



In the Beginning

THE FIRST YEARS
OF TEMPLE SINAI

By Arlen Ambrose

Mission

OUR HISTORY HELPS DEFINE who we are. It helps us understand the values that have shaped us and points us to the next stages of our journey. To collect, process, and catalogue our history the Archives Committee of Temple Sinai was formed. This standing committee has as its mission the assemblage of documents, pictures, and artifacts relating to our congregation and its leaders.

The Temple was formed by a group of individuals who had a vision of what we might become. This booklet is one person's account of how we began. Others might have a variation on the theme — a different take of when and where and how this or that occurred. The important thing to remember is that original documents — records of meetings, photos, reflections shared by several persons — become the basis for how we became what we now are. There are many more stories about our journey yet to be explored and written down.

Therefore, we call upon all of our members to check your files and folders and storage boxes along with personal recollections and reflections and bring them to the Archives office as an aid in building this history.

Call the Temple office if you have questions or if you have materials to share.

Arlen Ambrose is a Historian and author of this document. This project was initiated by Robert Adelstein, the source of many of the photos herein. Project Coordinator was Paul Levine. Members of the Archives Committee whose names are not listed anywhere else in this document but have been an integral part of the committee. Anita Fricklas, Harvey Stein, Bob Steine, Loretta Cawelti, Fred and Doris Schwartzberg. Graphic Design by SolomonHill.



Rabbi Zwerin at the Western Wall

Cover: Havdala Service, First Retreat

Back Cover: The Third and Present Ark with Torah Covers made by Rikki Zwerin

Forward

IN ORDER TO PRESERVE important records, photographs, and artifacts which document the history of Temple Sinai from its founding in 1967, the Board of Trustees created an Archives Committee in 2004 and dedicated a room for its use. In addition to collecting artifacts, the committee has undertaken an ambitious videotaping program of interviewing many of Sinai's founders and others instrumental in the formation of the congregation.

This essay contains many of my personal recollections of significant events in the formative years of Temple Sinai. I started writing it as an impersonal extract of early Board minutes and other historical documents for the archives. However, as it was shown to committee members, many remarked that a more personalized documentation of events was a needed adjunct to the archives, lest many events in the history of the Temple be forgotten.

Some of my observations are from memory or from conversations and reminiscences. Most of the material, however, is documented in Sinai's minute books and other items collected for the archives. Memory being faulty, and reminiscences being limited, and also because this is a work in process, I am hoping to receive corrections and additions, with the goal of someday seeing completed, with the help of many others, a definitive history of Temple Sinai.

This writing has been prepared with the active assistance of the Archives Committee, co-chaired by Ellene Austin and Robert Adelstein. In addition, special contributions have been made by Howard and Donna Lutz, Abe Wagner, Chuck Shom, Robert Adelstein, my wife Ruth, Elaine Appel, Doris Schwartzberg, Paul Levine, Rabbi Zwerin, and especially Barbara Glassman, whose contributions of her memories of events, together with her professional editing skills, attention to detail, and loving concern for the subject matter have combined to contribute whatever polish may be found in this work.



Arlen Ambrose, First Sinai Secretary

I. In the Beginning

ON JUNE 27, 1964, Rabbi Raymond A. Zwerin, just ordained by the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, was hired as assistant rabbi at Temple Emanuel, Denver, Colorado. He and his wife Rikki moved to Denver about July 15, 1964. (A copy of the Temple Emanuel Bulletin of July 6, 1964, announcing this event and listing many of Rabbi Zwerin's accomplishments is in the Temple Sinai archives.) One of the young rabbi's duties at Emanuel was to create and implement programming for a "Mr. and Mrs. Club," an outreach program for unaffiliated young couples.

In October, 1966, the Mr. and Mrs. Club held a weekend retreat at La Foret, a rustic camp and retreat center in the Black Forest northeast of Colorado Springs. Rabbi and Rikki Zwerin conducted the retreat. Their daughter Robin, age 11/2, also attended. Couples present were Marlene (now Lind) and Chuck Shom, Cecelia (now Zilla Cahn) and Abe Wagner with their twin sons, Daniel and David, age 5, Pinky and Dick Eber, Judy (now Wolfe) and Chuck Epperson, and Janet (now Bayless) and Arlen Ambrose. Most of the couples on the retreat were unaffiliated with any congregation, but grew close to Rabbi Zwerin and Rikki and became enthusiastic about continuing their associations from the retreat.

When it was learned in December, 1966 that Rabbi Zwerin's contract at Temple Emanuel was to expire the next year, Robert Adelstein drafted, and members of the Mr. and Mrs. Club circulated, a petition to Emanuel's Board of Trustees seeking renewal of the rabbi's contract. (A copy of this petition was recently located and has been included in the Sinai archives.) The petition pleaded eloquently for Rabbi Zwerin's retention, mentioning his outstanding talents and leadership of young couples.

In January 1967, several members of the Mr. and Mrs. Club met at the Shoms' home and expressed their disappointment that Rabbi Zwerin had not been asked to stay on at Emanuel. It was announced to the group that the rabbi had withdrawn his name from consideration and would be leaving Denver. Several people, myself included, suggested the possibility of starting a new congregation with Rabbi Zwerin, but this seemed to be an impossible dream. Denver already had two Reform congregations and most of those present expressed their view that this was not a viable idea. Several, however, continued to discuss the idea.

Rabbi R. Zwerin Named New Temple Sinai Leader

Rabbi Raymond Zwerin will assume the pulpit as spiritual leader of Temple Sinai, the newly organized Reform Congregation in the Denver area.

Irwin Karnfeldt, President of Temple Sinai said that Rabbi Zwerin's rich experiences of the past, which include a year's study in Israel under a scholarship at Upan Eban and Hebrew University in Jerusalem; his appointment as Dean of the Denver Institute of Adult Jewish Studies; and his appointment to the Faculty of the Leadership Training Institute of the National Federation of Temple Youth, as well as the Rabbi's dynamic and resourceful personality will give the new Temple Sinai one of the outstanding spiritual leaders in the country today.

Rabbi Zwerin brings to the Congregation an impressive and distinguished background, said Karnfeldt. Born in Cincinnati, the Rabbi moved to California at an early age and received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in psychology from the University of California in Los Angeles in 1958. In 1960, Rabbi Zwerin received the Bachelor of Hebrew Letters Degree from Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion, California School, Returning to Cincinnati, the Rabbi received his Master of Arts in Hebrew Literature and



RABBI ZWERIN

was ordained a Rabbi at Hebrew Union College in 1964.

Karnfeldt pointed out that with Rabbi Zwerin's appointment as the spiritual leader of Temple Sinai, the Temple will have a man who is familiar with the Denver Jewish Community that will permit the Temple to become an integral and dynamic source in our community immediately.

Rabbi Zwerin comes to the Congregation from Temple Emanuel where he has served as the Assistant Rabbi since 1964.

May 26, 1967 (cf. 8/25/67 News)

The formation of Temple Sinai

Temple Sinai Organization



On January 26, 1967, a dinner party was held at Chuck and Marlene Shom's home. Howard and Donna Lutz, Abe and Cecelia Wagner, Chuck and Marlene Shom, and Rabbi and Rikki Zwerin were in attendance. Howard and Donna Lutz's description:

The topic of a new congregation was something that just "fell out" of the dinner chatter. It was not a premeditated subject. During the course of the conversation, someone asked Rabbi about a new congregation. When he showed some interest, the question was asked 'How many families would it take to support a new congregation?' His response was the now famous, 'One... with a lot of money!' Whether it was at this time or shortly thereafter, the number of 100 families was agreed upon. If we could get 100 committed families who were not affiliated with any congregation by the High Holy Days, Ray and Rikki would stay. What followed was a phoning frenzy headed by, and to a large extent completed by Donna." (Rabbi Zwerin referred to this in his September, 2004 Kol Nidre sermon.)

Although Rabbi Zwerin had been offered several positions elsewhere, he and Rikki consider this dinner party to be the unofficial beginning of Temple Sinai. It made them put other offers "on hold" while seeing what could develop in Denver.

II. The Impossible Dream

SHORTLY AFTER THAT DINNER PARTY, Chuck Shom called to see if I was serious about starting a new congregation. It now looked like it might be possible! For an instant, my reaction was that I wasn't sure if I was serious. My son, David, had just been born. The task of starting a new congregation was overwhelming and seemed likely to fail. Denver had many varieties of Jewish expression in addition to its two active Reform congregations. My next thought was that if I waited for five years to join a congregation, when my new-born son was ready for religious school, the rabbi I loved and wanted to teach my children would be long gone from the scene. It seemed to be a crime to allow this great man to leave Denver. My immediate conclusion was, "If not now, when?" I told Chuck that I was indeed serious. He suggested that there appeared to be interest in the concept, and that there would be more discussions to follow. The idea was to contact as many of our unaffiliated friends as possible and to see how many would be interested in joining a new Reform congregation in Southeast Denver with Rabbi Zwerin as spiritual leader.

We each made lists of friends, acquaintances, classmates, and others whom we thought might be interested. We tried to restrict our recruiting to unaffiliated couples and individuals, as we did not want to be accused of trying to lure anyone away from Temple Emanuel. My list consisted of Max and Elaine Appel, Roger and Karen Spalter, Bob and Carole Slosky, Alan and Sally Gass, and some others with whom I had grown up in Pueblo or with whom we associated in Denver. Many of these friends became early active members. Chuck and Marlene Shom contacted many Jewish neighbors in their southeast Denver neighborhood.

Shortly thereafter, interested couples and individuals gathered at Shoms' to discuss starting a new congregation. Those present were excited and agreed to call (preferably unaffiliated) friends to see if there was more interest in the idea. Discussions were held about joining with existing congregations, such as the Beth Shalom (Conservative) Congregation of Littleton, Reconstructionist groups, and other groups which had formed but which had disbanded in prior years. Abe Wagner led the meeting. The group agreed that emphasis would be on congregational participation in all aspects of religious life, somewhat "hamish" (warmer), more traditional services than the prevailing Reform style, and strong educational programming for children and adults. We had seen that this was the type of synagogue that Rabbi Zwerin envisioned. Many younger couples were feeling a need for services with more Hebrew, more congregational participation, a spiritual connection with the State of Israel as an



Rabbi Zwerin and The First Ark

integral part of Jewish life, and more relevant rabbinic leadership, When they met and heard Rabbi Zwerin and attended services he conducted, they were easily persuaded to join us!

Soon afterward, on a cold night in early 1967, Abe Wagner, Dick Eber, Chuck Shom, and Arlen Ambrose met with Sy Fischer, Bill Singer, and Jerry Rush from Congregation Beth Shalom. The group discussed the possibility of forming a congregation with a Reform rabbi and changing the Conservative congregation's orientation to Reform. The Beth Shalom group agreed to see whether there was interest in their congregation in merging with a Reform group with Rabbi Zwerin. A signup sheet from this meeting, which I have found in my files, lists the above individuals but not the date.

Not long after this meeting, the membership of Beth Shalom held a congregational meeting to consider the proposed merger, but declined to join with the Reform group. I believe that the Beth Shalom contact was the most serious attempt to merge with an existing congregation, and although it was not successful in bringing about a merger, several members of that congregation became early and active members of Temple Sinai.

Early March 1967: The original group formed committees to recruit new members. Emphasis was placed on seeking out unaffiliated couples as, again, the group did not want to be considered to be a “split-off” of Temple Emanuel. Although the early recruits to Temple Sinai were almost all unaffiliated younger couples, the “good will” effort was only moderately successful, as some in the Denver Jewish community seemed take perverse delight in maintaining that our group was indeed a split-off. However, word of the effort spread, as Abe Wagner termed it, “like wildfire” and interest came from all quarters of the Denver Jewish community, including the Conservative, Reconstructionist, and intermarried elements of the Jewish population.

March 15, 1967: An meeting of individuals interested in starting a new congregation of approximately 75 people was held at First Plymouth Congregational Church. Abe Wagner chaired, and the group discussed the possibility of hiring Rabbi Zwerin, who was not in attendance at the meeting, and who had not yet committed to stay in Denver. The group was told that Rabbi Zwerin had been consulted about the possibility of a new congregation and had offered the opinion that a good show of interest would be to have 100 families recruited by the High Holy Days. Names submitted for the congregation were Temple Jeremiah, Temple



Dorothy Bernstein, our first secretary



The Zwerins, The Early Years

Israel, and Temple Isaiah. As Temple Jeremiah was about to be chosen, I placed in late nomination the name “Temple Sinai,” after the Washington, DC congregation of Rabbi Balfour Brickner where Janet and I had recently been married. A sigh of relief was audible, and the name was favored by a clear majority. I was later a bit disappointed to learn that Rabbi Zwerin wasn’t too thrilled with the name, as the Reform movement doesn’t place a major emphasis on the biblical events at Mt. Sinai. But the alternative, Temple Jeremiah, has never seemed very appealing to me.

A committee was formed to undertake the incorporation of a Reform Jewish congregation. A dues schedule was adopted based upon age of the husband (over and under 30) and status of children in religious school. For members over 30 and those under 30 with children in religious school, dues were \$200 per year.

For those under 30 with no children in school, dues were \$150. (Almost everyone was under 30!) Attendees were requested to pay \$25 right away, with promise of a full refund if the Temple did not have 75 families signed up within 30 days from that date! (I don’t think anyone held us to that promise, but we did have 88 members as of the June 14, 1967 meeting of the Board of Trustees.)

March 16, 1967: Organizational Meeting of the Board of Trustees: The sixteen original incorporators/Board of Trustee members were: Charles Shom, Howard Lutz, Irwin Kornfeld, Sy Fischer, Abe Wagner, Harry Sterling, Arlen Ambrose, William Singer, Lew Rosenberg, Kenneth Heller, Jerry Simmons, Verna Schwartz, Barbara Glassman, James Moses, Arlan Preblud and Laurence Rubenstein. They met at the Wagner’s’ home to organize the Temple and to execute the incorporation papers, which were drafted by Harry Sterling. The meeting ended around 12:30 a.m., thereby setting a precedent for many late night Board adjournments.

March 17, 1967: A letter was sent out to newly signed members from Abe Wagner, “president pro tem,” urging each to recruit new members, and announcing a meeting of interested people to be held on March 23 at the home of Irwin Kornfeld. Several more “Meet the Rabbi” meetings were held at private homes over the next several weeks. At each, Rabbi Zwerin shared his vision of how a new congregation could respond to the needs of young Jewish families in this age of change. Howard Lutz, looking back, describes these as “recruiting meetings, pure and simple.”

March 29, 1967: A Certificate of Incorporation, signed by all of the above-named incorporators/trustees, was filed with the Colorado Secretary of State, thereby incorporating a Reform Jewish Congregation to be known as “Temple Sinai.”

April 9, 1967: A “temporary membership list” of this date cites 69 member families.

April 26 & 27, 1967: Two Board meetings were held to discuss and confirm Rabbi Zwerin’s contract. Members formed committees to talk with interested families, and lists of potential members were prepared. Each family was to be contacted by telephone. Just about all Board members served as a membership committee and participated in home meetings with any family who would accept one. I recall going to one couple’s home and after being seated on the couple’s couch, having the wife begin the conversation with “Gee, I’ve never met a temple salesman before!”

May 3, 1967: The Board of Trustees met to plan the first congregational meeting and directed that a newsletter be sent to the congregation. The Board also authorized formation of a Sisterhood and appointed Barbara Glassman and Verna Schwartz to pursue this endeavor.

May 5, 1967: Volume I No. I of the Temple Sinai Newsletter was published. (A copy of this bulletin now resides in the archives.)

May 10, 1967: First Annual Meeting of the Congregation. The initial Congregational meeting was held at the First Unitarian Universalist Church at Colorado Boulevard and Hampden. The purpose of the meeting was “mainly to acquaint existing membership with the activities of the congregation and to obtain new members.” Board members had undertaken to call all existing congregation members, “urging them to be at the congregation meeting and to bring potential new members. No refreshments will be served. Name tags will be furnished for members and non-members, with members having a different color name tag.” One couple offered to donate a Torah, since that seemed to be the first requirement of a new synagogue. Irwin Kornfeld served as chair, four short committee reports were given, and Rabbi Zwerin addressed the group.



Ted Ruskin and Rick Simons, Archives Committee



Rabbi Zwerin, first Sinai picnic

May 24, 1967: An organizational meeting of Sisterhood, conducted by Barbara Glassman and Verna Schwartz, was held at Moore Realty's office at Hampden and Oneida. Debra Moses (now Herz) was elected as first Sisterhood president.

June 14, 1967: Rabbi Zwerin was officially hired for one year at \$10,000 per annum, from July 1, 1967 to June 30, 1968, plus a 10% contribution to his retirement fund and a \$400 housing allowance.

July 18, 1967: Membership was still at 88 families. (A list of these members is included in the minute book as of this date.)

August 30, 1967: Temple Sinai entered into a nine month lease of First Plymouth Congregational Church for Friday and Saturday use of the facility, to commence September 15, 1967 until June 15, 1968.

The terms were that either party could terminate on 60 days notice and the church had the option to request increased rent if Sinai's membership increased beyond 88 families. (It did, and they didn't.)

The small chapel at First Plymouth would serve well for our Friday night services and the large sanctuary with beautiful stained glass windows, half of which had "Old Testament" or Jewish biblical themes, would be used for the High Holy Days and for other large services. There was a large cafeteria-style room for our congregational meetings, adequate classroom facilities, and a comfortable library facility with a speaker system, which served as overflow seating on the High Holy Days. Importantly, it had adequate parking facilities. It also had a welcoming minister in Rev. Stuart Haskins who forged a strong interfaith relationship with Rabbi Zwerin and Temple Sinai.

September 1, 1967: The first Friday night service was scheduled but canceled due to the birth of Ron Zwerin!

September 5, 1967: Membership was 99 families.

September 8, 1967: Our first Friday night service was held in the small chapel at First Plymouth. A portable Ark had been acquired from the American Medical Center. Dave Abramson, caretaker of the AMC, had constructed it out of an old book cabinet. He put a curtain covering over the front and made an "eternal light" out of copper for the top. He also managed to rescue a wooden table,

which he painted to match the Ark. Two Torahs were held within the Ark. An additional Torah was given to us by another organization.

When not in use, the Ark was stored in a closed hallway next to the chapel. During services it was placed in front of, and partially obstructing the view of, a large cross, which hung prominently at the front of the chapel.

Members of the volunteer choir, which had been rehearsing High Holy Day music, were especially encouraged to attend this first service and to sit among the other congregants to encourage active congregational participation. Rabbi Zwerin announced from the bimah that the congregation would be expected to participate, and that if the congregants did not sing loudly, they would hear him! This little incident of humor gently and firmly created a unique atmosphere of congregational participation, which began at our very first service and continues to this day.

Also set at that first service was Rabbi Zwerin's tradition of reading and simultaneously translating the Torah portion each week, a talent then shared by few rabbis. His use of humor has been a keynote of many of his teachings and sermons, which often contain a spontaneous pun. (Example: in speaking about the Tower of Babel, he described it as being a "ziggurat." He then shared the Midrash about how many people died during the construction of this tower, and so, he said, they posted a large sign on its side, "Caution: Ziggurats may be hazardous to your health!") I'm sure that I am not alone in believing that the "pun" in a teaching or a sermon has often been the "hook" by which I remember the lesson.

There was a moment of panic the Monday following our first service: the church secretary, Mrs. Nibbe, telephoned the Temple office to relay a complaint that our group had spilled liquid on the carpet of the chapel. We were always worried thereafter that we might alienate the church's powers-that-be, and not be welcomed back. The problem became much less exacerbated when, as ritual committee chairman, I was authorized to present the church custodian, "Eppy" Espinosa, with a bottle of wine on each major Jewish and Christian holiday! Also, Lew Rosenberg accepted the task of calling or meeting with Mrs. Nibbe on a weekly basis to discuss any and all concerns. The issue never arose again, but it always reminded us that we would be more comfortable in our own facility.

September 11, 1967: Elections Meeting of the congregation of Temple Sinai. Five officers and ten Trustees were selected to serve until the May annual meeting. Irwin Kornfeld was President, Abe Wagner was First Vice President, William Singer was



Ellene Austin, Archives Committee Co-Chair



Barbara & Sid Glassman, Archives Committee

Second Vice President, Harry Sterling was Secretary, and Howard Lutz was Treasurer. Members of the Board of Trustees were Sy Fischer, Kenneth Heller, Dr. James Moses, Arlan Preblud, Lew Rosenberg, Verna Schwartz, Chuck Shom, Barbara Glassman, Morton Baker, and Arlen Ambrose.

September 14, 1967: Office space consisting of two rooms was rented in a small office building at 2765 South Colorado Boulevard. Dorothy Bernstein was hired as secretary. Dorothy's very part-time salary did not prevent her from putting

in full-time hours for the new congregation. She always maintained a warm and welcoming voice and persona for Temple Sinai. (My children referred to her as "Rabbi Bernstein.") For quite some time, the modest office on Colorado Boulevard operated with one staff member, one phone line, one electric typewriter, a ditto machine (for making multiple purple-ink duplicate copies) and a strange contraption called a "Thermofax," which made brittle, orange-ish onion skin copies that faded to dark if left in a sunny spot. Nevertheless, this humble strip-mall office was the focus of our congregational organization, and First Plymouth's welcoming and comfortable church facility accommodated our religious school and worship space needs. Accounting and financial record keeping took place in the Lutz's basement.

September 15, 1976: Notice of our first publicly announced Friday night service appears in the Intermountain Jewish News. The article states that Rabbi Zwerin's sermon will be titled, "In the Beginning."

September 20, 1967: The Board of Trustees allocated \$350 to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund, directed that all committee reports were to be submitted in writing, and decided to leave the issue of milk and cookies for the kindergarten and lower grades to the discretion of the education director, "the cost thereof to be minimized and to be paid for from the general fund."

October 4, 1967: First High Holy Day service — Erev Rosh Hashanah. The large sanctuary of First Plymouth Church, which held over 600 people, was packed. Rabbi Zwerin's sermon was "The Values by Which to Live." The Congregation gracefully accepted the Rabbi's earlier comment on the prominent cross, too large to cover, which hung from the ceiling at the front of the sanctuary: "Consider it to be a 'T' for Temple."

Simi Fleischer conducted and accompanied the all-volunteer choir. Much of the choral music had been composed or arranged by Simi for the occasion, and several pieces are still in use by the choir. She was paid \$150 plus a one-year

Temple membership. Laurie Caspe was soloist. Board members acted as ushers. Robert Adelstein performed the duties of sound engineer, and also tape recorded the services.

As Rabbi Zwerin described the event in his Kol Nidre sermon 37 years later, "I can still feel the electricity in the air that evening; I can still hear the melodies, remembering how I hummed them for weeks thereafter ... just as I still do to this day after each High Holy Day period. I can still recall the quiet sense of belonging, the naturalness of it all, that permeated the sanctuary."

The sanctuary was also filled for the morning service.

October 11, 1967: Religious school opened with 140 children. Membership of the Congregation was 124 families! A building and property committee was appointed by the Board to undertake a demographic study of membership and potential growth areas. The sum of \$150 was allocated to the ritual committee for an installation service for Rabbi Zwerin.

October 13 & 14, 1967: Yom Kippur services: Rabbi Zwerin's Kol Nidre sermon was entitled "The Impossible Dream," later affectionately referred to as the "Mensch of La Mancha" sermon. First Plymouth's sanctuary and library were filled. The services were enhanced by Max Appel chanting Kol Nidre. In subsequent years, Manny Dworkin sang "Kol Nidre."

My memories of these services are of looking at the overflow crowd in the large and attractive sanctuary and thinking, "Wow! This really IS an impossible dream!" I recall that I literally thought about pinching myself to prove that I was awake. I have gotten that tearful and excited feeling each year for thirty-eight years, at each High Holy Day service!

November 8, 1967: The Board authorized the development of a brochure describing the activities and future plans of Temple Sinai. A two-year renewal of Rabbi Zwerin's contract was authorized.

Thanksgiving, 1967: The first joint Thanksgiving service was held with First Plymouth Congregation, a tradition which has continued ever since, and which may be the oldest continuing joint Christian-Jewish service anywhere in the country. Rabbi Zwerin and Reverend Stuart Haskins have each



"Big Blue" The Second Ark, designed by Alan Gass

addressed the joint Congregation in alternate years and their assistants have also been invited to join in the speaking rotation. Jewish participants were startled at the first service when First Plymouth's ushers "passed the basket," but we eventually got used to it.

January 10, 1968: Always mindful of the need for sound fiscal policies, the Board authorized a fund drive for "future use for possible land acquisition, subject to approval of the Congregation." Among the fund-raising ideas considered was a \$100 per-person dinner at McDonald's Hamburgers. Board meetings were being held at homes of Board members, on a rotating basis, and often lasted until midnight or even 1 and 2 a.m. The longest meeting was the infamous "Milk and Cookies Board Meeting" at which the Board considered, until 2:30 a.m., the issue of the proper level to cut off the funding of milk and cookies being furnished to the lower grades! Other, more substantive, issues tackled by early Boards included the issues of optional use of yarmulkes (head coverings) and tallitot, musical accompaniment at religious services, and policies regarding donations of works of art.

January 19, 1968: An Installation service was held for Rabbi Zwerin, who indicated that, "Rabbis, like washing machines, cannot operate properly unless installed." Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk, the Dean of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, spoke at and conducted the installation.

March 13, 1968: Membership was 140 families. At about this point, the demographic study of the Congregation, undertaken by Mort Baker, indicated that the exact demographic center of the membership was a point, which coincided with the Howard Johnson Motor Inn at Hampton Avenue and Interstate 25.

April 5, 1968: An emergency joint memorial service was held by Temple Sinai and First Plymouth congregations to grieve the assassination on the previous day of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Rabbi Zwerin delivered the principal memorial address. This was the beginning of a tradition of emergency joint meetings of the two congregations, and similar sorrowful meetings have been held at the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy and the September 11, 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center.

BUDGET, 1969-1970

Revenue: \$36,190, if membership stayed at 220 families (deficit of \$2,183); \$41,125 if membership reached 250 families (surplus of \$2080).

April 10, 1968: The Sinai Board authorized joining the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Dues to the Union were to be at no charge for the first year, 5% of our expenditures for salaries and operations for the second year, and 10% of expenditures thereafter. The choir director's salary was increased to \$300 for the year.

May 8, 1968: The Board entered into negotiations with First Plymouth for

a two to three year lease of the church, authorized the purchase of a new ditto machine for “up to \$350,” and approved a 1968-1969 budget.

May 20, 1968: The second Annual Meeting of the Congregation was held at First Plymouth. Officers elected for a first official full term were: President, Sy Fischer; First Vice President, Bill Singer; Second Vice President, Harry Sterling; Secretary, Arlen Ambrose; and Treasurer, Howard Lutz.

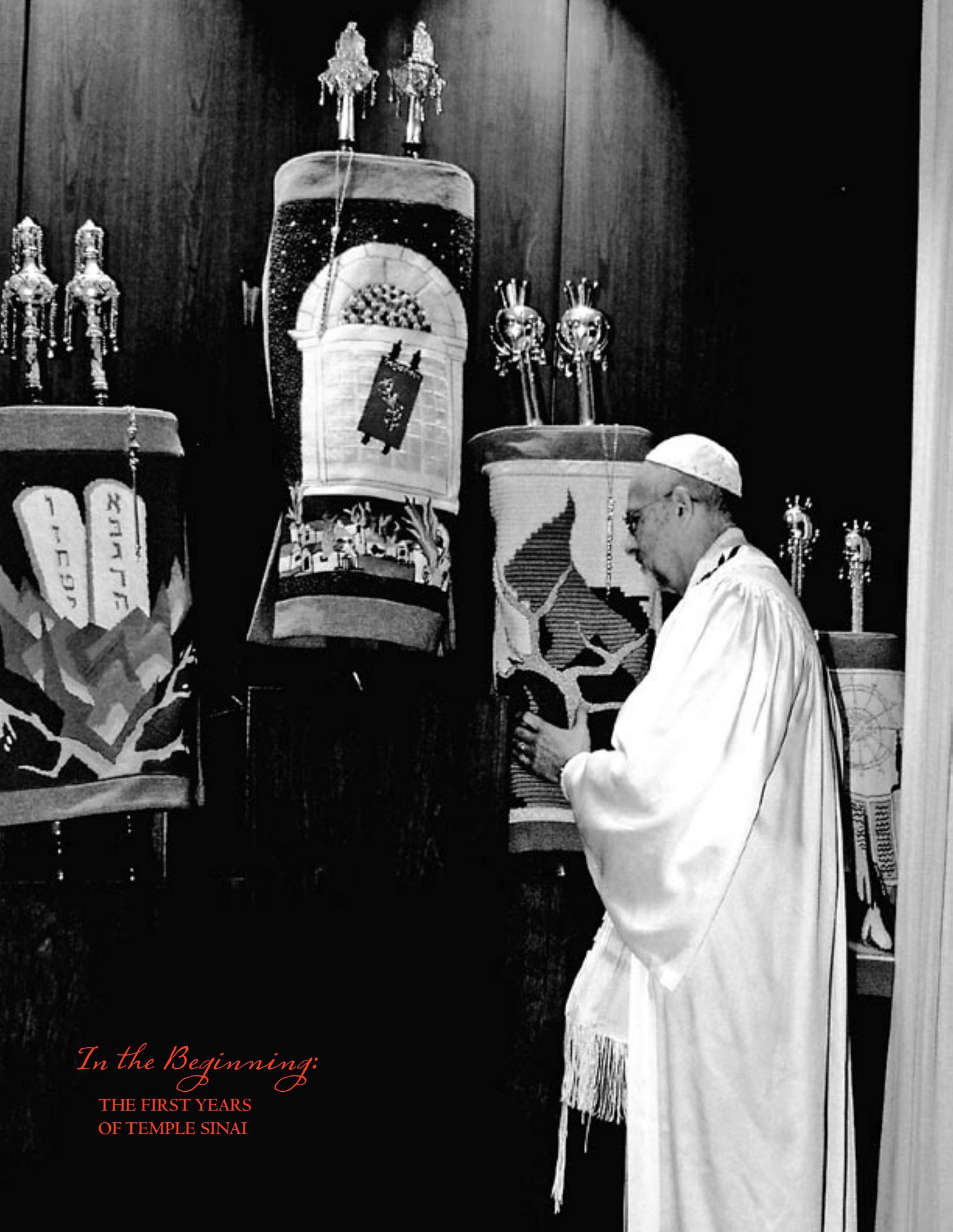
June, 1968: Rabbi Zwerin and Rikki began a tradition of leading congregants to Eretz Israel on tours that inevitably cemented the spiritual ties of individual Denverites to world Jewry and to the history and fate of the Jewish people. To date, they have accompanied approximately 1000 congregants and friends on unforgettable and life-changing experiences in our Homeland. It is thought that this may be the largest number of people brought to Israel by a single synagogue without communal or Federation involvement.

July 1, 1968: The Board offered Rabbi Zwerin a contract for two years, to June 30, 1970, at \$14,000 per annum. Architect Alan Gass had designed and built a new attractive Ark for use in the First Plymouth chapel and sanctuary. It was large enough to cover much of the chapel’s prominent cross, but being made of blue fiberglass, was light enough and thin enough to be moved into and out of a hallway next to the chapel. It was lighted on the inside and had a large circular opening with white curtains. The Ner Tamid receptacle held a votive candle and jutted forward from the top of the Ark. It could be folded upward to lie flat against the top so that the ark could be maneuvered through the hallway doors. In a recent lecture (2005), Rabbi Zwerin fondly recalled his memories of the “sounds of First Plymouth,” which included a scraping noise, and a cry of “OUCH, *%#&@,” when ushers’ fingers and knuckles were caught as the Ark was transported into and out of the narrow chapel hallway. In our new buildings, “Big Blue” (as the Ark was affectionately called) continued to serve for many years.

June 30, 1969: Under the strong, visionary leadership of Rabbi Zwerin and a series of fiscally responsible officers and Boards, the Congregation recognized the need for its own building as a key to its permanent existence. The Board, with the vote of approval of the entire Congregation, entered into a contract to purchase twelve acres of land at Xeric and Yosemite streets. The property, which included the highest point within the Denver city limits, is now called “Stony Brook.” This was to be the site of our very own building.



Robert Adelstein, Archives Co-Chair



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