

*Adapting Orthodoxy to American Life:
Shaarey Tphiloh and the Development of Modern Orthodox Judaism in Portland, Maine
1904-1976*

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As members of Portland, Maine's Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh laid the cornerstone of their new synagogue in 1904, they faced a daunting challenge. On one hand, congregants knew that they were Orthodox Jews, bound by dietary laws, Sabbath observance, and synagogue worship in the style of their East European forefathers. On the other hand, they also hoped to become respected citizens of their city, reaching social, economic, and even political prominence. How could their neighbors respect their religion if it appeared less dignified than Protestant worship? Over a century ago, Shaarey Tphiloh sought to create an American Orthodoxy that would allow its members to balance their identities as Americans and as Orthodox Jews. As times changed and new challenges emerged, Shaarey Tphiloh's members continually sought to balance these two fundamental aspects of their identity. If one theme stands out over the first century of Shaarey Tphiloh's existence, it is the dynamic balance between its congregants' commitment to Orthodox Judaism and their commitment to American life.

The bulk of American Jewish Historiography would lead one to believe that Orthodox synagogues like Shaarey Tphiloh resisted any adaptation to the American environment. According to one historian:

The generally-accepted story [of Orthodoxy in America] was that during the 1880-1920 period, those among the migrating masses who were sincere in their religious commitment aspired, under the guidance of their own rabbis from Russia

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and Poland, to transplant to these shores an Orthodoxy that resisted modernity and acculturation... They gave no support to initiatives to Americanize the synagogue, preferring their old-world *shtetls* instead...”

That same scholar suggests that historians who have examined Orthodoxy have generally “been sure to highlight how leaders of that traditional denomination have remained loyal to old patterns of thought and behavior even at the expense of losing many adherents to their cause.” They have portrayed Orthodoxy as a “monolithic entity”—an intolerant subset of Judaism that opposed modernity. The story that I present in the following pages argues against this traditional historiography, and suggests that Orthodoxy did in fact adapt to its American environment.¹

In this essay, I will show that in the first quarter of the twentieth century, while an immigrant generation was trying to prove their Americanism, the congregation had little difficulty adapting to America. By emphasizing aesthetics, Shaarey Tphiloh’s immigrant constituency could view itself—and be viewed by Portland’s non-Jews—as Americans of the Jewish faith.

Once the upwardly mobile and those reared in an American environment gained a stronger voice in congregational affairs, the emphasis then shifted from fostering Americanization to maintaining Judaism. By embracing secular education and English as the vernacular, and by incorporating gender roles that mirrored American mores, Shaarey Tphiloh at mid-century had created a dynamic new synthesis between American ideals and Orthodox Judaism.

However, as members of the congregation moved from the city to Portland’s suburbs in immediate the postwar years, their daily observance of Jewish law lost out to the new allures of American culture. While American Orthodoxy strengthened in these years by placing a greater emphasis on traditional practices, Shaarey Tphiloh could not

take advantage of this trend. Without a critical mass of observant Jews—a common problem for Jewish communities that like Portland were far from New York’s hub of Jewish life—Shaarey Tphiloh struggled to maintain its precarious balance between Jewish law and American life.

This essay, then, is an attempt to understand how an Orthodox congregation has navigated these competing American and Orthodox identities—and to understand where it succeeded and where it has struggled. It is also an attempt to move beyond the study of Jewish life in major metropolitan areas like New York, and to understand how the process of Americanization took place elsewhere in America. I will argue that while this Maine congregation had little trouble maintaining a dynamic balance between “America” and “Orthodox” in its first fifty years, the problem of non-observance in Portland’s suburbs greatly challenged this synthesis.

I. From Immigrants to Americans

On the rainy afternoon of September 14, 1904, Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh laid the cornerstone of its magnificent new edifice on Newbury Street in Portland, Maine. The leaders of the congregation planned an elaborate ceremony, inviting over five hundred guests, including some of the most prominent citizens of Portland. Businessmen, clergymen, architects, authors, and even Mayor James P. Baxter were invited to attend—alongside members of the Jewish community—and welcome the new synagogue onto Portland’s religious scene.

While this ceremony formally created the largest synagogue in Portland to date, it was not the first synagogue in the city. The first Jewish communal institutions were

founded by a wave of immigrants in the 1860s who were probably attracted to the city by its economic opportunities. While most other East coast cities featured Jewish institutions by the mid-nineteenth century, Jewish life in Portland at that time was limited to a temporary community of itinerant peddlers and merchants. There is no evidence that these individuals founded synagogues or burial grounds, and when Eastern European immigrants began to arrive in 1866, they formed informal prayer groups, probably distinguishable to contemporaries by the place of origin of their worshippers. By 1878, Portland was home to 185 Jews and featured only these small, immigrant prayer groups.²

By 1886, these small groups had coalesced into three primary congregations, the largest of which was invited to represent the Jewish community at Portland's centennial celebration. Speaking for this congregation, Barnard Aaronson clearly indicated its members' desire to be part of the larger community. His yearning is unmistakable in his description of the Jewish "church," which he referred to explicitly as "a citizen of our city." Aaronson argued that its members included "some of our most important citizens," and that its membership "willingly obeys the laws as prescribed by our city fathers, is anxious to promote the welfare of his city in his way, humble though it may be. I feel that he can be called a law abiding citizen, in all that phrase implies."

When describing religious practices, he tacitly suggested that Portland Judaism was compatible with the American religious values of respectable Christian denominations. He argued that "the form of religion is Orthodox, yet thoroughly liberal in thought and action," clearly conveying to his neighbors that Judaism was congruent with modern America. He further suggested that stereotypically negative images of Jews should not be applied to the Jews of Portland. "As a class," he argued at the celebration,

“Portland’s ‘Sons of Israel’ compare more than favorably with the Hebrew of other cities.” He was careful to mention that holidays were celebrated with the “care and spiritual feeling that characterizes our cosmopolitan cities,” a sentiment that suggests his belief that his synagogue was not a bastion of immigrant Orthodoxy, but instead projected a refined, Americanized outlook. He sought to shed negative stereotypes of East European Jews, and convince Portland that his community was one of refined, sophisticated Americans. While Aaronson was successful in gaining a place alongside non-Jewish religious leaders at the celebration, he was clearly ambivalent about the acceptance of Jews in the community, noting that “We sincerely hope nothing will occur in the future to mar the harmonious feeling now existing between the denominations.”³

In 1900, leaders of Aaronson’s congregation decided that by merging with another small Portland synagogue, and together pooling their resources, they could erect a magnificent synagogue and further enhance their respectability in the eyes of their non-Jewish neighbors. A beautiful new building would also create a more dignified atmosphere for Portland’s poorer Jews, and would help to teach those individuals how they could incorporate American respectability into their worship. Likely with both goals in mind, these leaders formed the Hebrew Synagogue Society in 1900, the forerunner organization to Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue. Its leaders were men who had attained a degree of success in the world, and who believed that their brethren could—and should—follow suit.

After acquiring a parcel of land in the heart of Portland on which to build what was to become the largest synagogue in the city, the leaders of the new congregation began to plan an impressive ceremony to announce the synagogue’s arrival. They

certainly knew that the laying of the cornerstone was a watershed event in the history of Portland Jewry, and needed to decide how it should be celebrated. Who should be invited? Who should speak? The leaders of the incipient congregation had to decide how to project their new synagogue to both the Jewish and the non-Jewish community. It is clear that from the beginning, the leaders of Shaarey Tphiloh sought to demonstrate to the larger community that Judaism was a dignified religion that deserved an equal place alongside the city's Christian denominations.

Shaarey Tphiloh's leaders decided to invite over five hundred guests to the cornerstone ceremony, which they announced would take place on a Wednesday afternoon, September 14, 1904. The invitations proudly proclaimed that the honor of laying the cornerstone would be presented to Mayor James P. Baxter, undoubtedly one of the most prominent figures in Portland. Among the hundreds of invited guests were members of the Jewish community, Christian clergy, as well as "those in Portland who are most prominent in business and in the professions."⁴

The synagogue's leaders asked Mayor Baxter to speak at the celebration, and at the ceremony itself he briefly discussed the place of the Jewish community of Portland. He began by proclaiming, "I esteem it a privilege to preside at the laying of this corner stone to an edifice in behalf of a people which numbers among it some of the greatest statesmen, publicists and philanthropists which the world has known, and with whose history all should be acquainted." He then wished "those who hereafter shall manage its affairs, the highest success in all good works in which they shall engage." In a ritual that probably appeared Masonic to some in the audience, he donned a silk apron, picked up a silver trowel, and performed the ceremony.⁵ By presenting the greatest honor of the day

to a city official instead of a member of the Jewish community, the leaders of Shaarey Tphiloh demonstrated the emphasis they placed on recognition from the larger community.

While Baxter was an obvious choice as a speaker, the synagogue leaders had to decide who else would deliver addresses. Isaac Marcus, Shaarey Tphiloh's first rabbi, was a natural fit, and offered either Hebrew prayer or Yiddish comments—words that were not recorded in the local press because the reporter probably could not understand them.⁶ The selection of the keynote speaker, however, was somewhat surprising. The synagogue leaders chose Charles Fleischer, a Reform Rabbi from Congregation Adath Israel of Boston. On the surface, having a Reform Rabbi deliver the keynote address at an Orthodox synagogue seems rather strange. Yet upon closer examination, Rabbi Fleischer was a telling choice to speak to the mixed crowd at Shaarey Tphiloh's cornerstone ceremony, revealing much about the synagogue's priorities. "A cultural pluralist before the term was coined," Arthur Mann later wrote in *Commentary* magazine, Fleischer "preached that his people could be Americans and Jews at the same time..." He often preached on Jewish-Gentile relations, and many times spoke to audiences that featured as many non-Jews as Jews. By 1905, one Boston newspaper recorded that "no man in Boston... [has] a greater following among the young intellectuals."⁷ His oratory abilities and prestige among both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences made Fleischer a particularly good fit for the ceremony.

Instead of selecting a distinguished Talmudist or a devout Orthodox Jew, they selected a man who believed the congregation's membership could both worship as Jews, and be respected as Americans. They selected a speaker who would argue that Jews

could be “Americans in nationality,” and contribute to broader society.⁸ This choice clearly indicates the desire of Shaarey Tphiloh’s leaders to demonstrate their fitness for American society—and to project that message to their coreligionists and non-Jewish neighbors alike.

The synagogue’s leaders also selected Dr. Elias Caplan, a local physician, to serve as the Master of Ceremonies. When Rabbi Fleischer sent a telegram of regret that he was ill and could not attend the ceremony, Caplan was asked if he could give the keynote address in Fleischer’s stead—and the address that he delivered was likely penned by Fleischer. The speech argued that Shaarey Tphiloh members could be both Jews and Americans, but would have to change in order to reach that goal. Caplan began by acknowledging and excusing the stereotypical image of the unrefined, immigrant Jew—an approach that suggested that more integrated Jews may have been embarrassed by the newer immigrants. Caplan suggested that Jews did in fact possess faults as a people, but that these shortcomings were the products of the world, which “made our environment,” restricting economic opportunities and land ownership. He pointed to the example of Russia, arguing that Jews were not on an equal plane with their Christian neighbors. “For centuries we were the playthings of a semi civilized world, hunted avoided and bled. Is there any wonder that Israel is not perfect, for from whom could he learn perfection?”

Caplan then argued that America was exceptional in granting Jews the freedom to become modern, equal citizens, suggesting that “Before us now lies our future, a future full of promise. The very air we breathe is fragrant with freedom, hope is no longer a dream but a reality.” He then continued:

We are witnessing today in this great country the dawn of a new era...The institutions of this mighty republic are our institutions, its laws are our laws, its

flag, the flag of the free and the brave... is our flag. For the first time in hundreds of years we are among friends; the weary head of Israel has at length found a haven of refuge, a place of true rest. My friends, this day marks an epoch in your life...

Caplan urged his congregants to take advantage of the unprecedented opportunities that America afforded them, and suggested to the non-Jews in the audience that his coreligionists would seize this opportunity for betterment.

The thrust of Caplan's speech indicated that it was the duty of Jews to change their lifestyle to become worthy of these awesome opportunities—and it was the responsibility of the synagogue to foster these changes. Caplan reminded the members of the congregation that they had to earn the respect of their American neighbors. "Let us remember our debt to the world and pay it like true men," he suggested. "Let us remember that we cannot force respect and admiration, that the more respect we have of ourselves, the more careful we are of our habits, of our actions, the greater will be the esteem of the world." Suggesting that Shaarey Tphiloh members should learn to carry themselves like modern Americans, Caplan then argued that it was the synagogue that would serve as this "foundation of a better life, and a closer union with your Christian friends. For, the time of exclusiveness has passed."

That the leaders of Shaarey Tphiloh would allow this speech to headline such a defining ceremony clearly suggests that many leaders believed that the new synagogue would mould some of the newer immigrants into better Americans. In an age in which countless national organizations sought to educate and Americanize East European immigrants, Shaarey Tphiloh's leaders seemed to believe that their institution would serve a similar purpose. These leaders no doubt convinced Mayor Baxter that this was their aim, as evidenced by his remarks at the ceremony. Baxter maintained that he

accepted the honor of laying the stone because in America, “all men’s religious opinions are respected, it is my duty, and it is eminently proper, that, as Mayor of this City, having in view the welfare of all citizens irrespective of party, race or creed, I should welcome the erection of a building to be devoted to the bettering of the condition of a considerable body of our citizens...”⁹ The Mayor certainly believed that Shaarey Tphiloh was an organization designed to improve the condition of Portland Jewry, and from the words of the speakers on that day, it seems clear that much of the congregation’s leadership shared this view.

On June 4, 1905, Shaarey Tphiloh hosted a dedication ceremony that served a similar purpose as the cornerstone ceremony nine months earlier. The ceremony presented Shaarey Tphiloh to Jews and non-Jews alike as a dignified religious institution, and by all accounts, the guests were impressed with what they saw. The *Eastern Argus* described the ceremony as “imposing” and “appropriate,” and commented on the large size of the building, its ornate woodwork, and symbolic decorations in the sanctuary.¹⁰ It seemed that most people expected a dignified ceremony and were not disappointed.

According to the newspaper correspondent who described the scene and the atmosphere in great detail, the only aspect of the program that seemed somehow unrefined was the unfamiliar custom of covering ones’ head upon entering the synagogue. “Those not of the Hebrew faith,” observed the correspondent, “took their [hats] off from force of habit, soon replaced them and sat covered during the entire progress of the exercises. The speakers did not remove their hats when they spoke, and in short they made a special point of remaining covered before the Lord, instead of uncovering at the door sill as Christians are taught to do.” Mayor Baxter, wearing “his

silk hat on his head... spoke enthusiastically of the good work that the Hebrews have done here and everywhere where they are located..." That this was the only aspect of the service that the non-Jewish community found strange, speaks to the success of Shaarey Tphiloh's leaders in creating a dignified ceremony for their neighbors.

As was the case at the cornerstone ceremony, the main oration was delivered by Elias Caplan, who again maintained that Judaism was compatible with its American environment. He compared the Jews to the ancient Egyptians and Greeks, calling the Jewish people "a galaxy of men destined to influence mankind for all time." He argued that the Bible was "more durable than the pyramids, more elevating than the noblest production of the Greeks." He emphasized the continuity of Jewish life, arguing that:

Over three thousand years ago a temple was erected in a city called Jerusalem by a Jewish King, dedicated to the worship of one G-d. And now you, the descendants of that King and his people are dedicating a temple of your own to worship the G-d of your ancestors, to preserve the ideals held sacred by them. It is on different soil and under a flag symbolizing the ripest fruition of liberty that you have erected a temple.

Even while emphasizing Jewish continuity, Caplan praised the ethics of Protestant Americans, presenting them as role models for his congregants. He lauded the character of Washington, Lincoln, and Roosevelt, and argued that, "True culture and true religion consists in overlooking minor differences but holding fast to the universal verities common to all religious beliefs." He presented Judaism as a unifying religion, suggesting that "it proclaimed the unity of the universe, its voice was the voice of peace." Most importantly, Caplan reiterated the central dilemma facing his institution and his congregants. "Let us remember that we are not only Jews, loyal to our traditions, but free Americans enjoying the blessings of liberty."¹¹

The question that Shaarey Tphiloh members faced at the outset was how they would balance those two, often conflicting, ideals. Its leaders believed that in order to attain greater social and economic success, their neighbors had to believe that Judaism did not preclude them from becoming good Americans. They believed that their synagogue's refined atmosphere would not only bring them respect from their neighbors, but could also help to Americanize those congregants who still clung to immigrant practices. This ideal met with little resistance at the cornerstone laying and dedication, but the potential for conflict grew when the synagogue began holding daily worship services. It was easy for congregants to support a refined cornerstone ceremony, but how could they reconcile their traditional religious services with this progressive philosophy?

To create this synthesis, members of the synagogue looked to incorporate the awe-inspiring *atmosphere* of Protestant churches, while still maintaining a commitment to Judaism and Jewish law (Halakhah). With such a goal in mind, congregational leaders began to transform their service from *participatory*, to more *performance-oriented*. Traditional Jewish worship had always been chiefly participatory, as worshippers would pray at their own pace, chanting out loud, standing and sitting as necessary. To many Shaarey Tphiloh members, this style seemed somehow unrefined, and clearly at odds with what they saw in their neighbors' churches. There they witnessed a more performance-oriented service, with a leader at the front of the sanctuary, parishioners who would follow his lead, and musical accompaniment.¹²

The first sign of this shift from participation to performance was the incorporation of a *bimah* (stage) at the front of the sanctuary when the synagogue was built. Traditional East European services would be led from the reader's desk at the center of

the synagogue. The correspondent who covered the dedication ceremony for the *Eastern Argus* noted that “in front of the ark is what is known as the bimma, which is the pulpit with a pedestal on which the priest or rabbi stands as he faces the ark and reads from the scriptures.” By moving the rabbi from the center of the sanctuary to the front, Shaarey Tphiloh seems to have been furthering the idea of performance in the sanctuary.¹³

Beyond architectural innovations, changes to worship practices also furthered the shift from participation to performance. Most strikingly, the Board of Directors hired a choir to provide musical accompaniment during the service. Although Jewish law forbade the use of organs on the Sabbath, the voices of the choir still emulated church choirs and created what Shaarey Tphiloh’s leaders probably believed to be a more refined atmosphere. As early as 1917, the Cantor—whom the congregants strikingly called “Reverend”—was accompanied by a boys’ choir, and in 1918, Shaarey Tphiloh hired a special choir for the High Holidays.¹⁴

Across America, many synagogues went beyond simply incorporating performance-based aspects of worship, and their members chose to emulate churches in much more controversial areas. Some synagogues decided to remove head coverings, abridge the service, and permit mixed seating. While all of these changes were very much in line with American religious norms, the majority of Shaarey Tphiloh’s membership believed that they violated Jewish law and therefore forbade such changes within their synagogue.¹⁵

For members of Shaarey Tphiloh, maintaining Halakhah appeared to be just as important as creating a more dignified service. In 1915, the synagogue maintained a *Shochet* (Kosher Slaughterer) and a significant number of references to his work

indicated a particularly keen concern with ensuring the availability of strictly Kosher meats for its congregants. The synagogue also hired a *Mohel* (ritual circumciser) and maintained a *Mikvah* (ritual bath), the continued existence of which appeared to have also been of significant concern to the congregation. Members of the congregation asked the rabbi to step in and decide an undefined issue of Jewish law in 1915, and in 1917 the synagogue paid to dispose of torn prayer books in accordance with Halakhah. Members of the Board of Directors were also particularly concerned that holidays and burial rituals were carried out in accordance with Jewish law.¹⁶

These examples help to illuminate what congregants believed was the best synthesis between traditional Judaism and American life. They wanted a service that would mirror their Protestant neighbors in respectability, but one that would also remain deeply committed to Jewish law. To most contemporaries, this seemed to be an effective balance. However, in the ensuing years, some of the most prominent members of the congregation would emphatically disagree.

II. The Success of Americanization

During the synagogue's dedication, Elias Caplan stood in front of Portland's most distinguished citizens, representing Shaarey Tphiloh as their Master of Ceremonies. A successful physician, he seemed to embody the ideal so treasured by the congregation's founders—he had become a successful American while also remaining an active member of the Jewish community. Yet shockingly, by 1913 Dr. Caplan had helped to found a rival Conservative congregation, later known as Temple Israel, which permitted the Americanization of the service even if it violated traditional renderings of Halakhah—

embracing such concepts as abridging the service, adding English readings and prayers, and adopting mixed seating.¹⁷

The creation of Temple Israel highlights a tension within Shaarey Tphiloh over the proper balance between Jewish law and Americanization. While Shaarey Tphiloh's challenge in its initial years was to demonstrate that immigrant Orthodoxy could be adapted into a respectable American faith, the congregation soon discovered a new challenge—how to make Orthodox Judaism viable for those who already viewed themselves as full fledged-Americans. Congregational leaders like Caplan, who had “made it” either socially or economically, believed that their congregation should follow the lead of Temple Israel and incorporate some of the new institution's innovations to reflect their status as successful Americans—even if those innovations violated Jewish law. The majority of Shaarey Tphiloh's membership, however, rejected this possibility outright.¹⁸

But the wealthiest members of Shaarey Tphiloh were not the only ones who now viewed themselves as well-integrated Americans. The rising generation of Portland Jewry—primarily the children of immigrants—grew up speaking English, and were educated primarily in the public schools. For this generation, the challenge was not how to become Americans despite their Jewishness, but how they could remain Orthodox Jews despite the reality that they were so effectively integrating as Americans.

In 1917, Rabbi David Essrig arrived at Shaarey Tphiloh, and offered a solution to this dilemma. He brought to the congregation a definition of Americanized Orthodoxy that appealed to the younger generation by fusing the English language with traditional observance. By incorporating English into the congregation, Rabbi Essrig probably hoped

to reach young people who did not understand Yiddish, the language of Eastern Europe that had remained the vernacular of the synagogue. While he came with a strong rabbinic background, Essrig also had a firm command of the English language and hoped to use this skill to “try and bring some of the essence of the Jewish traditions and teachings from the best sources, to our youth who are familiar only with the English language.” In his later writings, Essrig attempted to familiarize English-speakers with the great ideas of Judaism, including dietary laws and holiday customs, as well as the role of women and of the synagogue.¹⁹

Incorporating English was not the only way in which Essrig reached out to Jewish youth. He argued that, “the Jewish youth of today... are drifting away beyond anything known in the Jewish communities of their elders... The only remedy for this condition is to create educational and social centers in which our young will be molded according to Jewish ethics.” Essrig believed that it was the responsibility of “elders to supply attractive and adequate schools of religion in which the young may receive that character-building which they lack.” Not surprisingly, Essrig was very involved in strengthening the Hebrew school during his time in Portland, and was also the director of the Portland branch of Mizrachi, a Zionist organization.²⁰ Rabbi Essrig demonstrates that Shaarey Tphiloh was not only concerned with upholding Jewish law, but also remained interested in modernizing Orthodoxy.

In 1936, Rabbi Mendell Lewittes came to Shaarey Tphiloh, and the congregation hoped that he would also fashion an Orthodoxy that would seem modern and up-to-date to the rising generation—without alienating the elder members of the community. Lewittes became the first American-trained rabbi at Shaarey Tphiloh,²¹ and brought to

the congregation Yeshiva University's national approach to "modern Orthodoxy." Founded in New York under the leadership of Bernard Revel, Yeshiva's leadership maintained that modern Orthodoxy should "harmoniously combine the best of modern culture with the learning and the spirit of the Torah and the ideals of traditional Judaism."²²

During his tenure at Shaarey Tphiloh, Lewittes introduced new ways of synthesizing Orthodoxy with modern life, including new forms of religious practices.²³ The younger generation joined Rabbi Lewittes in supporting the Young Israel Club, an organization that featured traditional services with English sermons, congregational singing, and decorum. In Portland, these services included "responsive singing in which all members participate, thus making everyone feel that he or she is actively engaged in heartfelt prayer.... All efforts are being extended to provide a modern and most enjoyable Sabbath service for all."²⁴ These Young Israel services did not become the norm for the entire congregation, however, as Shaarey Tphiloh also maintained its traditional services.

In addition to the Young Israel service, Lewittes also appealed to the younger generation because he advocated university education. Many Orthodox Jews believed that religious education was far more important than secular studies, but Lewittes opposed such a notion. He instead subscribed to the educational philosophy of Yeshiva University, which encouraged its students to pursue higher secular education in addition to their religious studies. This, it was believed, would prepare them to become American Jewish leaders—well versed in both American and Jewish matters. For those younger members of the congregation who hoped to reach economic prominence in the larger

community, college education seemed like a ticket to their goal—and Lewittes appeared to be an advocate for their success.²⁵

However, many of the older and more traditional members of the community did not share this view. “More is needed than continual attacks upon college students and their secular education,” wrote an anonymous individual in the Jewish Community Center’s *Center Bulletin* in 1945. The writer(s) believed that the issue of secular education was driving a wedge between competing factions of the community, and the result was that the younger generation was turning away from the synagogue. The editorial claimed that, “there is no doubt that religion is more a part of life of the older folks than it is of the others.” It argued that “the Jewish youth of Portland will continue to go away to school,” and that “this important element of the Community may be further driven away from close association with the Jewish Community.”²⁶

This generational conflict seemed to prevent Rabbi Lewittes from achieving his vision. Those who opposed secular education also seemed to resist the congregational singing and English readings associated with the Young Israel club, forcing those services to remain distinct from Shaarey Tphiloh’s regular services. Arriving with a fresh perspective and approach, Lewittes was unable to convince the more traditional members of the congregation to fully support his progressive platform. After only six years on the job, Rabbi Lewittes left Portland in 1942.

The example of Lewittes illustrates Shaarey Tphiloh’s ambivalent message about Yeshiva University and their form of “modern Orthodoxy.” Younger members flocked to Young Israel services, which featured increased levels of decorum, congregational singing, and English sermons—yet the older members refused to allow the Young Israel

style to become the norm. Younger members sought secular college educations, but the older generation appeared to oppose this idea. The congregation continued to hire rabbis with Yeshiva University and Young Israel backgrounds, but prevented them from fully incorporating their ideas into synagogue life. Frustrated by the perceived obstinacy of the traditionalists, many younger members turned away from Shaarey Tphiloh, believing that its form of Orthodoxy was not compatible with their status as Americans. Many joined the Jewish Community Center, but there were no other major synagogues in Portland until 1947. As a result, many simply walked away from Jewish institutions altogether.

One of the most important indicators that Shaarey Tphiloh's members—especially this younger generation—had become successful Americans was their rapid flight to the suburbs. As Portland Jewry gained greater economic prosperity, they began to move to the more fashionable and suburban Woodfords neighborhood. Joining their non-Jewish neighbors in the suburbs in the postwar years represented a “symbol of Americanization,” and a sign of “acceptance in the culture of the United States.”²⁷ By 1942, about half of Portland's Jewish population resided in Woodfords.²⁸

For those Jews who had moved to Woodfords, the Conservative Temple that opened in 1947 seemed to fit their needs better than Shaarey Tphiloh did. Not only was Temple Beth El in the heart of their new neighborhood, but it also seemed to provide a better religious program for the new suburban American milieu. Its members could take full advantage of the new automobile-based culture after Conservative authorities soon legitimized driving to the Temple on Sabbath. The mixed seating arrangement of Beth El also seemed to be much more in line with notions of gender equality—Shaarey Tphiloh had relegated women to the balcony in accordance with traditional Orthodox practices.

“Conservatism exemplified that which was most appealing to the suburban Jew,” remarked one prominent sociologist. How then could Shaarey Tphiloh’s leaders portray their institution as compatible with this new, American lifestyle?²⁹

Faced with competition from Beth El, and watching Shaarey Tphiloh’s membership and financial solvency decline, the congregation hired Rabbi Morris Bekritsky who later served as the vice president of the national Rabbinical Council of America.³⁰ Rabbi Bekritsky spearheaded a series of changes designed to demonstrate Shaarey Tphiloh’s compatibility with the modern, suburban lifestyle. At first the changes were relatively small. The congregation continued to emphasize increased levels of decorum, and in 1952, “A discussion was held on the decorum on Saturday mornings...[and a committee was appointed] to see that the proper decorum be observed at Saturday morning services.”³¹ The synagogue’s members were also concerned with the length of services. In 1947, the board held a “Discussion of length of services... for high holidays.”³² The following year, a committee of four was appointed to meet with the Rabbi and Cantor “to arrange for length of services etc,” and in 1950, the Hazzan reported that he could begin services at 7, and be finished by 1 pm.³³

But with large numbers of its congregants moving to Woodfords, Bekritsky understood that in order to truly demonstrate Orthodoxy’s vitality, he would have to bring Orthodoxy to the suburbs. This was no easy task. Many of Shaarey Tphiloh’s leaders were perfectly content to remain in the old building and saw no need to move to Woodfords. By 1957, however, Shaarey Tphiloh had nevertheless opened a second branch of the congregation in suburbia, in a building that Rabbi Bekritsky suggested “retains all of the tradition and wisdom of the ages and combines with it the zeal and

youthfulness which are the hallmarks of modernity.”³⁴ Most of the traditionalists remained at the old building on Newbury Street, and Shaarey Tphiloh’s more progressive members set out to make the new Noyes Street branch a thriving example of modern Orthodoxy.

Now in the center of the emerging Jewish neighborhood, the congregation began a series of changes designed to synthesize Orthodoxy with suburban life. While many of those who remained at Newbury Street did not actively advocate these measures, it seems clear that the “progressive leadership” at Noyes Street increasingly set the agenda for the entire synagogue.³⁵

One of the ways in which Shaarey Tphiloh advocated a “modern Orthodoxy” was by emphasizing the role of women within the congregation. Conservative Judaism had appealed to suburban women in part because mixed seating symbolized women’s increasing equality. Moreover, many Orthodox synagogues nationwide had adopted this seating pattern as well during the interwar years. While it would have been easy to adopt mixed seating in the new suburban synagogue, Shaarey Tphiloh’s leadership maintained that it violated the Orthodox rendering of Halakhah and refused to countenance the innovation.³⁶ How could Shaarey Tphiloh demonstrate to women that it could recognize their equality while still adhering to Jewish law?

Instead of incorporating mixed seating, Shaarey Tphiloh began to give women more equality within the synagogue in other ways. First, the Noyes Street sanctuary allowed women to sit at the same level as men, “side-by-side,” indicating a greater level of equality.³⁷ However, to maintain a separation between the sexes during worship, the congregation used a *Mechitzah* (partition). This arrangement became commonplace in

Orthodox synagogues throughout the country as a means of maintaining the integrity of Jewish law, while adapting to the gender equality of modern society.

Not only did Shaarey Tphiloh change its seating pattern in order to make Orthodoxy viable in the suburbs, but it also gave women a greater say in the affairs of the synagogue. In 1959, the directors decided to expand synagogue leadership to women, resolving “that not more than three members of sisterhood be represented on Board of Directors with full voting power.”³⁸ In 1966, women requested to serve on synagogue committees, and in the following year the board considered a study group for both men and women.³⁹ According to one member who was active in the Sisterhood, “I wasn’t that active when it was down there [Newbury St.]... But from the day they came out here [Noyes Street], I was active.”⁴⁰

In addition to gender issues, decorum continued to be a major focus of the congregation as it adapted Orthodoxy to its new suburban surroundings. In 1965, the Board expressed continued concern about decorum, deciding “that decorum in the lobby during each of the three High Holidays be supervised by a uniformed policeman.”⁴¹ Enhancing decorum took on many forms in this period, as children’s behavior was an issue in 1962, and again in 1969.⁴² That same year, the cantor noted that the choir “greatly enhances and beautifies the services and they have been...an integral and important part of our High Holiday services.”⁴³ There was also a discussion of adding a temporary speaker’s pulpit for the Rabbi at Noyes Street so that more people could hear the sermon. The sermon itself probably gained prominence in the service because it helped the synagogue resemble other American religious institutions.⁴⁴

Other changes within the Noyes Street synagogue indicated that the congregation was willing to adapt even further. In 1966, Rabbi Bekritsky held Friday night worship services after people had finished work—services which were popular elsewhere, especially in Conservative congregations, as they were more in line with people’s schedules. Traditionally, Friday night services had been held only at sundown.⁴⁵ The Board also identified a need for “better edited and later-issue Siddurim [prayer books],” although it is not clear which prayer books if any they chose to buy.⁴⁶ Finally, the congregation sought to offer more than just religious worship, and offered Beano games, a cabaret social, a music festival, and many speakers and other events.⁴⁷ All of this indicated that Shaarey Tphiloh understood the need to change in suburbia if it wanted to adapt Orthodoxy to this new, American environment.⁴⁸

However, even as Shaarey Tphiloh adopted all of these modifications, it still continued to view itself as ultimately bound by the more traditional interpretation of Jewish law. In 1965, Bekritsky argued that:

Shaarey Tphiloh has fought hard during these past years to keep the banner of orthodoxy flying high. It was, at times, a very hard fight, but a necessary one. Orthodoxy is the arsenal of Judaism and we are proud that Shaarey Tphiloh has been a fort which has ever defended and maintained the traditional values upon which our faith rests.”⁴⁹

Shaarey Tphiloh remained committed to Kashrut in the synagogue, to the maintenance of the Mikvah, and to other forms of Halakhah. After the 1969 High Holiday services, the board reported that, “services went well and the only problem was that the speeches could not be heard in the rear of the Shul. The use of a microphone was discussed. Because of religion, this cannot be done.”⁵⁰ While Shaarey Tphiloh was willing to change in an attempt to appeal to suburbanites, it still was not willing to violate or significantly alter its understanding of Jewish law.

III: The Challenge of Non-Observance

By the late 1960s, Shaarey Tphiloh faced a troubling reality—most of its members were not maintaining Jewish law in their daily lives. It soon became clear that in order to make Orthodoxy viable in suburbia, congregational leaders would have to accept that its members could violate Jewish law outside of the synagogue—so long as they respected it within its walls. This balance was fraught with complications and would threaten the very essence of Shaarey Tphiloh as an Orthodox synagogue.

In 1960, the board made a suggestion that “that No Parking signs on Saturday and Holidays should be placed in front of the Noyes St. Synagogue,” indicating that worshippers were likely driving to and from synagogue on the Sabbath (which violated traditional renderings of Jewish law).⁵¹ Then in 1963, Rabbi Bekritsky acknowledged that his members’ adherence to the laws of Kashrut may not have been exemplary, when he noted that “Many who might be lax regarding the laws of kashruth all year long are very strict with themselves regarding the Passover diet.”⁵² A 1969 policy indicated that intermarriage was also a concern. The new policy read:

Any present member of Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue who marries a non-Jew may retain his or her individual membership in the synagogue, and any Jew married to or marrying a non-Jew may become an individual member of the synagogue, but any such person shall be prohibited from serving as an officer of the synagogue, as a member of its board of directors, or as chairman of any permanent or standing committee.⁵³

These regulations and comments clearly indicate that many members of the congregation—even though they may have preferred Orthodox-style services—did not incorporate Jewish law into their daily lives.

Comments by contemporaries also indicate that this was the new reality. By the 1970s, many members of the congregation no longer kept Kosher homes, and many of those who did would still eat pork and other non-Kosher foods outside of the home.⁵⁴ Levels of observance became so lax that even as early as the 1950s, the synagogue could no longer find a President who followed Halakhah in his daily life. One member recalled that:

Unfortunately, they were left with a comparatively small number of strictly religious individuals, and they were the type who were just not qualified to run a meeting or run a business operation that carries quite a budget... So [the rabbi] realized that it had reached the stage in time where it was going to be people who belonged to the Orthodox Synagogue who were not strictly Orthodox in their habits, but who were going to have to do the business end of running the synagogue... Up until then, we had men as Presidents who would not work on the Sabbath, or who would walk on the Sabbath. So it was quite a change when I came in and since then.⁵⁵

Thus the synagogue—which distinguished itself from Beth El by accepting the binding authority of traditional sources of Jewish law—now had a significant part of its membership that did not recognize Jewish law in their own daily lives.

By the 1970s, it was becoming clear that the lack of observance was threatening the very existence of the congregation. While Orthodoxy was strengthening nationally by placing a greater emphasis on tradition and observance, Shaarey Tphiloh found fewer and fewer members who were willing to observe Halakhah in their daily lives.

Struggling to figure out how to match Orthodoxy with suburbia, Shaarey Tphiloh saw its membership drop by twenty percent in just 8 years—from 1966 to 1974, membership declined from 466 to 373.⁵⁶

To combat these difficulties, Shaarey Tphiloh hired a new rabbi who worked to bring Orthodoxy's national emphasis on tradition to Portland. Rabbi Steven Dworken

came to Shaarey Tphiloh in 1971, and soon implored his congregation to be more observant, writing that:

Many of our people encounter obstacles which make it difficult to observe some of the mitzvos [commandments]. Deciding these obstacles are insurmountable, they abandon these traditions... Let us then devote ourselves to more scrupulous and devoted observance... While fragmented Jewish living and selected performance of mitzvos leaves much to be desired, it is certainly preferable to total non-observance. Partial observance... can introduce us to the meaning and beauty of a full Jewish life... Because of our Torah, we the Jewish people have remained alive.

Dworken believed that, “American Judaism will be strengthened only if families—entire units—receive education, live, and practice Judaism. REJEWVINATE IT’S NOT TOO LATE.”⁵⁷

Dworken used many techniques to try to convince his congregation to increase their level of observance. In 1973 he compared Judaism to exercise, arguing that, “We cannot really achieve spiritual heights without regular practice... Superficial experiences lead to superficial feelings and actions... Without the exercise and practice of Judaism, our spiritual muscles become flabby, soft, and atrophied from disuse.”⁵⁸ In 1975, he argued that his congregation should “return to the observance of Shabbos [Sabbath] in the traditional way.” Realizing that his members may not be persuaded by the argument that Sabbath observance was required according to Jewish law, he suggested that it could act as a “relief [from the] tension” of a modern, fast-paced life. He suggested “that more Jews try Shabbos observance as a remedy for distress and tension. Let us bring back its traditional observance and thus help purge neuroses and complexes. It certainly is worth trying.”⁵⁹

Yet in Portland, without a critical mass of observant Jews, it appears as if these appeals did not have the desired impact. “We’ve gotten a lot of young members, a lot of

young couples. But, whether that has affected their lives to a great extent, I don't know... I mean, there are some young couples who keep a Kosher home now who didn't before."⁶⁰ Dworken believed that "For Judaism to be viable, the great mass of Jews must accept its teachings and live by its dictates. It is not enough to have an elite group live by its laws... The words of Torah must become known to all segments of our people and its ideals must inspire the great mass of our community..." He lamented that "some of us have awakened and responded to our responsibilities as Jews, while most have not."⁶¹ In 1976, Dworken observed that "The difference between Orthodox and Conservative is half a block. Our people park a half a block away. The Conservatives will drive right up in the driveway, in many cases."⁶² Both violated traditional Jewish law, but the implication was that while Conservatives saw nothing wrong with it, his members were somewhat ashamed of their behavior.

In 1976, Rabbi Dworken announced that he was leaving to accept a post in Linden, New Jersey. Months before his departure, he believed that while he made Orthodoxy in Portland "much more respectable," he still could not "influence [the majority of his congregants'] daily actions, unfortunately."⁶³ Dworken went on to attain national prominence as a spokesman for modern Orthodoxy through his position as executive vice-president of the Rabbinical Council of America until his tragic and unexpected death in 2003.⁶⁴

The years since Steven Dworken left Shaarey Tphiloh are simply too recent to examine with the same historical analysis that I have used throughout this essay. Many of the debates of this period are too fresh to examine in an objective and dispassionate manner. Several trends and transformations are either still underway, or time has not yet

revealed their full significance. Posing an additional challenge, congregational minutes for much of this era have unfortunately been misplaced. Unwilling to speculate about recent congregational life, I have chosen not to comprehensively examine this period.

I would be remiss, however, in not mentioning two important facts about this recent era. First, Shaarey Tphiloh closed the historic Newbury Street branch of the congregation shortly after the departure of Rabbi Dworken, choosing to consolidate its operations into its Noyes Street branch. Second, the synagogue had difficulty settling on rabbinic leadership. No fewer than seven full-time rabbis and several interim leaders have served the congregation since the late 1970s.⁶⁵

The example of Shaarey Tphiloh helps to move us beyond the traditional historiography, and demonstrates that Orthodoxy did adapt to its American environment. American Orthodoxy at Shaarey Tphiloh has never remained stagnant—it has never been a “monolithic entity.” Yet while Orthodoxy in large, urban centers strengthened in the postwar years by placing a greater emphasis on traditional Jewish practices, this Maine congregation did not have the critical mass of observant Jews to take full advantage of this trend.

¹ Jeffrey S. Gurock, ed., *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective*, (Hoboken: Ktav, 1996), xvi, xiv. Gurock and Jonathan Sarna have recently pioneered a new historiography of which this essay is a part. They have pointed out that not all Orthodox congregations resisted modernity in the way in which it had been commonly assumed. Sarna suggests that an “Americanized Orthodoxy” had existed since the 1880s, whose proponents, “sought, over time, to adapt their mode of worship to reflect their own newly-awakened middle class sensitivities, and all alike hoped that by improving the atmosphere of their synagogues they would impress their own children as well as visiting non-Jews, whose mainline churches generally reflected these same religious and social values.” Gurock also points out that “throughout this entire century, Orthodoxy in America harbored an alternative, tolerant and reconciled approach to Jewish group acculturation.” For more information, see Jeffrey S. Gurock, ed., *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective*, (Hoboken: Ktav, 1996); Jeffrey S. Gurock and Jacob J. Schacter, *A Modern Heretic and a Traditional Community: Mordecai M. Kaplan, Orthodoxy, and American Judaism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A New History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), esp. 234, 235.

² Michael R. Cohen, *Jerusalem of the North: An Analysis of Religious Modernization in Portland, Maine's Jewish Community, 1860-1950* (Undergraduate Thesis, Brown University, 2000), 18-23. This work is available in the Portland Public Library and the University of Southern Maine's Glickman Library. See also Jacob Rader Marcus, *To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585-1984* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), 84, and Benjamin Band, *Portland Jewry: Its Growth and Development* 6-8, 111, as well as the 1880 Census and 1879 and 1881 Portland City Directories at the Maine Historical Society.

³ John T. Hull, *Centennial Celebration: An Account of the Municipal Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Town of Portland*, (Portland: Owen, Strout & Company, 1886), 144-45; Cohen, *Jerusalem of the North*, 31.

⁴ Invitations were sent to "several ministers, and to those in Portland who are most prominent in business and the professions." Notable guests included Former Mayor Darius H. Ingraham, and building architect John J. Cunningham. Included among the distinguished non-Jews who were asked to speak was Holman D. Waldron, an author who had recently written books in the "From Pen and Camera" series, about Portland, the White Mountains of New Hampshire, Gettysburg, and other places. It is not clear if Waldron actually spoke at the event, although it was announced that he would. See "Sh'aray Tphiloh," *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME) 9/10/1904 p. 5; "Shaaray Tphiloh," *Eastern Argus*, 9/15/1904; "Corner Stone of New Synagogue," *Evening Express* (Portland, ME) 9/14/1904 p.1, 6.

⁵ *Evening Express* 9/14/1904 p. 6. I want to thank members of one of my Brandeis University seminars, who helped me to interpret the events of this ceremony. Special thanks to Jonathan Sarna, Racquel Franklin, Victoria Khitterer, Adam Mendelshon, and Elizabeth Natanshon.

⁶ The *Eastern Argus* from 9/15/1904 mentions that Rabbi Marcus spoke in Hebrew, and the *Evening Express* of 9/14/1904 states that "Rabbi Marquis of this City offered prayer." I have used the spelling "Marcus" throughout this essay.

⁷ Mann, Arthur, "Charles Fleischer's Religion of Democracy," *Commentary* 17 no. 6 (June 1954): 558-560. The quote is not footnoted in Mann's article.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 560.

⁹ *Portland Evening Express*, 9/14/1904.

¹⁰ *Eastern Argus*, June 5, 1905, p.4; *Evening Express*, Saturday June 3, 1905, p. 1; *Maine Sunday Telegram*, June 4, 1905, p. 12.

¹¹ *Eastern Argus*, June 5, 1905, p. 4-5.

¹² For more on the transformation from participation to performance, see Sarna, *American Judaism*. Sarna argues that this shift characterized many American synagogues.

¹³ In 1915, the synagogue admonished Rev. Morris Leibowitz for, among other reasons, "Insulting the members of this congregation while performing the services on the bimah." A few months later, the "President authorized stopping the cantor from going to the bimah and chanting Ale Male Rachamin and so forth." While the meaning of these lines are ambiguous, there are two possible interpretations for these passages. First, it is certainly possible that the Board may have been upset with Reverend Leibowitz and simply wanted to prevent him from addressing the congregation at all. However, an alternative interpretation of these comments would be that to further the shift from "participation to performance," the cantor decided to chant part of the Yiskor (memorial) service from the Bimah, perhaps even facing the congregation instead of facing the Ark. However, many American Jews believed that the leader of the service should face the congregation, much like Protestant clergy face their worshippers. It is certainly possible that Reverend Leibowitz began chanting some prayers while facing worshippers, angering many in the congregation. His chanting of the Yiskor service in such a fashion could have particularly piqued congregants' concerns, who preferred to remember their deceased parents with deference to East European traditions. Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 10/21/1915; 2/6/1916. Thanks to Jonathan Sarna for his assistance in helping me to understand this interpretation. See also Sarna, *American Judaism*, 173. *Eastern Argus*, 6/5/1905, p. 4.

¹⁴ Sarna, *American Judaism* 176-77; Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 2/10/1918; 4/1/1917. The first reference to the title "Reverend" that I could find was on May 22, 1910 in the minutes of the Board of Directors.

¹⁵ Traditional Jews believed that Halakhah was comprised of both the commandments in the Torah, and also rabbinical judgments. While reforms like mixed seating were not expressly forbidden in the Torah,

they were prohibited according to rabbinic interpretations. Special thanks to both Jeffrey Gurock and Evan Hoffman.

¹⁶ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 1/3/1915; 2/7/1915; 9/15/1915; 3/12/16; 8/8/1917; 9/6/1917; 11/12/19; 12/19/19; 10/17/20.

¹⁷ Cohen, *Jerusalem of the North*, 44. As cited in Band, 29. By 1919, Temple Israel had affiliated with the Conservative movement, and had hired Jewish Theological Seminary graduate Rudolph Lupo as their first rabbi.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 47. See Band 29-31, and Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes 1/13/1915, 3/12/1916, 10/1/1916, 11/3/1917, 12/15/1917. Band, 31; Cohen, *Jerusalem of the North*, 47-8.

¹⁹ David Essrig, *Fountain of Wisdom*. While Essrig wrote this book after he left Shaarey Tphiloh, newspaper articles of the period indicate that he addressed his congregation in English while in Portland. See *Portland Press Herald*, 5/3/1926.

²⁰ *Evening Express*, 5/3/1926 p. 22 and p. 22; Band, 40; *Los Angeles Times*, October 31, 1927, p. A18.

²¹ It is not clear where Rabbi Miller was trained, although he was likely from a European Seminary.

²² Sarna, *American Judaism*, 232.

²³ According to his later writings, Lewittes believed that that Orthodoxy should reexamine its interpretation of Halakhah. He suggested that "On the one hand, we accept the *Halakhah* as a given *datum*... On the other hand, we must always search for the inner meaning, the spirit of the Law so that it will inspire us to the ultimate purpose of the Law-giver; namely, to acquire his ethical attributes." See Lewittes, *The Light of Redemption*, p. 73.

²⁴ Jewish Community Center *Center Bulletin*, 9 November 1945. (Private Collection, Jewish Community Center of Southern Maine). See Sarna, *American Judaism*, 234. Edward Sacknoff, whose father Morris was a longtime president of Shaarey Tphiloh, claimed that the younger generation banded together to bring Lewittes to Portland and that his late Friday night services featured mixed seating. While everyone in the congregation did not support these services, their popularity indicated that a significant portion of the congregation began to view such a service as congruent with their identities as both Orthodox Jews and modern Americans. Interview by author, 29 February 2000.

²⁵ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 231-3.

²⁶ Jewish Community Center *Center Bulletin*, 9 November 1945. (Private Collection, Jewish Community Center of Southern Maine).

²⁷ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 282-283.

²⁸ Band, 83; An Educational Report in 1948 found that 52% of the child population of Portland Jewry resided in Woodfords. See Alexander S. Kohanski, *Survey of Jewish Education Portland, Maine*, (Jewish Federation of Portland, 1948), 1.

²⁹ Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement*, (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1955), 256. See also Jack Wertheimer, "The Conservative Synagogue," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1987), 124-126. Sarna, *American Judaism*, 285.

³⁰ See *Portland Press Herald* April 23, 1971? P. 1, back page; *Maine Sunday Telegram*, Feb 9, 1958, p. 6b

³¹ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes 8/8/1950, 1/23/1952.

³² Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 9/10/1947.

³³ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 8/17/1948, 8/8/1950.

³⁴ Shaarey Tphiloh Newsletter March 1965, p. 2.

³⁵ The phrase "progressive leadership" was used by Harold Wolf, see Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 5/19/1966.

³⁶ For more on the use of mixed seating during the interwar years, see Jenna Joselit, *New York's Jewish Jews*, Saul Bernstein, *The Orthodox Union Story*, 162; "Victory for Synagogue Sanctity," *Jewish Life* 26, no. 5 (1959): 3-5; and Michael Kaufman, "The Orthodox Renaissance: Crisis and Challenge," *Jewish Life* 34, no. 1 (1966), 10.

³⁷ See Jonathan Sarna, "The Debate Over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue"; *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 379. Rabbi Steven Dworken, who served at Shaarey Tphiloh from 1971-1977, later bristled at the notion that his women still sat "up there." He replied, "My women don't sit up there. They sit side-by-side." See Steven Dworken, "Portraits of the Past: The Jews of Portland: The Jewish Bicentennial Oral History Program," interview by Konnilyn Feig, 1976-77. 26.

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- ³⁸ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 6/18/1959, 7/16/1959, 9/17/1959.
- ³⁹ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 11/16/1966, 7/19/1967.
- ⁴⁰ Dorothy Goodman, "Portraits of the Past: The Jews of Portland: The Jewish Bicentennial Oral History Program," interview by Konnilyn Feig, 1976-77, 37.
- ⁴¹ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 9/16/1965.
- ⁴² Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 7/19/1962, and 7/19/1969.
- ⁴³ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 5/20/1969.
- ⁴⁴ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes 7/17/1969.
- ⁴⁵ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 11/16/1966. It is likely that these services were in addition to an earlier Friday service.
- ⁴⁶ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 4/24/1966.
- ⁴⁷ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 2/21/1963; 11/21/1963, 2/20/1964.
- ⁴⁸ Not everything in the congregation changed. For example, the synagogue continued the practice of selling Aliyahs [honor of being called up to the Torah], though many modern Orthodox congregations were removing this practice because they believed that it violated proper decorum, The congregation confirmed that these honors would continue to be sold in 1957. See Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 6/20/1957. However, it was also decided that if the congregation purchased new mantels for the Torah, they would not carry donor names. For more information on this decision, see Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 4/24/1966.
- ⁴⁹ Shaarey Tphiloh Newsletter, March 1965.
- ⁵⁰ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 9/24/1969. The Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America decided in 1948 that microphones could be used during the Sabbath, and that use in worship did not violate Jewish law. However, it reversed its decision in 1954. See Sarna, *American Judaism*, 291.
- ⁵¹ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 6/23/60.
- ⁵² Shaarey Tphiloh Newsletter, April, 1963.
- ⁵³ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 12/17/1969.
- ⁵⁴ See "Portraits of the Past: The Jews of Portland: The Jewish Bicentennial Oral History Program," interview by Konnilyn Feig, 1976-77.
- ⁵⁵ Morris Cox, "Portraits of the Past: The Jews of Portland: The Jewish Bicentennial Oral History Program," interview by Konnilyn Feig, 1976-77, 25.
- ⁵⁶ Shaarey Tphiloh Board of Directors' Minutes, 11/21/63
- ⁵⁷ Congregational Record (Newsletter), May 1974, February, 1976. (Shaarey Tphiloh Private Collection).
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., September, 1973, p. 2-3.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., October, 1975.
- ⁶⁰ Steven Dworken, "Portraits of the Past: The Jews of Portland: The Jewish Bicentennial Oral History Program," interview by Konnilyn Feig, 1976-77, p. 15.
- ⁶¹ Congregational Record (Newsletter), May, 1976.
- ⁶² Steven Dworken "Portraits of the Past: The Jews of Portland: The Jewish Bicentennial Oral History Program," interview by Konnilyn Feig, 1976-77, p. 18.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 15, 28.
- ⁶⁴ New York Times, January 16, 2003, Thursday, Late Edition – Final SECTION: Section B; Page 10; Column 1; Rabbi Bekritsky passed away in 2002. See Portland Press Herald, January 3, 2002 page 9B.
- ⁶⁵ Full-time rabbis since Dworken include Asher Reichert, Marc Nenner, Lawrence Zierler, Marc Mandel, Isaac Yagod, Simcha Green, and Akiva Herzfeld.