

19th Amendment (women's suffrage) is ratified.

League of Nations meets for the first time at Geneva, Switzerland.

Warren Harding elected.

*Histadrut* (Jewish labor federation) and *Haganah* (Jewish defense organization) founded.

Dearborn Independent publishes *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

**1920**



Worldwide influenza epidemic strikes.

American Jewish Congress founded.

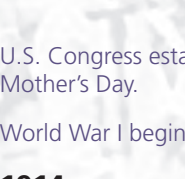
**1918**



Brandeis appointed to U.S. Supreme Court.

Julius Selya becomes president of KI.

**1916**



U.S. Congress establishes Mother's Day.

World War I begins.

**1914**



Congregation Kehillath Israel established with a membership of 36.

**1915**

Congregation Kehillath Israel granted State Charter.

Birth of J.F. Kennedy.

Bolsheviks seize power in Russia.

U.S. Congress Passes Espionage, Sabotage and Sedition Acts.

Balfour Declaration, supporting the establishment of Jewish homeland in Palestine.

U.S. declares war on Germany.

**1917**



Red Scare after World War begins in U.S.

KI Sisterhood was founded.

The Treaty of Versailles is signed.

18th Amendment and Volstead Act Passed: Prohibition begins.

Boston Police Strike.

**1919**

The Emergency Immigration Act is passed implementing numerical and quota limits.

Land purchased for Synagogue building.

Sacco and Vanzetti found guilty.

Britain proclaimed that Palestine east of the Jordan river closed to Jewish settlement.

Adolph Hitler becomes chairman of the Nazi Party.

**1921**

First Holy Day Services and First Hebrew school classes at Oddfellows Hall.

Initial services held in home of A. Matz.

**1911**

# 1917-1927

## CHAPTER ONE

From meeting in someone's home to the building which still stands at 384 Harvard Street, the members who formed KI were determined to make the congregation distinct. KI was the first synagogue that originated in Brookline. In many ways, the synagogue reflected the town in which it began—passionate, self-aware, eager to learn, and willing to work for what it wanted. The building was completed in 1924, and the arrival of Rabbi Louis Epstein in 1925 placed the community on the path to stability, growth, and commitment to *Klal Yisrael*. Originally an Orthodox congregation, the decision to allow men and women to sit together signaled the desire to balance tradition with modernity.

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise established the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York.

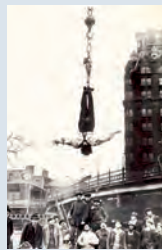
Transjordan established in British portion of Mandate area.

Lenin creates the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Fascist Leader Mussolini rises to power in Italy.

The cornerstone of the Synagogue is laid.

**1922**



Lenin dies, Stalin begins rule as Soviet dictator.

The first conference of the General Zionist movement is held in Jerusalem.

National Origins Immigration Restriction Act passed.

Joseph Rudnick becomes president.

First Holy Day services are held in the new Synagogue.

**1924**



First liquid-fuel rocket launches at Auburn, MA.

NBC radio network opens with 24 stations.

First SAT college admissions test.

*Winnie-the-Pooh* is published by A. A. Milne.

**1926**



**1927**

Charles Lindbergh makes the first solo transatlantic flight.

The Hundred Dollar Banquet held.

The KI Brotherhood organized.

*The Jazz Singer* opens, marking the end of the silent film era.

**1923**

Harry Houdini frees himself from a straight jacket while suspended upside down.

Firestone Tire and Rubber starts producing inflatable tires.

The Charleston becomes the dance craze of the decade.



**1925**

Dedication of Temple Kehillath Israel.

Louis Epstein is installed as Rabbi.

Fitzgerald publishes *The Great Gatsby*.

KI High School organized.





## Testaments and Testimonials

Hanging on the wall outside Novakoff Hall was a large framed document written in Gothic calligraphy. Alongside it were photographs of KI's founders sporting round glasses and somber mustachios. Every *Shabbat*, I used to pass this exhibit on my way to *Nitzanim*—another display of pomp in a venerable building. The document was especially mystifying. Years passed before I could read it, and still more before I actually did:

“Testimonial

Whereas Congregation Kehillath Israel had an indebtedness of Twenty-five Thousand Dollars which was the balance due for the erection of its Synagogue in the Town of Brookline; and Whereas; the members and friends of the Congregation whose names are listed below, through their sincere regard for its welfare, and the welfare of the community, by generously contributing One Hundred Dollars per cover at a Banquet held at the Hotel Somerset in the City of Boston on the sixth day of January, Nineteen Hundred Twenty-seven, have made it possible to pay this debt...”

# JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER IN NEW BROOKLINE SYNAGOGUE

### NEW JEWISH SYNAGOGUE IN BROOKLINE

The first orthodox Jewish synagogue to be established in Brookline, Congregation Kehillath Israel, will be formally started Sunday, June 11, at 3 p m, when the corner stone of the building will be laid with appropriate ceremonies, before a distinguished group of public officials, including perhaps Gov Channing H. Cox, Lieut Gov Alvan T. Fuller, Senator Lodge, Judge A. K. Cohen, Philip S. Parker, chairman of the Brookline Board of Selectmen, Asst Atty Gen Albert M Hurwitz, David Lourie, and a number of prominent rabbis of other synagogues in Boston.

The new synagogue is being erected on Harvard st opposite Beals st, on a site 200 feet in length by 120 feet in width, and when finished will represent a cost of approximately \$150,000. It will accommodate approximately 1000 members at a time, and its backers are looking forward to occupying it by the Holy Days of next Fall.

This building will, however, be used for more purposes than that of religious worship. It is planned to make it a community center for the 4000 Jews who live in Brookline at the present time, with schools for the young, social centers, committee rooms and other features which will be used for the benefit of Brookline's fast growing Jewish population.

Its construction is the result of a concerted movement which began in 1911 at the instigation of the older Jewish residents of Brookline, and crystallized during the past year into the formally organized congregation

The officers of this congregation include Harry Edelstone, president; Max S. Bronstein, vice president; Charles M. Rudginsky, treasurer, and Hyman P. Selyea, secretary. The building committee includes these officers and also Samuel F. Berman, chairman; Harry Swartz, treasurer, and several other prominent residents of Brookline, Allston and Brighton.

**Cong. KEHILLETH ISRAEL  
OF BROOKLINE**

will hold services on the **HIGH HOLIDAYS AT  
BEACON HALL, COOLIDGE CORNER**

Tickets may be secured from

<b>J. B. SELYA,</b> 77 Harvard St., Tel. 1249-W Brookline	<b>H. WILLIS,</b> 1342a Beacon St., Tel. 1396-J Brookline
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**Prices are \$5.00 for couple, \$3.00 for single man's ticket**

The committee will gladly forward tickets by mail upon request.

Courtesy of The Boston Globe

Temporary locations sufficed but by March 5, 1921 the plans were in place to build a permanent building as this *Boston Daily Globe* article announced.

**SARGENT**

**SARGENT & COMPANY**  
 MANUFACTURERS OF HARDWARE

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

CHARLES L. TITUS  
 ROOM 1101 SCOLLAY BLDG.  
 40 COURT ST.  
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 92-94-96-98 CENTRE STREET

SARGENT & COMPANY, CHICAGO  
 221-223 WEST RANDOLPH STREET

July 7, 1924

Boston Supply Co.,  
 Boston, Mass.

Dear Mike: Att. M. Meyers

Referring to our conversation in reference to the finish hardware requirements for the Temple Kehillath Israel in accordance with W. C. Vaughan Co., schedule furnished us we authorize you herewith to quote a net price of \$1800. on this hardware.

do this on account of the nature of the work and the fact that your concern are so loyal to our line. In addition to this we also appreciate the fact that both Mr. Rudnick and Mr. Shapiro have used large quantities of Sargent hardware and we are glad to take this opportunity to show our goodwill toward them.

Yours truly,  
 SARGENT & CO.  
*Charles L. Titus*

*Franklin B. 2650 cc 2/10*

The Decimal System of Pricing and Packing has been adopted for Sargent Hardware.

**WILL FORMALLY DEDICATE  
 BROOKLINE'S FIRST TEMPLE**

Representative Attendance Expected at Exercises of Congregation Kehillath Israel—Dr. Jung and Judge Lourie Principal Speakers



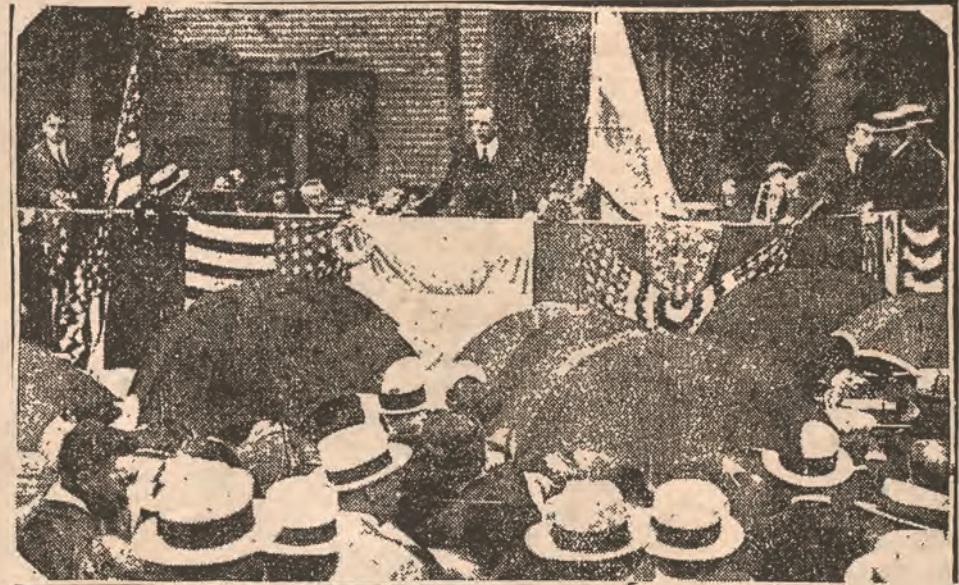
Temple Kehillath Israel, Harvard Street, Brookline

This correspondence about hardware for the building draws attention to the status of our community.

KI opened its new building in time for the High Holidays in 1924.

## STORM HALTS LAYING OF CORNER STONE FOR THE NEW SYNAGOGUE IN BROOKLINE

### Exercises at Site on Harvard St Interrupted, But Are Continued in Congregation House—Asst Atty Gen Hurwitz, Selectman Rowley, David Lourie and Rabbi Gold Speak—Building to Begin at Once



ASST ATTY GEN ALBERT HURWITZ SPEAKING AT EXERCISES AT SITE OF FIRST SYNAGOGUE IN BROOKLINE, TO BE ERECTED BY CONGREGATION KEHILLATH ISRAEL.

Members of Congregation Kehillath Israel gathered on the site of the proposed new synagogue on Harvard st, Brookline, yesterday afternoon to witness the laying of the cornerstones. The exercises planned by the building committee were carried out, but the cloud-burst, preceded by a heavy hailstorm, made impossible the ceremony of laying the stone.

The storm broke while the speaking program was in progress and the crowd which had gathered about the stand sought shelter in neighboring doorways. As there appeared no prospect of a let-up in the storm, the outdoor program was abandoned and the speaking exercises were continued in the house occupied by the congregation farther along Harvard st.

The Hebrew custom in the laying of a cornerstone is to issue an appeal for contributing funds, and the largest contribution has the honor of actually laying the stone. The rain interfered with this part of the program yesterday.

There will be no further public gathering for the corner stone laying, although a meeting will be called later by the congregation, when the appeal for funds will be issued.

**Harry Edelstone Presides**

Harry Edelstone, president of Congregation Kehillath, opened the exercises yesterday afternoon and introduced Asst. Atty Gen Albert Hurwitz as the chairman of the meeting. Mr Hurwitz said Jewish history reveals that large religious projects by these peoples have their beginning in small groups coming together to establish a house of worship. Religion, he said, was their foundation stone, the center of Jewish community life.

Mr Hurwitz said he was happy to feel that the new project was to be a community center and school, as well as a temple for worship, and he hoped the people would make full use of it on other than special occasions.

The speaker deplored the tendency among some of the younger Jewish people to break away from the orthodox church and he urged the congregation to make it their business to see that the young people attended the synagogue regularly.

Selectman Charles F. Rowley officially represented the town of Brookline. On behalf of the town, he congratulated the congregation upon the approaching fulfillment of its dream to see a splendid edifice erected.

Mr Rowley said this temple meant more than an addition to the architectural beauty of the town. It means that another institution has come into being, not only to minister to the needs of its members, but also to improve the social and civic life of the people.

Continuing, Mr Rowley said: "Whatever we owe to other Nations of antiquity; to Greece for her art and her literature, to Rome for her system of laws, who can ever forget that out of the little country of Palestine came the men who more than any others have guided and directed the spiritual life of the world's best civilization?"

David Lourie of Chelsea, who was the mainspring of the Jewish war sufferers' drive in that city, was the next speaker, and he was in the midst of an inspiring address when the outdoor program was cut short.

Dorchester, under the direction of Bandmaster Emil Posselt.

The building of the synagogue will begin immediately. It is to cost approximately \$150,000 and will comprise a temple, community center, library and Hebrew school.

Congregation Kehillath Israel was founded in Brookline in 1910, reorganized Dec 15, 1915, and incorporated Jan 29, 1917. The charter members include Julius P. Selya, president; Solomon Shine, vice president; Morris Schlager, treasurer; Harry Brooks, secretary, and Simon Rogers, Bernard Steuer, Samuel White, William Blum, Samuel Ellis Berman, Arthur N. Goding, Louis Miller, Joseph Goldner, Abraham Glaser, Charles Nadell, Samuel H. Waldstein, Mencher M. Elchler, Samuel Lamb, Samuel Goldstein, Harry Willis, Louis Green and Harry S. Limer.

The above names, together with those of the present congregation officers: Harry Edelstone, president; Max S. Bronstein, vice president; Charles M. Rudniski, treasurer; Hyman P. Selya, secretary; the board of trustees and building committee, also the charter officers and members and present officers and members of the Sisterhood of the congregation, will be filed with other records in the cornerstone.

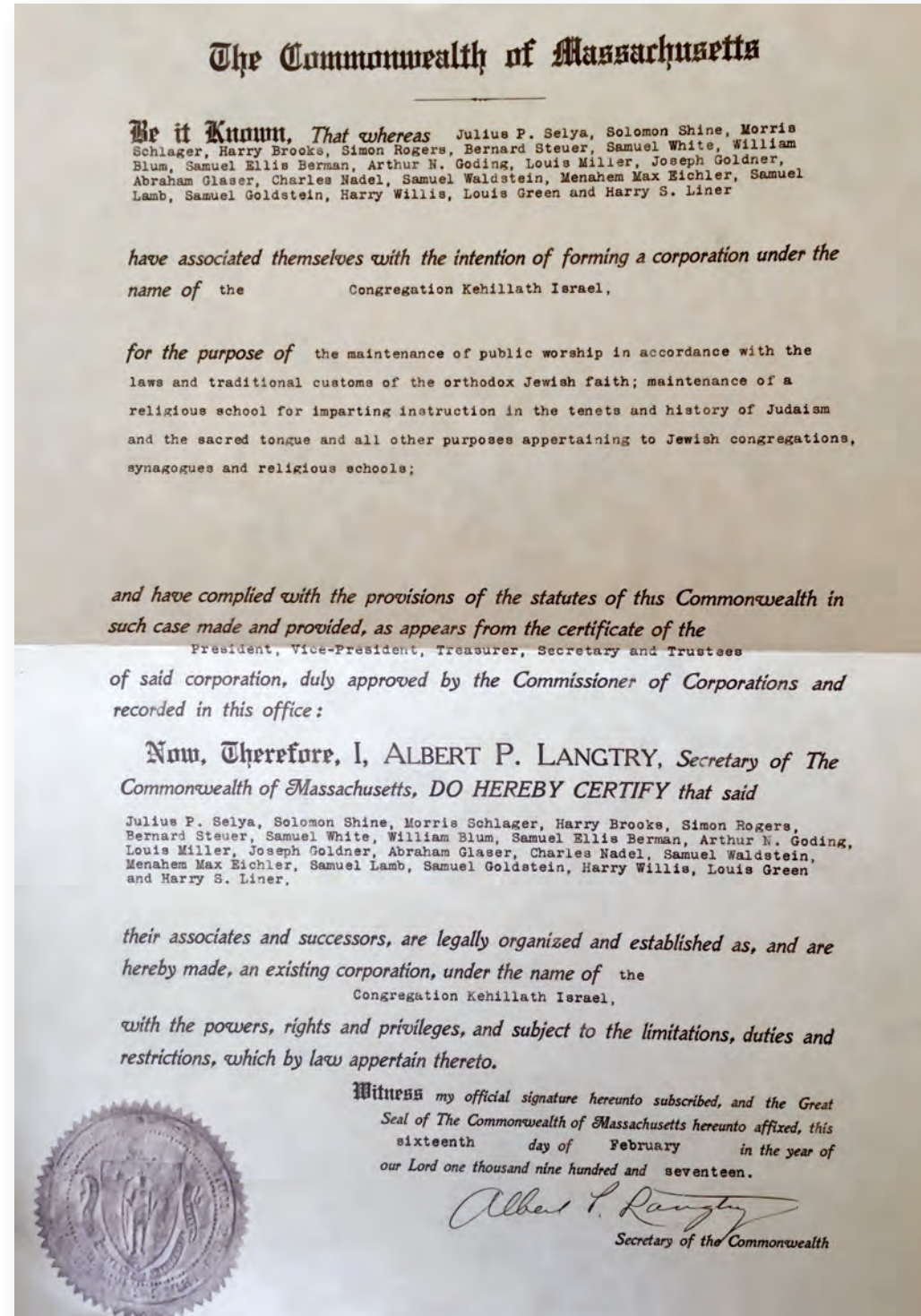
Courtesy of The Boston Globe

358 men and women are listed as having contributed to eliminate the congregation's debt. This milestone marked the end of KI's first decade—as Rabbi Louis M. Epstein noted, “the closing of the period of our immaturity.” It also marked KI's emergence as a stable and financially independent institution. Thus, the Testimonial depicts a congregation poised to grow, burden free.

The Jews of Brookline had been worshipping together since 1911, convened by Mr. A. Matz who needed a *minyan* to say *Kaddish* for his mother. Over the next few years, they continued to meet in his home. A sustained effort to form a community that would provide regular services was in place by 1915. These 36 men rented space in various locations and filed for incorporation in February of 1917. Key to this effort were prominent businessmen who had made Brookline their home—Julius and Simon Selya, David Nadel, and A. Glazier. Soon they were joined by Joseph Rudnick, the Rabinovitz brothers, David Dane, and Oscar Landers. They engaged a student at Tufts Medical School, Israel Wrightman, to teach students in the budding religious school.

KI's members intended their *shul* to be a guardian of Orthodoxy that emphasized *Torah* study, ritual, and community. Other congregations existed in Boston's more Jewish neighborhoods including Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan. There was a class dimension to this new congregation that would originate in Brookline—unlike those that would move from the city to the suburbs in the years ahead. The upper-middle class Jews of Brookline saw themselves as distinct and wanted a synagogue that would reflect their success and status.

Over the following decade, the congregation grew dramatically. By 1922, they had the funds to construct the synagogue building (though not before hail interrupted the laying of the cornerstone), which still stands at 384 Harvard Street. The Hebrew School welcomed the children of members as well as the unaffiliated. In 1924, Maurice Liberman was engaged to run the Hebrew School and edit the *KI Chronicle*, which reported member activities, provided *Torah* teachings, personal ads, and trumpeted the success



February 16, 1917  
KI is officially registered with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

ABSTRACT FROM THE KEHILLATH  
ISRAEL HEBREW SCHOOL  
CURRICULUM  
**FIRST YEAR**

**HEBREW**

1. Mechanics of reading and writing.
2. Prayer book practice.
3. Hebrew conversation.
4. Study of Hebrew Primers.
5. Memorization and translation of fundamental prayers.
6. Hebrew terms connected with Holidays and Synagogue.

**RELIGION**

1. Customs and ceremonies.
2. Practical Judaism in everyday child life.
3. Principles of Judaism through the medium of stories, playlets, etc.
4. Love for the Synagogue.

**HISTORY**

1. Bible stories.
2. Biographies of great Jewish men and women.
3. Holiday stories.
4. Stories portraying Jewish life.

**MUSIC**

1. Hebrew National Songs.
2. Religious melodies and synagogue responses.
3. American patriotic songs.

**JEWISH AND OTHER ACTIVITIES**

1. Children's Congregation and services
2. Holiday Entertainments.
3. Clubs, games.
4. Sports.

**SECOND YEAR**

**HEBREW**

1. Prayer book practice.
2. Memorization and translation of selective prayers.
3. Study of the Bible in the original selected portions of the Book of Genesis.
4. Hebrew conversation.
5. Hebrew readers.
6. Writing exercises.

**RELIGION, HISTORY, MUSIC, AND  
JEWISH ACTIVITIES**

Along the same lines as in the first year, but more advanced work and in a more intensive manner.

**NOTE**—The September issue of the Chronicle will contain the complete curriculum of our Regular Daily School, Sunday Classes, and Special Courses.  
Maurice Liberman, Principal.

Education was central to KI. Here we see some highlights from the 1925 school year.

**FIRST ANNUAL  
SCHOOL OUTING**

The Pupils of Kehillath Israel School

Invite their Parents and Friends to spend with them

**Sunday, June 7  
AT FRANKLIN PARK**

The Juniors who are in charge of this affair promise  
a good time for everybody

**WE ARE NOT FUSSY**

Come in your Stars, Buicks, or Pierce Arrows, and take us to the outing. We will be waiting for you in front of Temple Kehillath Israel. Sunday, June 7, 9 A. M. sharp. Don't disappoint us  
The Carless Children.

**Dr. Wolfson to Address  
Junior Congregation**

Dr. Harry A. Wolfson of Harvard University will address the Junior Congregation Kehillath Israel of Brookline, at their next meeting to be held on May 7th, at 8 o'clock, at Temple Israel, Commonwealth avenue.

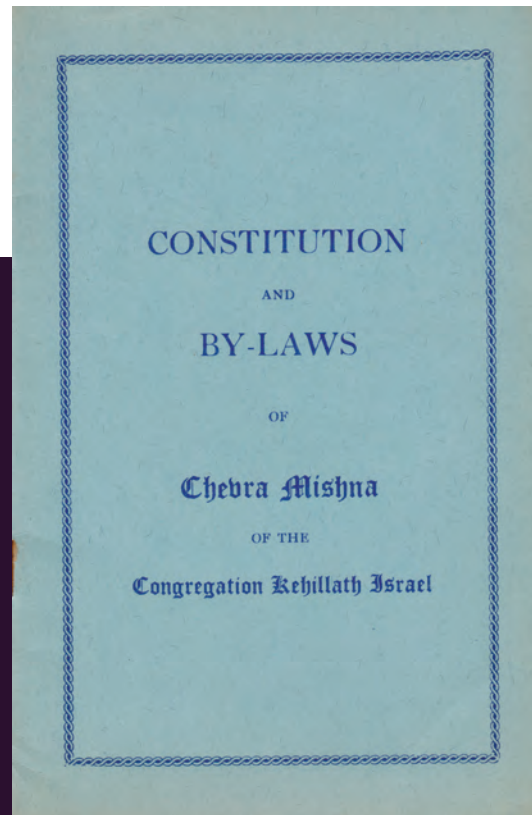
of the new congregation. A *Chevra Mishna* Society was formed, and according to its 1924 by-laws, “women can participate in the society just like men and are obligated to all of the commitments they are capable of maintaining.”

The community hired Rabbi Louis Epstein, who had been serving Congregation *Beth Hamedrosh Hagadol* in Roxbury since 1918, to begin in the Fall of 1925. Even in these early years, KI proudly proclaimed its offerings for different groups within the community. The Sisterhood held balls, bazaars, and bridge parties. The Juniors, a youth group, was forever in want of members who pulled their weight in organizing the club’s events. Hebrew School students participated in *Hanukkah* and *Purim* pageants, portraying characters such as Satan, Miss Irreligion, Miss Assimilation, and the Spirit of Moses. And while the entire community laid the groundwork for their *shul*’s first hundred years, the Ladies’ *Mizrachi* Brigade devoted itself to the future of the Jewish people as a whole by promoting “the rehabilitation of Palestine.”

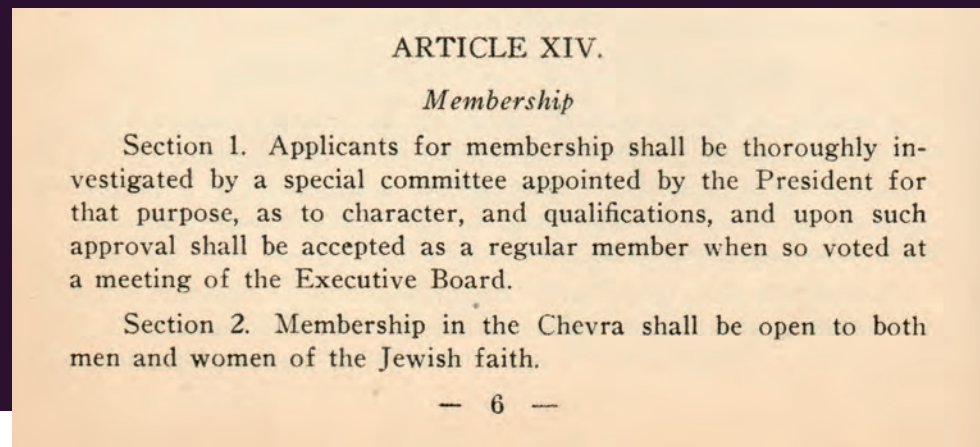
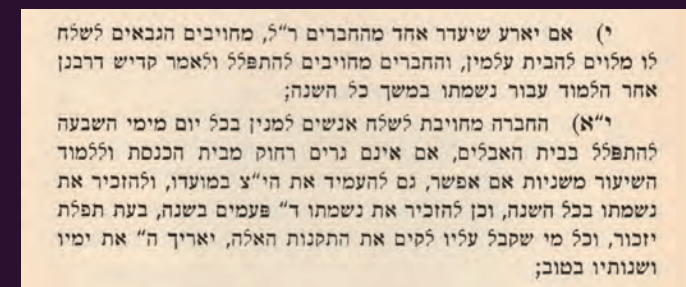
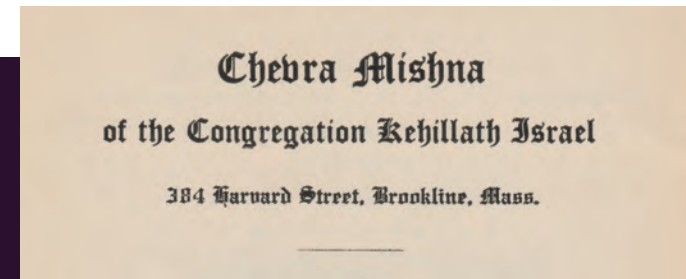
KI’s commitment to strict Orthodoxy soon shifted. Before Rabbi Epstein arrived in 1925, congregants voted in favor of mixed seating during prayer. President Rudnick appreciated the potential consequences of this decision and implored the women of the congregation, “I plead with the ladies of this community, who were so eager to sit with their husbands and children, that they show their appreciation by giving us their full support...and also to help us spiritually to make this Temple a real house of God.”

Nonetheless, the decision created a permanent rift. Some members left and established the “strictly Orthodox” Congregation Sons of Israel, predecessor of today’s Young Israel. KI transitioned from Orthodoxy to traditional-Conservative in an effort to straddle the worlds of Judaism and Americanism. This effort also reflected the community’s “in-between-ness”: not rigidly doctrinal, yet eager to embrace tradition; at once Jewish and American; nascent, but flourishing. KI began a process of maturation.

The Testimonial marks the strong foundation from which they were able to grow. Since its founding, KI has developed into one of Greater Boston’s most prominent



This 1924 document outlines and codifies the religious practices of the synagogue.



Of particular note is that membership was open to both men and women of the Jewish faith.



PRESIDENT JOSEPH RUDNICK

**THE PRESIDENT'S APPEAL**

I want to appeal to the young men and women of this community, or the so called "victors" that they must at once show their interest as they have promised that they would do so if this congregation would fulfill their wish. There is no excuse now for anyone to stay away, or refuse to give their support to the Temple, or not to pay their contributions which have been pledged. The issue was settled in your favor and it is your duty to do your utmost to put this congregation on a high standard in every way.

I plead with the ladies of this community, who were so eager to sit with their husbands and children, that they show their appreciation by giving us their full support and assist us in raising funds for the Congregation and also to help us spiritually to make this Temple a real House of God.

Writing in the KI Chronicle in February 1925, President Rudnick implores those who fought to sit together to please attend services.

**THE MIRIAM CLUB**

The Miriam Girls, after a period of some inactivity, are now having very successful meetings. At a recent election the following girls were elected: President, Frances Rozen; Vice-President, Muriel Sherman; Treasurer, Natalie Broudy; Secretary, Muriel Kodis; Publicity Agent, Judith Thurman; Assistant Publicity Agent, Evelyn Pinkerton.

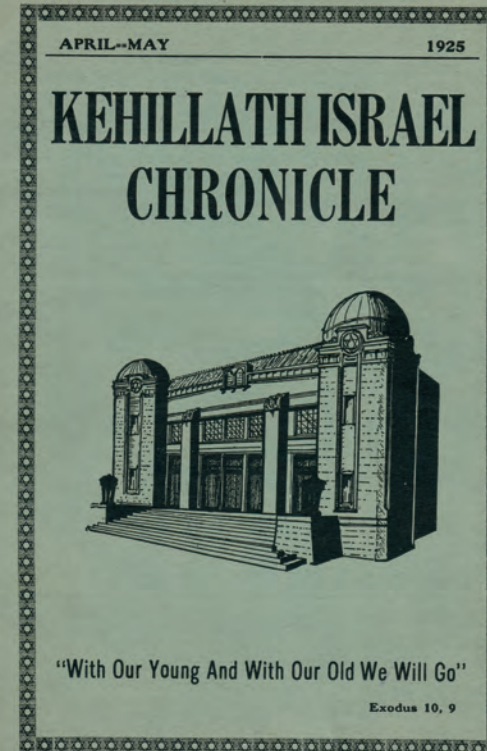
The club meets every Sunday at 11.30 a. m. After a short business meeting, there is usually a speaker to address the girls.

At the Lag Ba-Omer party which was given to all the Hebrew and Sunday School children, the Miriam girls assisted by serving to the hundred and fifty children that attended.

**WOMAN TO PREACH AT TEMPLE KEHILLATH ISRAEL**

Tonight, for the first time in the history of Temple Kehillath Israel, Harvard st, Brookline, a woman will occupy the pulpit and deliver the sermon. Mrs Irma Lindheim, president of the National Hadassah, will be the speaker, and the night will be known as "Hadassah Night."

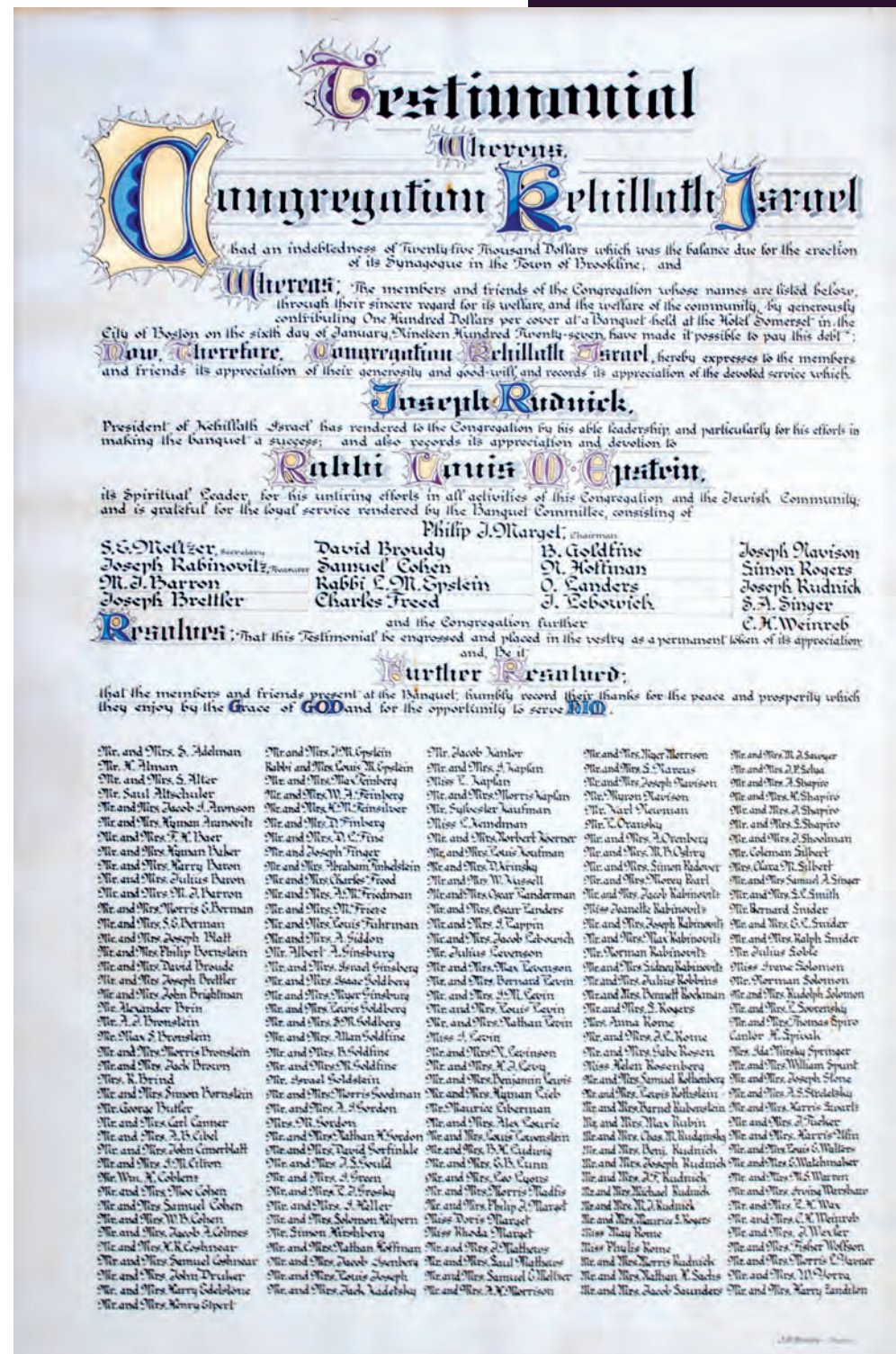
It is expected that the members of the Hadassah Societies of Greater Boston will be present in large numbers. The services will be conducted by Rabbi Louis M. Epstein.





synagogues. It remains an example of dynamic traditionalism—a community that endeavors to uphold Judaism’s age-old rituals and ethos while remaining open to change. Now KI is entering its next hundred years and American Jews are redefining their relationship with tradition, just as their predecessors did a century ago. Could the congregants listed in the Testimonial see the fruits of their vision, they would no doubt be astounded. We, too, would probably feel the same if we could foresee the changes that the coming decades have in store for KI.

**Annie Davis** learned to walk, talk, and *daven* at KI. She is a recent graduate of Johns Hopkins University with a degree in History and an abiding love of music and theater. Since 2010, she has served as a Park Ranger and volunteer at five different National Parks, from Boston to the Grand Canyon.



The list of donors to the \$100 Banquet of 1927 which helped pay off the mortgage of the Synagogue Building.



The committee from the One Hundred Dollar Banquet, January 1927

A panoramic photograph of the 1927 dinner at the Somerset ballroom. Over 300 people attended and Mordechai Kaplan, then at the Jewish Theological Seminary, was the guest speaker.

