

The Rise And Decline Of A Toronto Synagogue: Congregation Beth Am

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Résumé

Dans cet article on étudie l'épanouissement de la communauté juive située dans le "Bathurst Corridor" de Toronto, les problèmes rencontrés à cause de l'établissement de l'école et enfin l'affaiblissement de la congrégation.

En 1954 plusieurs familles juives qui désiraient la vie paisible de la banlieu formèrent la Congrégation Beth Am. Ces familles venaient de plusieurs couches sociales et d'origines différentes. Les représentants de Beth Am tentèrent de s'associer au groupe de Beth David mais une divergence d'opinion empêcha cette fusion. Au printemps 1954 ils créèrent ainsi le West Wilson Community Centre et, ayant acheté la propriété Ness située sur Keele Street, ils purent avoir leur propre synagogue qui au début n'était qu'une énorme tente.

En 1955 la congrégation comptait 77 membres payant et au printemps de l'année suivante elle avait atteint les 200. Le temps était venu d'essayer d'avoir un rabbin. Plusieurs rabbins se succédèrent entre 1955 et 1958 lorsque Shamai Kanter accepta de devenir le rabbin de Beth Am. Les intérêts du rabbin se centrèrent surtout sur le domaine de l'éducation et à ce but il donna naissance à la bibliothèque d'abord et à l'école après. Les inscriptions de l'école montèrent de 169 en 1956 à 200 en 1959 et à 270 en automne 1960. Cependant plusieurs familles avaient pris l'habitude d'envoyer leurs enfants à l'école sans faire partie de la congrégation, ce qui créa une division très nette parmi les membres. En 1960 420 élèves étaient inscrits à l'école et en 1967 la congrégation comptait 322 membres. Pourtant une année plus tard le nombre commença à diminuer ce qui apporta aussi une réduction dans le nombre des inscriptions pour l'école.

Harvey Meirtovich étudie les différentes couches sociales qu'on retrouve à Beth Am et il arrive à la conclusion qu'à présent la congréga-

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tion est encore solide, quoi que l'école soit moins fréquentée. Il fait remarquer que les membres de la congrégation veulent rester fidèles à leur religion et à leurs valeurs, mais il ne cache pas une certaine préoccupation pour le futur car plusieurs familles d'origine italienne et autre se sont installées dans cette partie de la ville. L'article se conclut ainsi en soulignant le rôle considérable que Beth Am a joué dans l'épanouissement de cette communauté juive.

De la part de l'éditeur: Nous venons d'apprendre que Beth Am va bientôt fermer ses portes et que cette congrégation va s'unir à celle de B'nai Israel-Beth David.

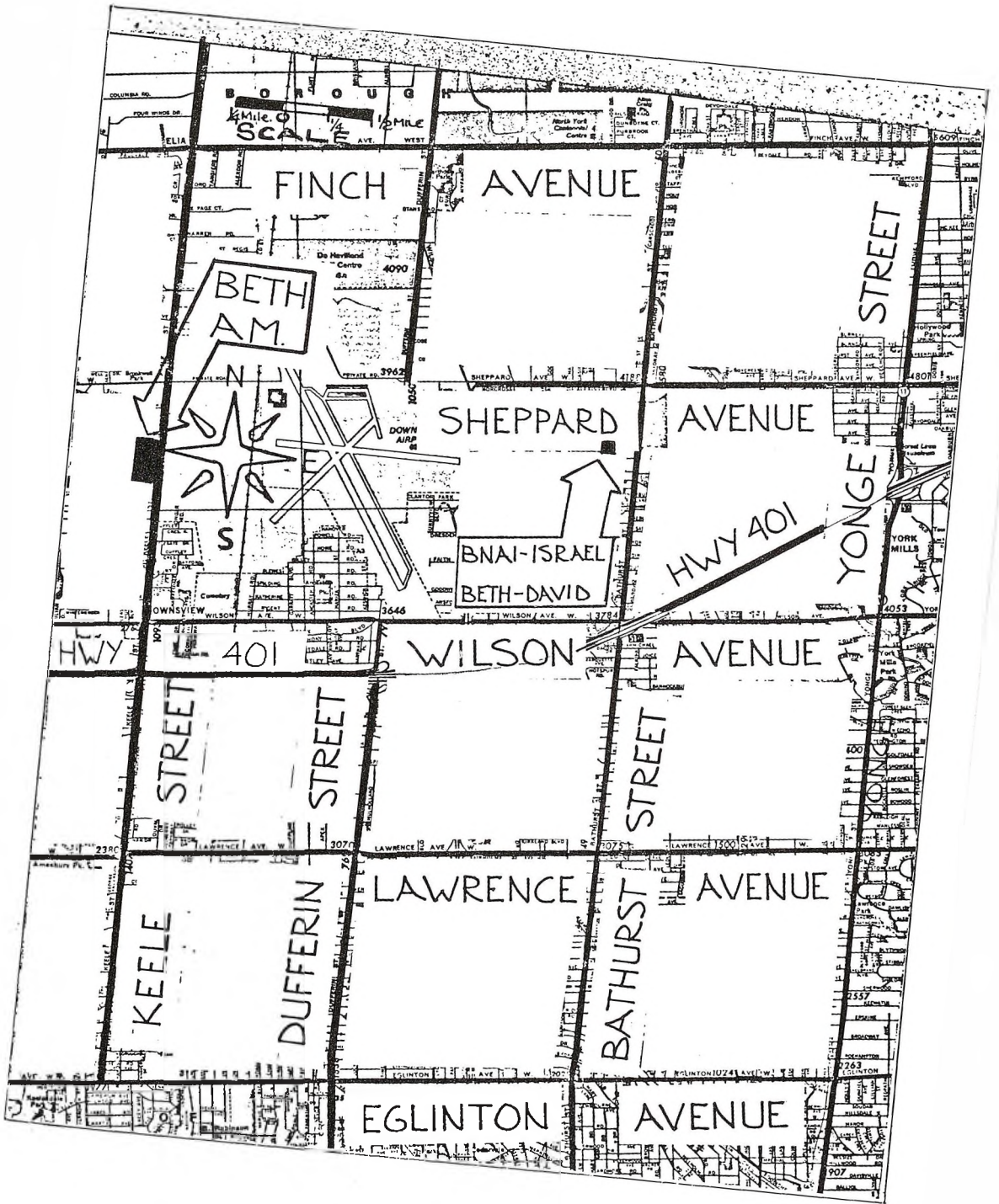
HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION

This study discusses the peripherally located Jewish community which evolved in the north and northwest pocket of North York Township, Toronto whose ethnic-religious centre is Congregation Beth Am.¹ Although the Jews in this corner of the township number some 3,000 persons, or roughly 6.5% of the general population, only scant attention has been paid to the rise of a Toronto Jewish community which lies outside what we shall term the *Bathurst Corridor*² (See map).

To be sure, Evelyn Kallen has conducted in-depth research analysis on Jews residing in the Bathurst corridor.³ In the 1971 census the Jews there numbered 30.5% (i.e. 64,000 people) of the total population (of 185,000) in the area. Kallen confined her research to those Jews who affiliated with three Toronto synagogues, each representing either an Orthodox, Conservative or Reform constituency. Utilizing a stratified (non-random) sampling technique Kallen drew conclusions about the ethnic-religious patterns of the Toronto Jewish community at large.

It is our contention that her descriptive statistical research, to the extent that it can be extrapolated to the larger Toronto scene, reflects the ethnic-religious life styles of those Jews who dwell within the Bathurst corridor and not the Jews who opted for residence in the geographic area which came under the influence of Beth Am. Our study, like that of Dr. Kallen's, focuses only on those Jews who are affiliated members of the synagogue.⁴ We begin with a history of the congregation, drawing primarily on archival data from the years 1954-1965, which reflect the congregation's period of gradual increase and consolidation in membership.

The men and women who came together to form Congregation Beth Am in the fall of 1954 were yearning for the novel setting of life in subur-



bia.⁵ They had been preceded by middle income Jewish families of various ethnic backgrounds who had left the inner city and had established residences in the Bathurst corridor. As Jacob Spelt has noted, persons in lower income brackets desiring to flee from the inner city tended to concentrate themselves in the northwest pocket of North York Township.⁶

Indications are that the early members of the Beth Am community subscribed to this demographic axiom. For example, preliminary discussion of a possible merger with the recently established Beth David Synagogue, located in the Bathurst corridor vicinity, were initiated shortly after the congregation's founding. These discussions were fruitless. Aside from the peripheral geographical location of Beth Am, which did not appeal to the Beth David representatives, it soon became evident that, by and large, the socio-economic level of the Beth Am membership was below that of Beth David's.⁷ Hence, the failure to effect a merger between the two congregations at this early date bears out the accuracy of A. H. Richmond's research: residential segregation exists not only by ethnic groups but by social class.⁸

The inception of the congregation can be traced back to the early spring of 1954, when about one hundred people met in Downsview Public School and formed the West Wilson Community Centre.⁹ As the organization's name indicated, the individuals who had assembled were interested, chiefly, in forming a social and educational institution. The group leaders, however, were determined that the final goal would include the establishment of a permanent religious center. Formal steps in this direction were taken in the late fall of 1955 with the purchase of the Ness Estate on Keele Street from Mr. Percy Wright for the sum of \$45,000.¹⁰ The estate was over 100 years old. At one time it had served as a horse breeding farm and country home for the Ness family, which had emigrated from Britain to Canada about 200 years before. Wright had purchased the land for development purposes. In the interim period before its acquisition by Beth Am, the estate was reputedly the scene of a gambling and prostitution operation. High Holy Day services were first held in 1955. The four hundred congregants who assembled inside a circus tent measuring some 4,000 square feet listened to the preaching of Sam Birenbaum, then a medical student. Dr. Birenbaum recalls that in one of his sermons he spoke of the tent of meeting of the children of Israel and compared it to the experience of the Beth Am congregants who were dwelling in their own temporary sanctuary. A later rabbi remembers that when he conducted services in the tent he was forced to depart "for home for the ex-

press purpose of putting on a set of long underwear".¹¹

The synagogue's first Torah was presented to the congregation by Mr. Hans Fried, a successful Toronto restaurateur. The money for the Torah was donated by a Christian, Mr. Thomas (Tex) Mitchell, who had served as a mercenary pilot for the Israeli government between 1952-1954 and had become a zealous supporter of Zionism and Judaism.¹²

By June 1955, the congregation's roster totalled 77 paid up members. By early spring of the following year, membership had grown to 200 families. Although the leadership of the congregation had discussed the advisability of hiring a rabbi, financial considerations postponed any serious talk of the matter until the winter of 1955. Until this time, Rabbi David Monson of Beth Sholom Congregation acted as an effective religious advisor. In open advertisements placed in Canadian and American newspapers the congregation invited candidates to apply for the position of rabbi. Several candidates replied, most of whom had received training in Orthodox yeshivot (rabbinical seminaries). Intent on employing a rabbi with a "Conservative bent", the pulpit committee weeded out one applicant, in particular, who explicitly mentioned a talent for preaching in Yiddish. Significantly, the congregation honed in on two rabbis who were serving Canadian synagogues. In June of 1956 Beth Am hired its first spiritual leader, Jacob Shtull, a 1953 graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and a Canadian by birth. Shortly after he assumed the post of rabbi the congregation became a charter member of the United Synagogue of America, the lay branch of the Conservative movement.¹³

Rabbi Shtull's tenure was brief. Within the year he had handed in his resignation. At a meeting of the Board of Governors he made a point of speaking about what he regarded as the proper relationship which should exist between a rabbi and a congregational board. Reminiscing about those early years Rabbi Shtull has written:

The group of leaders at that time were newcomers to synagogue administration . . . I cannot recall ever developing a close relationship with the officers. We were all young and inexperienced. The Rabbi's role was not fully understood by the leaders.¹⁴

Another rabbi who served the congregation a few years later expressed similar sentiments:

I found the members, as a whole, to be very nice and cooperative. But the leadership was "European" and poor. Everyone, because he could "*daven*", wanted to be the Rabbi. They still have the old no-

tion of a rabbi as seen in "Fiddler on the Roof". They want to relegate the Rabbi to a secondary position while at the same time pointing to the prominence of the Beth Tzedek Rabbi.¹⁵

It would appear that during these formative years, Beth Am's rabbis exercised a restricted role in their dealings with the board. This was so because the board largely perceived its relationship with the rabbi as that which existed between an employer and an employee. Any efforts by the rabbi to involve himself in the "affairs" of the congregation, particularly as they might have related to finances, were shunned.

Over the years the congregation has gone through a gradual metamorphosis; some might call it a maturing process. Today, the rabbi, although a guest, may sit in on all discussions of congregational affairs. There is a consensus among the leaders of the congregation that he can play a role in the affairs of the congregation outside the realm of the strictly spiritual.¹⁶

With the departure of Jacob Shtull, Reuben Slonim of Toronto consented to act as a consultant rabbi to the synagogue. Lacking a full-time rabbi, Beth Am engaged Nathan Lieberman, a native of Warsaw, who had immigrated to Canada in 1948, to officiate as a cantor and teacher in the Hebrew school. He served as the congregation's cantor until 1973, when he left to assume the post of rabbi in Oakville, Ontario and today serves as rabbi in Niagara Falls, Ontario. In September of 1958 Rabbi Shamai Kanter, another Seminary graduate, became the spiritual head of the synagogue.¹⁷

EDUCATION

Rabbi Kanter brought to his duties an avid interest in Jewish scholarship and a wish to cultivate Jewish learning among the congregants. One of his first acts was to urge the creation of a library. Financial problems necessitated postponing the implementation of this suggestion for several months. During the 1958-59 season, he introduced an institute of adult studies.

These classes, on the whole, were not well attended. He was more successful, however, in attracting a select number of youth. Working in close cooperation with the rabbis of two other synagogues, Beth David and Adath Israel, Rabbi Kanter was instrumental in the formation of a regional high school which met twice weekly at Adath Israel and once a week at the home synagogue. He enjoyed meeting with his class because, in his words, it provided him with an outlet "to be *rebbe* as well as rab-

bi”.¹⁸

Rabbi Kanter’s presence was certainly felt within the larger Christian community. When a missionary movement began to coalesce in the city, Kanter issued a statement, certain to arouse controversy in some circles, denouncing the newly established Christian group. He took care to copyright his remarks and insisted that anyone wishing to reprint his editorial had to receive his permission. On another occasion he applied to the Canadian educational system the American canon of separation of church and state. He called upon Canadian “Protestants to assume the burden of developing their own system of religious education” and thereby divorce religious teaching from the public schools which were supported with public taxes.¹⁹

The people who joined Beth Am wanted to identify with and solidify their commitment to a retention of Jewish values. Although they had rejected what they viewed as a rigid orthodoxy, they were, nonetheless, intent upon transmitting a sense of “Jewish identity” and tradition to their children. Concern was voiced early over the quality of their children’s Jewish education. The Beth Am Hebrew School began to operate officially in September 1955, with an enrollment of 40 children. The first principal was Mrs. Shoshana Kurtz. She was followed by Mr. Sholom Goodman in 1959 who held the post for two years. Aside from developing a satisfactory afternoon curriculum, the educational staff had to be on guard and take necessary precautions against the threat of fire to the wooden frame structure which housed the school.²⁰

School enrollment climbed steadily to 169 in 1956, 200 by 1959 and 270 in the fall of 1960. However, the school was plagued by parents who, living within the school district, benefited by sending their children to the Hebrew school, but refused to affiliate as members. One survey conducted by the synagogue revealed that as many as 50 parents (amounting to almost 29% of the total school population) fit into this category. Several years later the school roster registered non-members’ children at 40%.²¹ Another chronic problem was the poor public transportation system. Until the situation improved in the early 1960s, the Hebrew school’s peripheral location, off the main routes of the bus line, made it necessary for students and teachers to use taxis.²¹

The school functioned on a three days a week schedule, offering each child six hours of instruction. An effort by the principal in 1958 urging the adoption of a five day school week met with little support, although he pointed out that more intensive curriculum would likely attract highly

qualified teachers. Eventually, an honours programme was instituted. By 1958 the burgeoning school enrollment made it necessary to introduce evening class hours. Between 1957 and 1961, classroom facilities at a local public school nearby were used, rent free, for kindergarten children.²³

The effort to attract girls into the Hebrew school constantly challenged the early educational administrators. Many parents, as second generation Canadian Jews, harbored the notion, prevalent among their peers, that boys alone needed to receive a Jewish education, and then only to enable them to qualify for their *Bar Mitzvah*. Four years after its doors opened, a consultant for the Bureau of Jewish Education in Toronto noted that less than 20% of the school's population were girls. Two years later Rabbi Kanter could not point to any improvement in the situation.

A step to provide an attractive package for young girls and their parents had been initiated in 1957 when the synagogue permitted girls to become *B'not Mitzvah* during services which were to be held on Saturday morning.²⁴ A year later it was decided that girls would be called to the Torah in the same manner as boys. The school eventually witnessed four of its students attending institutions of higher Jewish learning. Another student was the recipient of a prize in a national Bible contest (English division).²⁵

Towards the close of 1962 an issue took shape which had all the potential of dividing the congregational membership. As already mentioned, a large percentage of parents, while categorically refusing to join the membership rosters of the synagogue, were quite prepared to pay a slightly higher tuition payment in order to be able to send their children to the Hebrew school. When some of these parents' children became active members in USY, the congregation's youth committee met to ponder the situation. Faced with what some members viewed as sheer exploitation by parents who obstinately refused to join the synagogue, the committee enacted a ruling prohibiting non-members' children from holding executive office and from participating in regional and national conclaves as representatives of Beth Am. Within two weeks the youth commission itself revoked this decision. The matter, however, was reintroduced the following month to the congregation's executive board. Its members recommended that membership in the youth group be open only to members' children and that non-members' children be granted associate member status. When the congregational board met, the executive's resolution was modified further and given an even more conservative tone: as of the 1963-64 season, USY membership would be restricted to members' children.

Throughout the spring, the youth commission continued to evaluate the board decision. Finally, in mid June, an emergency congregational board meeting was convened to reconsider the issue. In a vote which included a large number of abstentions the board voted to revoke the decision it had arrived at a few months earlier.²⁶

BUILDING CAMPAIGN

The quantity of archival data which is devoted to Jewish education and youth programming indicates the high priority these items received in the minds of most congregants. The other item which consumed members' time and energies centered on the synagogue's building campaign and the finances which were related to it.

One of the earliest synagogue records made mention of donation boxes which were set up at general meetings enabling interested members to make small contributions, aside from their dues. Such monies were, undoubtedly, channeled into repair work and renovation of the synagogue house as well as installing needed burglar and fire proofing. When the idea was seriously broached to construct a new building to adjoin the synagogue house, some members expressed the opinion that the congregation should rather rest content with an extensive renovation project. But, within three years of Beth Am's formation, ground breaking ceremonies were held for the synagogue's first new building, a social hall *cum* temporary sanctuary. However, efforts to collect pledges ran afoul. In spite of an earlier temporary loan given to the congregation by a leading Toronto businessman, construction was halted for a time. Eventually construction was renewed, and by the High Holiday season of 1958 the social hall-sanctuary was ready for assemblage.²⁷

Within three years estimates were quoted for a proposed permanent school edifice and sanctuary. Construction of these buildings, however, did not actually begin until March of 1964. By September of the same year the school building was operational and members could worship in their newly constructed sanctuary.²⁸

The installation of permanent pews in 1966 coincided, ironically with a visible fall in membership which happened without warning. Family affiliation actually increased gradually between 1962 (232 members) and 1967 (322 members). Moreover, Hebrew school registration had hit a peak of 420 pupils in 1966. Yet the following year the congregation's board recorded its anxiety for the first time that sixteen families had recently left the area. One year later the board noted that a loss of eigh-

teen families had been sustained and that the school population had dropped to 351 pupils.²⁹ Membership continued to decline until the early 1970's. In 1975, membership had stabilized at approximately 260 families, but school enrollment had dropped to a twenty year low of approximately 100 students.

The precipitous decline in pupil enrollment and the more gradual drop in member affiliates can be attributed to the volatile socio-economic composition of Beth Am's membership, and their slow migration to other regions of settlement. We shall have occasion to make reference to these phenomena in our sociological analysis of Beth Am's members.*

SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF CONGREGATION BETH AM

Socio-Economic Status

As we have mentioned above, Beth Am's early members consisted of Jews who were striving to attain middle class status. The returns on our mailed survey questionnaire³⁰ strongly suggest that Beth Am affiliates, today, have, by and large, achieved a modicum of social and economic success. In fact, they compare quite favourably with many of their brethren who reside in the Bathurst corridor region. Kallen's research showed that the model class for income was between \$10-20,000. This figure compared with 59% of Beth Am respondents who earned between \$10-25,000 annually.³¹ However, our statistics showed that under one quarter of our sample (including males and females) were employed as professionals. Over one quarter were gainfully occupied in sales and management while slightly more than 13% were engaged as merchants.³² Educationally, a sizeable majority (62.1%) of respondents completed or received only some high school education. Under 30% have undertaken some aspect of university study.

Yet, they have entered the ranks of the middle class. Although aggressive drive and ambition are indispensable requisites for economic success, we suggest that our respondents have achieved a certain amount of economic security, mainly because they have adhered to an hypothesis posited by Merrijoy Kelner. Since World War II, Anglo-Saxon domination in Canada, albeit secure, is gradually undergoing a democratization process. While positions of prominence continue to be dominated by Anglo-Saxons "working within the bureaucratic structure", non Anglo-Saxons have penetrated previously closed economic sectors. Their ascent into elite circles, however, lies outside the corporate bureaucratic

*The research questionnaire is available at the Canadian Jewish Congress Central Region Archives.

framework, in high risk, innovative or technically specialized fields such as entertainment, construction, retailing and research.³³ While not necessarily having attained positions of social and economic prominence, over 40% of our sample have entered this type of field. They are at work primarily in the fields of crafts, retailing, financing and professions requiring technical expertise.

Over three quarters are native born and almost two-thirds are native Torontonians. In comparison with their parents, most of whom immigrated to Canada either between 1901-1913 or between 1919-1939, our respondents have indeed gained a notable level of economic stability. Today the number who work as craftsmen (4%) is small when compared to their parents' generation (35.7%). But unlike their parents the personalized skills of the second generation are highly sought after in a society which still appreciates the talented hands of a craftsman. Most of the parents of Beth Am members surveyed (42.9%) chose to enter the business world. Their establishments generally operated on a small scale enabling them to earn livelihoods. Their children, however, have often been able to enlarge their parents' operations or expand their occupational interests into sectors which were previously largely closed. They have also entered professional ranks at a far greater rate than had their parents.

Our study tends to show that, in spite of the Canadian establishment's refusal to stress social mobility as a positive virtue,³⁴ our respondents have acquired that trait, probably through a chain of transmission emanating from their parents and their Jewish heritage. Moreover, the democratization process which Kelner sees manifesting itself at upper executive levels appears to have filtered down, making it possible for ambitious working class people to acquire greater degree of power, prestige and status, and thereby become respectable members of the middle class. Indeed, a sizeable majority of our respondents perceived themselves as middle class.

Relocation

In reply to the question of whether they were seriously considering the possibility of moving from their present quarters over the next few years, our survey revealed that significant numbers from all age brackets expressed the desire to remain in their present home. Seventy-five per cent (or 113 out of 150) of those 45 years of age or over and sixty-five per cent (or 69 out of 106) of those between the ages of 20-44 indicated a preference to remain in their present domiciles.

The younger age groups' reluctance to move may be attributed to the

high cost of property and housing in other sections of the city, particularly in the Bathurst corridor and east of the Don River. At present, slightly over one half of our sample reside within three miles of the synagogue. An almost equal number live from four to more than seven miles from the congregation. When broken down by age, we see that of those beyond the age of 45, over 35% dwell within three miles of the congregation, while almost 22% live beyond a radius of four miles. Our figures for the younger age set show that slightly more of them (23.9%) reside at least four miles from the synagogue than live inside of that radius (17.2%).

Hence, our data indicates that in spite of a declining school population, Beth Am retains a solid measure of stability because its membership roll comprises a viable mix of young and middle age couples who live within relatively easy walking/riding distance of the synagogue. But, should the younger aged affiliates decide in the future to relocate, presumably out of the area under discussion, then it seems likely that Beth Am would experience a precipitous decline in membership and status. As the situation now stands the congregation faces the prospect of a further loss in membership. As Jews continue to relocate to the area of third settlement, in the northeastern section of the township, the new ethnic-religious institutions which will spring up will ultimately claim the allegiance of those who are presently tied to Beth Am.³⁵

Religious Attitudes

Those Jews who constitute Beth Am's membership have a very definite sense of their ethnic identity³⁶ — they feel themselves to be ethnically Jewish. Only small factions view themselves primarily as Canadians, Canadian Jews or Jewish Canadians. Their participation in the affairs of the synagogue and their lesser involvement in Jewish organizational life outside the bounds of the synagogue bears testimony that their identity is fostered, largely, through identification with a religious institution. Hence, our data confirms the conclusions reached by the authors of the *Riverton Study*: "The Jewish Self image necessitates religious affiliation as the identifying characteristic."³⁷

Whereas Kallen's respondents could choose their synagogue affiliation, Beth Am's congregants were compelled, largely, to join the one religious institution which existed in the area. Indeed, a majority (40.6%) cited Beth Am's propinquity to their homes as the primary reason they joined. Once having become members, however, almost one quarter of them (24.6%) cited the congregation's Conservative orientation as a decisive factor

which influenced their membership. An almost equal number (22.7%) pointed to a wish to have their children receive a Hebrew school education.³⁸

Religious Observance

A majority of respondents classified their parents' religious observances as either very strictly observant, or moderately observant. A greater percentage of mothers than fathers were ranked as observant, while more fathers than mothers were described as moderately observant. A combined tally reveals that over one half of the parents were viewed by their children as observant to moderate in religious practice while only one fifth regarded their parents as strictly observant. These figures correspond favorably with similar data gathered on parents in the *Riverton Study*.

When describing their own patterns of religious observance, our data showed that Beth Am members have retained a similar level of observance as their Conservative counterparts in Kallen's study. A most striking observation was that the principles of Kashrut were adhered to, at least in their homes, by sizeable numbers of congregants in both samples. Middle aged and older congregants tend to predominate as regular Sabbath service worshippers. But, on the whole, we noticed that the observance pattern of Beth Am congregants was fairly equally distributed according to age. We observed that younger members (representing 41.4% of our respondents between the ages of 20-44) displayed the same overall propensity to retain and/or discard rituals as did older members (representing 58.6% of our respondents 45 years of age and over).

Women's Role

In light of the current discussion as to the role of women in congregational life, our survey polled the attitudes of respondents on a number of key issues. When asked whether they favoured more participation by women in the conduct of services, including reading from the Torah, we observed that at least two thirds of the male and female respondents answered in the affirmative. But when questioned whether women should be permitted to become rabbis, affirmative responses declined markedly to just over one half by women and less than one half for men. Not surprisingly, younger aged members of Beth Am expressed a much greater willingness than their older peers to entertain a change on both issues.

Although a majority of Beth Am women polled indicated a proclivity for more active participation by women in all phases of congregational life, it is equally evident that, thus far, they have made no conscious effort

to translate their feelings into practice. Hence, they constitute a silent majority prepared to abide by the status quo.³⁹ A national survey conducted under the auspices of the National Women's League (Conservative) noted similarly that the overwhelming majority of Conservative women appeared to be "unmoved by the Resolution of the Committee on Law and Standards, regarding a more active role for women in the rituals of the synagogue. . . ."⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

Social scientists who have analysed second generation American Jewish communities, most notably W. Herberg and M. Sklare, have concluded that there is a definite tendency by them to discard much of their cultural-religious accoutrements. Their progeny, in turn, reacquire much of the cultural-religious baggage their parents have cast aside. The statistical data gathered in our local study of a Canadian congregation runs counter to the above sociological principle which has gained a high degree of acceptance in Jewish intellectual circles. Rather, the second *and* third generation Jews we have focused upon value highly their ethnic identity. It manifests itself, primarily, in an adherence to eclectic forms of ritual behavior and a commitment to the perpetuation of religious institutions.

Our demographic study has sought to demonstrate that Jewish families will continue to gradually drift away from the northwest corner of North York Township. Other ethnic groups will replace them; Italians have already established residences in the area in large numbers. The long range future of Beth Am is tenuous. What remains certain, however, is that Beth Am's physical presence provided a needed setting around which suburban Jews who were committed to the retention and transmission of Jewish values could congregate. There seems little doubt that Beth Am's existence enriched the lives of those Jews who came into contact with it and who desired to see Judaism perpetuated.

FOOTNOTES

1. As this paper goes to press, Beth Am is about to close its doors and merge with Congregation B'nai Israel-Beth David. Already in 1975 the forces of disintegration were apparent. In fact, the question of Beth Am's stability was one of the factors which prompted me to undertake this study.
2. "Bathurst Corridor" is defined here as that concentrated belt north of Bloor Street which passes through Forest Hill and continues in a northerly direction towards the northeast corner of North York. There is an inner suburb which corresponds roughly to the Forest Hill area. Jews dwelling there were generally of an upper socio-economic status: J. Spelt, *Toronto: With a Chapter on the Economic Structure of Toronto* (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan, 1973) p.103; A. H. Richmond, *Ethnic Residential Segregation of Metropolitan Toronto*, p.41 (cited later). No attempt has been made yet

to research the third area of Jewish settlement in the northeast corner of North York across the Don River. This burgeoning community, which presently numbers over 12,500 Jews, appears to be becoming a focus of a new middle and upper middle income Jewish social class. Census of Canada, June 1971 and reproduced in a memorandum of the Canadian Jewish Congress (Central Region), April 19, 1974.

3. E. Kallen, *Three Toronto Synagogues; A Comparative Study of Religious Systems in Transition*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto, (1969).
4. A study of a different sort might wish to consider random surveys of *all* Jewish residents including non-affiliates in the area with which we are concerned.
5. Information on the early history of the congregation was gathered from synagogue archives; manuscript pamphlet on the history of the congregation compiled by Mrs. Rosalyne Federman; interview with Dr. Samuel Birenbaum, the congregation's first pro-tem president, on October 20, 1974.
6. Spelt, *loc.cit.* :
7. Interview with Dr. Sam Birenbaum; the membership list for the year 1957 showed the following partial (179 out of 219) occupational distributions: Craftsmen — 19; Trade — 32; Business/Management — 57; Professionals — 34; Sales — 28; Clerical — 4; Labourers—6. The serious financial burden carried by the synagogue during these formative years is evidenced further by the bank's refusal to grant the congregation a mortgage so that it could build more adequate facilities to suit its needs: *Executive Minutes*, October 1, 1957 (hereafter referred to as *X Minutes*); at one point one of the congregation's creditors was about to initiate a court claim against the synagogue for an outstanding balance of just over \$1000: *Congregational Correspondence*, 1957; another instance of the congregation's economic plight is illustrated by the need for the congregation to sell the rabbi's home: *X Minutes*, July 9, 1957.
8. A. H. Richmond, *Ethnic Residential Segregation in Metropolitan Toronto* (Toronto: York University Institute for Behavioral Research, Ethnic Research Programme, 1972) p.12, 56.
9. Jewish names were compiled from lists in the possession of the local rate payer's association and voter registration lists. A door to door canvas then narrowed the actual number of Jews in the vicinity: Interview with Dr. Sam Birenbaum; interestingly, a few years later the local United Church minister requested a membership list from Beth Am so that in his efforts to canvas the Christian community he could bypass the Jewish homes: *Congregational Correspondence*, 1959.
10. This was slightly below the market value for the two storey farm house and adjacent two acres of property. The owner was prepared to sell because he was in financial straits: Open congregation letter, November 23, 1955; interview with Dr. Sam Birenbaum; congregation's Annual Report for Year ended June 30, 1963.
11. *X Minutes*, July 21, 1955; interview with Dr. Sam Birenbaum; letter to the author from Jacob Shtull, November 25, 1974.
12. Interview with Dr. Birenbaum; Federman manuscript.
13. *X Minutes*, June 23, 1955, November 23, 1955, January 17, 1956, May 28, 1956; synagogue letter, January 4, 1956; interview with Dr. Birenbaum; undated report (late spring 1956?; letter by Rabbi Shtull to Max Shechter, November 29, 1956; letter to author from Jacob Shtull, November 25, 1974.
14. Letter from Jacob Shtull, *loc.cit.*
15. Letter to author from Albert L. Raab, February 11, 1975. When evaluating the rabbi's remarks, it should be noted that he was the only rabbi to be dismissed from his post with the congregation.
16. Interview with Mr. Peter Shour, a past president of the congregation, June 8, 1975; the synagogue archives show that the second rabbi engaged by the congregation attended executive and board meetings as a guest; the present rabbi of the congregation has exer-

cised his prerogative not to vote at any meetings of the Board of Governors. Other Toronto congregations, such as *Beth Sinai* and *Temple Ari*, expressly forbid their rabbis' from voting at board meetings. Beth Sinai and Temple Ari are fictitious names for Adath Israel and Temple Sinai congregations. They were used by Dr. E. Kallen in her study: *T.T.S.*, pp. 58, 89, 166.

17. *X Minutes*, December 24, 1956; *Board of Governors Minutes*, January 14, 1957; (hereafter referred to as *Board Minutes*); *X Minutes*, August 19, 1957; Rabbi's Correspondence, 1958; *Who's Who in Canadian Jewry* (Montreal, 1965), p.141.
18. Adult Education Correspondence, 1959; *X Minutes*, October 14, 1960; Rabbi's Correspondence, March 20, 1962; *Board Minutes*, October 27, 1958; *X Minutes*, January 12, 1959.
19. Beth Am Bulletin, April, 1962 (hereafter referred to as *Bulletin*). *Ibid.*, March, 1962. In light of Rabbi Kanter's feeling, it is certainly ironic that today the educational leaders in the Toronto Jewish community are urging the adoption of a plan whereby Jewish day schools will be subsidized with provincial money.
20. Interview with Dr. Birenbaum; Federman manuscript; *Education Committee Minutes*, October 11, 1965; *General Meeting Minutes*, May 15, 1961; *Board Minutes*, November 26, 1956; *X Minutes*, July 9, 1957.
21. Federman manuscript; *Education Committee Minutes*, October 29, 1958; Synagogue Correspondence, February 21, 1957, September 30, 1957; *General Meeting minutes*, May 15, 1961; *Bulletin*, November, 1959, September 17, 1962; *X Minutes*, November 11, 1963. Kallen's data shows that Beth Am was not alone in its struggles to attract affiliates. In 1961 only a few less than 50% of the Jews living in the Hurstwood corridor affiliated with a synagogue, with the greatest number joining Conservative (44%) and Orthodox (38%) congregations. The Reform numbered 18%: Kallen: *T.T.S.* p. 42.
22. Author's personal recollection; *Education Committee Minutes*, September 5, 1957.
23. Synagogue Correspondence, 1957; *Education Committee Minutes*, February 13, 1958, October 29, 1958.
24. *Board Minutes*, November 18, 1957; *Education Committee minutes*, January 2, 1958; *Bulletin*, June 1960; today a Bat Mitzvah is permitted to recite the *Maftir* and *Haftorah* portions and accompanying blessings. Furthermore, on the day of a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* a sister may receive an *aliyah*. This practice arose out of a specific request. Beth Am's practice must be regarded as more liberal than the other Toronto Conservative congregations and the Conservative synagogue in Hamilton, Ontario. For example, Adath Israel Congregation only permits a *Bat Mitzvah* to recite the *Haftorah* and accompanying blessings, but doesn't allow them to have an *aliyah* or recite the *Maftir* portion. Beth Jacob Congregation in Hamilton is equally as conservative by permitting the young girl to recite the *Haftorah* while the father recites the appropriate blessings and receives the *Maftir aliyah*. The only congregation more liberal in this matter than Beth Am is Beth Tzedec which, while following Beth Am's procedure, allows *B'not Mitzvah* (and women) to serve as Torah readers: *Rabbinical Assembly Minutes of the Ontario Region*, March 10, 1975.
25. Three entered rabbinical seminaries, two of whom graduated as Conservative rabbis, while the third pursued studies at Orthodox Yeshivot; the fourth became a cantor, and the fifth, a woman, pursued graduate studies in Jewish History at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.
26. *X Minutes*, December 3, 1962; January 3, 1963; *Board Minutes*, February 18, 1963; June 17, 1963.
27. *X Minutes*, June 30, July 7, July 28, 1955; October 22, 1956; July 9, August 19, October 1, October 30, 1957; Federman manuscript; the cost of the social hall and new kitchen was approximately \$170,000: *Annual Report*, 1963, 1966.
28. *Board Minutes*, May 1, 1961; September 19, 1966; Federman manuscript; the cost of the new sanctuary came to over \$340,000: *Annual Report*, 1966.

29. Membership Lists, 1962; 1963 (260 families); 1966 (around 300 families); it should be pointed out that a synagogue notice (dated September 30, 1962) sent to a newspaper listed synagogue membership at over 350 members. This was confirmed by *Bulletin*, October 1, 1962; *Board Minutes*, November 21, 1966, February 30, September 18, 1967.
30. Our questionnaire was mailed to the entire synagogue population (510 adults). We received a return sample of 256, representing just over 50% of the congregational membership.
31. Of course, we were not able to monitor the economic status of Jews who left the area. However, based on the demographic facts we have established, we abide by the assumption that a move away from the area generally meant an advance in economic terms. The tables supporting the statements and conclusions made in the remaining portion of this article can be found in the Canadian Jewish Congress Central Region Archives.
32. Aside from those who did not respond to the question on occupation, over 30% of the women listed their occupation as housewife.
33. M. Kelner, *The Elite Structure of Toronto; Ethnic Composition and Paths of Recruitment*, unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto, (1969), p.222, 239.
34. J. Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), pp.54, 57.
35. Hence, the decision by Beth Am's leadership to merge with B'nai Israel-Beth David in 1977 was done from a position of relative strength and stability.
36. Ethnicity has been defined as "those who conceive of themselves as being alike by virtue of their common ancestry, real or fictitious, and who are so regarded by others"; T. Shibusani and K. Kwan, *Ethnic Stratification* (New York: Macmillan, 1967) p.40 and cited in *TTS.*, p.2.
37. *Riverton Study*, p.25-26; this brief study analyses a second generation American Jewish Community. The more sophisticated study is, of course, *The Lakeville Studies*, 2 vols. (1967). However, because the data therein refers to third generation Jews we have deliberately refrained from making reference to it; W. Herberg developed the Riverton theory referred to here in his book, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, (1960). The conclusion of the Riverton Study, while apt for Beth Am's membership, still leaves open the mystifying question of why Beth Am did not attract more area Jews into affiliating with the congregation. Several suggestions, all requiring research, come to mind: 1) a large number of first and second generation Jews whose priorities were economic advancement and integration into Canadian secular life; 2) the strong pull of Yiddishism acting as a surrogate for synagogue affiliation; 3) the existence of landsmanschaft societies which catered to the social, cultural, religious (i.e. burial privileges) needs of Jews; 4) the secular-cultural draw of the YMHA-YWHA; 5) the native Canadian leadership of the congregation intentionally founded a Conservative congregation which stressed decorum and encouraged the use of English in services. This style of worship service probably had little appeal to recent Yiddish speaking survivors of the Holocaust and other Yiddish speaking recent immigrants who moved into the area. I am indebted to Mrs. Victor Sefton for suggesting this last point.
38. We note that 10-15% of our respondents failed to answer the questions relating to why they joined the congregation; whereas the orthodox synagogue has a day school nearby attended by well over 90% of the children of the members of that synagogue, Beth Am presently sends only 3 children to day schools; *TTS.*, p.85, 118; Anonymous Interview, June, 1975.
39. We should not rule out the possibility that the women's responses may not have reflected their actual feelings, but rather the way they thought they should have answered the question from the viewpoint of the women's liberation movement.
40. Zelda Dick, "Light from our Poll on Women's Role", *Women's League Outlook*, vol. 45, Summer issue, 1975, p.15.