

## *The Junior Congregation*

I recall most vividly a bitterly cold, snowy morning at the end of January, 1948, on the occasion of my first weekend visit to Portland. I remember being informed quite casually by my host, Mr. Benjamin Lazarus, that Junior Congregation Services were to be held at 9:30 A.M., and I wondered to myself, "Who among the children would be so rash as to leave the warm comfort of his home and venture forth in such inclement weather?"

Upon my arrival at 509 Forest Avenue, the building which then housed our Temple, I found eight children awaiting me — among them Sandra and Bonnie Godfrey, Cynthia and Sandra Rudek, Beryl Kates, Bernard Cope and two others whose names I do not recall. Although the group was small, its members compensated for the lack of size by their enthusiasm and devotion. No matter how bad the weather or what other activities and programs may have been scheduled each Saturday found that nucleus present, eager to participate in our services.

The patience and determination of this handful of children soon bore rich fruit. In September, 1948, when the Junior Congregation was reconvened, following the Summer vacation, its numbers had grown to thirty. The congregation was large enough to be given independent status as a subsidiary unit within the Temple framework. In December, 1948, elections were held, and the following were elected as the first officers of our Junior Congregation: Sandra Godfrey, President; Elsa Stein, Vice-President; Brenda Bernstein, Secretary; and Susan Turitz, Secretary.

In September, 1949, the Temple Beth El Hebrew School was founded. The beneficial effects of the close dovetailing of its program with that of the Junior Congregation were soon felt by the latter. The average attendance increased to fifty children. The congregation during this year was guided most ably in its endeavors



by: David Zolov, President; Bernard Cope, Vice-President; Susan Turitz, Secretary; and Cynthia Sacknoff, Secretary.

At the present writing, although the 1950-51 synagogue year is still in its infancy, the Junior Congregation continues to grow in size and strength. Attendance at our Saturday Morning Services has averaged between 60-70 children. More significant, however, and more indicative of the spiritual development of our Junior body, is the enthusiastic response which greeted the introduction of Succoth Services. More than 40 children attended each of these services, a fact which leads us to the happy conclusion that Holiday Services will become a regular feature of our Junior Congregation.

The present officers of the Junior Congregation are: President, Eliot Rich; 1st Vice-President, Cynthia Sacknoff; 2nd Vice-President, Gerald Goldberg; Secretary-Treasurer, Linda Elowitch; Secretary, Ronald Mack.

Although figures demonstrate more clearly and vividly the physical growth of the organization, the real measure of the achievements of our Junior Congregation lies in the intangible realm of spiritual values. First and foremost, our children are developing a sense of "at-homeness" in the synagogue, so that its atmosphere is no longer mysteriously alien and strange to them. They are learning that collective prayer is a normal, natural function by means of which a group expresses its values, hopes and aspirations.

Second, the Sabbath is being restored to a central position in the lives of our children. Slowly but surely, a positive attitude is being forged which we hope will remain with them throughout life.

Last, the knowledge which they absorb in Hebrew School is removed from the academic plane and infused with a vitality and relevance which would otherwise be lacking. In the Junior Congregation our children put into practice, as part of a living process and valid social experience, the skills and techniques which they have acquired in school.

Needless to say, the Junior Congregation could not have attained this degree of success without the splendid cooperation and assistance of the Religious Services Committee, the Sisterhood through its Junior Congregation Committee and the inspiring efforts of Mr. Ernest Braun of our Hebrew School. Our sincere thanks are extended to them for this magnificent accomplishment. We are confident that under their guidance and leadership the Junior Congregation will fulfill its present promise and become one of the strongest units — perhaps even the very cornerstone — of our Temple structure.



OFFICERS OF THE JUNIOR CONGREGATION