

Congregation Anshe Chesed's One Hundred Anniversary "Planting a Tree"

The Beginning – 1914-1930

Imagine that you are a "pioneer" migrating to the rural community of Linden Township. What would you find? What was Linden like, 100 years ago? According to "This is Linden", authored by Lauren Pancurak Yeats, "Linden was separated into two distinct municipalities, a borough and a township. Both had few streets, an abundance of farmland, and property for sale at affordable prices."

- Yes, there was electricity. In fact, Thomas Alva Edison experimented with lighting and electricity in an area that encompassed Linden Township, over 30 years before.
- While Wood Avenue was just a dirt road traversed by many horses, wagons and buggies, St. Georges Avenue may have been paved and holding the distinction of being one of the oldest roads in New Jersey.
- There were very few cars, but there was a police department, a fire department and even a Board of Health.
- There were telephones, 19 of them in the town in 1903, more in 1914.
- There was a post office, though the building that presently houses the main post office would not be built until 1938.
- Most of the area was farmland, including the Lampert Dairy Farm, owned by Jews who were synagogue members.
- For entertainment, there was dog-track racing.
- What about Jews?
 - In 1914, Linden had the 2nd largest Jewish population in Union County.
 - There were two synagogues – One was Congregation Agudath Achim Anshe, the city's first shul to boast its own home at the corner of Chandler and St. Georges Avenue (1911). In 1924, it moved to St. Georges Avenue. With tinsmiths, blacksmiths and businessmen moving from New York, the founders hoped that the synagogue would grow and prosper. It did thrive until Jews began moving to the more suburban parts of Linden.
 - A second early synagogue was Ahavas Achim Anshe of Tremley. There were 11 charter members including Samuel Mopsick (the founding president), Isadore Kalish, Joseph Samuel Duchin, Herman Coplan, Isaac Itzkowitz, Julius Levine, Morris Fishkin, Nathan Gimpeloff and Samuel Duchin. They would meet in private homes until they received property in 1920 between Wood Avenue and Clinton Street and came to be known as the 18th Street Shul.
 - It was in 1914 that Congregation Anshe Chesed was born.
 - Jewish immigrants who had come to Linden and lived north of the railroad around Wood Avenue got together to figure out how to preserve the faith of their fathers. Hardworking but dedicated, this group decided to rent space in the home of Samuel and Rebecca Berzon, 300 East Price Street so that they could conduct services and have a Hebrew School for their children.
 - Many of these early families have descendants who are still members of Congregation Anshe Chesed.

- Harry Rabkin
 - Hymen Levine
 - Louis Kurland
 - Max Feinberg
 - Joseph Weitzman
 - Louis Feldstein
 - Barnet Rakin
 - David Winetsky
 - Samuel Freiman
- From the rented rooms, in 1918 the congregation acquired property on East Blancke Street between Maple Avenue and Roselle Street to construct its first synagogue building. It served this community for only 3 years and can be seen today as a two-family house at 537 East Blancke Street. Among the families who joined the parishioners throughout these beginning years were these people, again some names familiar today:
 - Philip Weitzman
 - Jacob Siegel
 - Philip Margulies
 - Louis Levine
 - Joseph Engel
 - William Schmidt
 - Adolph Braun
 - And the Jews kept coming. Quickly outgrowing the Blancke Street facilities, the congregation looked around for larger quarters and in 1921 acquired the land at the corner of East Blancke Street and Maple Avenue. In 1922, amidst much joy, the synagogue was opened and it was to last Congregation Anshe Chesed over 30 years. That building stood for many years and after the synagogue left this property, it functioned as the headquarters of the Linden PAL. It was knocked down in the beginning of the 21st century.
 - To fulfill the needs of the ever-increasing Jewish population in Linden, in 1921 the congregation hired its first full time Rabbi and Cantor, Rabbi Morris Baicofsky. Rabbi Baicofsky had just arrived from Bialystok, Poland when he assumed the spiritual leadership and is credited with inspiring generations of Linden Jews, with his religious knowledge and commitment. He would serve Congregation Anshe Chesed until 1946 as its Rabbi and until 1972 as its Cantor. When members reminisce about the “old days” of Anshe Chesed, Rabbi Baicofsky is often the center of those memories. He taught youngsters in Cheder and for Bar Mitzvah, married couples and of course buried members. His influence was pervasive and Rabbi Baicofsky was the center of the synagogue’s Jewish world.
 - Lay leaders also served the congregation, including representatives of many of the founding families. The Gabboyim were Mr. Louis Feldstein and Mr. Joseph Weitzman. The presidents during this period and even a bit into our next period are listed in a plaque as you enter the synagogue. An “old timer” questions whether the listing is actually accurate on the

plaque, but I provide you the names of all the men who served from 1914-1937.

- Harry Rabkin
- Philip Margulies
- Joseph Weitzman
- Adolf Braun
- Joseph Engel
- Hyman Levine
- Louis Levine
- Louis Feldstein

As Congregation Anshe Chesed was planting its roots in Linden, just as the proverbial tree finds a home, events outside of the community impacted the small congregation.

- World War I had a significant impact. Many immigrants came to the United States as a result of the war in Europe and found their way to Linden. Others who were already here, fought for the United States including Harry Weitzman (from the Borough) and Samuel Feinberg, Nathan Gushin, and Sam Mehrman (from the Township). Another impact of World War I was the creation of manufacturing in Linden, including Standard Aircraft, near Elizabeth Avenue.
- The “Roaring Twenties” saw enormous changes in life as Lindenites knew it. Movies were introduced; cars became more plentiful; and communication by telephone increased.
- In the early twenties, immigration from Europe and settlements reached a peak. I share a personal story. My mother-in-law, Rita Weitzman, accompanied her brother and family to Ellis Island in the 1980’s, as a tourist returning to her point of entry to the US over 50 years before. When the tour guide asked if anyone had come through Ellis Island, only Rita raised her hand, explaining that she had entered in 1922 from Sokovalya, Poland. When she arrived, it was determined that she had an eye infection. While her brother was admitted to the “land of golden streets”, Rita remained in the Ellis Island infirmary for a week. Had it not cleared up, she would have been deported back to Poland. Her story is similar to many others.
- In 1925, the city of Linden as we know it today was formed, with the Borough uniting with the Township. As Linden grew and developed, so did Congregation Anshe Chesed. The tree took root. Just as no one really knows what will sprout from a seedling, so our forefathers had no idea of the direction of the synagogue. They had faith.

Congregation Anshe Chesed's 100th Anniversary Script 2

“The Tree Takes Root”

A Period of Growth – 1930-1954

The tree planted in 1914, representative of our synagogue, developed new roots and flourished. During this period, the synagogue continued to attract new members and to grow both religiously and literally, even as changes were occurring. Think about the time period – 1930-1954!

Events in the world impacted Linden, Congregation Anshe Chesed, and its members during this tumultuous time period. First, there was the Depression in the 1930's. While there were some support services within the synagogue, such as those provided by the Ladies' Auxiliary, times were challenging. However, Linden was in a unique position to create primary employment opportunities and support secondary ones as well. Chemicals, automobiles, and oil were vital national commodities and Linden was able to provide these. Later on, as the war became a reality, aircraft and other manufacturing sprung up.

Ironically, the depression was a time when there was a lot of growth in Linden. Some came from the Lower East Side of New York; others came from Newark or other urban areas, seeking a more suburban environment. Still others came from overseas, some before the war and some after.

As war noises became louder in Europe and life became increasingly difficult for Jews, the pull of those “golden streets in America” was very strong. The following families who came to Anshe Chesed from Germany and its environs would impact synagogue life significantly:

- Ilse and Teddy Katz – Teddy served as an effective president for many years – and terms.
- Ruth and Bob Markman – Ruth was the Hebrew school teacher and later ran Congregation Anshe Chesed's nursery program while Bob served as Gabbai for many years.
- Gertrude Weil – We now have educational programs made possible by Mrs. Weil's generous bequest. She considered our synagogue her family.
- Alfred Kahn, brother to Mrs. Weil, served as gabbai and overall Shul manager for many years. He turn-keyed his knowledge to his mentee Leonard Neuringer, teaching him to hold on the “principal” and to manage charity funds judiciously.
- The Rudnitzky family continues to contribute to the life in our synagogue to today, with Elliot serving as president for 6 years and then both Sandye and Elliot co-chairing our 80th anniversary celebration.

With FDR's ascendancy as president, the Democratic Party became strong. Lou Rakin and Lewis Winetsky were instrumental in the formation of the Democratic Club of Linden. Louis Weitzman was the Assistant Tax Collector (later to become the City Tax Collector.) In the transition from a rural environment to an industrial economy, opportunities continued to grow for Jews. Morris Winetsky, for example, bought the town's newspaper, *The Linden Observer*, though this was for a short time.

During this period, many of the retail businesses on Wood Avenue were opened by Jewish entrepreneurs. For a complete listing, see our Power Point. Does anyone at your table remember any of these businesses?

It seemed that practically every professional in town was Jewish and these included doctors, dentists and attorneys. Dr. Abraham Barr served as the community's first physician. Joseph Engel built the first apartment house. Louis Levine was the first Jewish member of the Linden Board of Education. Philip Cohen was the City Attorney (to be followed by Lewis Winetsky) while Louis Rakin was the city's first Jewish magistrate. In later years other Jewish leaders arose, such as Emanuel Bedrik as Superintendent of Schools, Abraham J. Frankel as Director of Public Welfare and Jerome Krueger as City Councilman and later, as City Attorney. Graduates from Linden High School distinguished themselves in a wide variety of fields and attended the most prestigious schools.

Also during this time period, the rise of Hitler occurred, as well as World War II. Jews from Linden fought in this war and died. For a listing of these, there is a plaque in our synagogue so that they can be remembered to this day.

With the end of the war, many Shoah survivors made their way to Linden. A term Rabbi Dworken would fondly use for these families was "Greeners" or "Greenas." It was a derivation of the term "greenhorn" and was not viewed negatively, with the families using it themselves as a badge of distinction. The Schlesinger brothers – Ziggy and Jake- encouraged their cousin Lee Weinberg and her husband, Isadore, to come to Linden. Having no place to live, the Weinbergs moved into the home of Whitey and Becky Grumet, thus forming a life-long friendship and developing a positive environment for others to come, including the Brunners, the Fursts, the Jablons, the Kanars , the Krakhauers and the Zylberbergs. In addition, the Golds and Kaufmans made their way from Israel and the Moores from the Netherlands.

A very special relationship developed with Rabbi Nathan Zuber, congregational Rabbi of the Roselle Street Synagogue, and the "greeners" from the Frank Street synagogue. Rabbi Zuber had a life-long connection with so many Jewish families in the Linden-Roselle area. His reputation was widespread as a kind and generous man with a remarkable mind and memory for Talmud. Rabbi Zuber was the unofficial "Rav's Rav" of Congregation Anshe Chesed. These members with a unique history brought with them an appreciation for freedom and America, as well as a need to perpetuate their Judaism and they played an important role within our synagogue.

In 1948, the Congregation members saw the realization of their dreams. The State of Israel was born. The synagogue members played an important role on the Jewish world scene. Workers and facilities were available for such activities as United Jewish Appeal, the Joint Distribution Committee, Zionist movements, Yeshiva institutions, and Israel Bonds. There were speakers at the Blancke Street Shul such as Jimmy Roosevelt, son of Franklin and Eleanor and Mayor Briscoe, first Jewish Mayor of Dublin.

Against the background of the depression, WWII, the Holocaust, the arrival of immigrants, the prosperity after the war, and the birth of Israel, Congregation Anshe Chesed flourished. As we look closer at synagogue life, during these decades, one can make connections between these events and how the synagogue reflected the philosophy of its founders and incorporated newcomers:

1. The structure of the Blancke Street synagogue represented the orthodoxy of its membership. On the first floor, there were classrooms and a social hall. Worshipers mounted outside stairs to reach the main sanctuary and the men's section. Women climbed another set of stairs to reach their section on the 3rd floor.
2. Throughout this period, a variety of rabbis served Congregation Anshe Chesed. As noted before, Rabbi Baicofsky served as rabbi until 1946 and then as Rabbi Emeritus and cantor until 1972, returning as rabbi for 2 years in the late 40's. In 1946, Rabbi Horowitz was hired. He was succeeded by Rabbi Joseph Renov from 1949 – 1953. In 1953, Rabbi Aharon Shapiro brought new ideas and enthusiasm to Congregation Anshe Chesed. Rabbi Shapiro served for over 20 years and is credited with taking the synagogue into the 2nd half of the 20th century.
3. There was a Ladies' Aid and Auxiliary in the synagogue that provided social activities and fund raising opportunities; they also rolled bandages and took up various collections for the war effort. They provided the Friday night Oneg Shabbot, complete with garbanzo beans. There were fashion shows and home produced talent shows. Their cooking was well-known, led by "balabustas" such as Mrs. Weiner and Mrs. Rafelson and eventually, Mrs. Gordon. Later on others would join their ranks and these Shul-sponsored dinners developed into the Businessmen's Lunch and Dinner.
4. When the men went to fight in WWII, the Men's Chorus, an integral part of the services, particularly the High Holy Days, changed. Choir members such as Joe Lieb, Sam Rafelson and Mendy Rafelson had gone to war. Now the younger boys sang – the Zitomer boys, Fred and Merwin, Harry Kantrowitz, Hy Rafelson, Morty Weitzman and Perry Lieb.
5. Fund-raising for the synagogue was a very different matter from what it is today. Aliyot were auctioned off from the Bima and families and consortia would bid against one another. Sylvia Scheininger remembers Mr. Feldstein calling out the bids in Yiddish and the excitement of finding out who was the successful bidder. It certainly raised much needed money. This same practice was followed for the Yom Kippur appeal. Annual contributions were announced by Mr. Winetsky for the entire congregation to hear. Payment was made at the post-Yom Kippur gathering, where a table was set up and people came to pay their obligations. It was not high-tech, but effective.
6. The presidents who served during this period continued the tradition of dedication and service:
 - Dr. Hyman M. Glasston
 - Harry A Levine
 - Benjamin Rosen
 - William Reibel
 - Isadore Posnock
 - Lewis Winetsky
 - Samuel Hammer

Synagogue life at Anshe Chesed during the 1930's, 40's and early 50's was characterized by an adherence to traditional Judaism, including separate seating, traditional liturgy, and learning. While many congregants were comfortable with this, there was a growing number who were pressing for changes. They wanted mixed seating and more English in the service. Conservative Judaism was most appealing to this group. Various solutions were considered. Should two

synagogues share the same space? What happens to families who were divided between the two camps? The strength of members who believed in the Orthodox mission of the synagogue such as Teddy Katz, Isadore Posnock, the Levines and Lewis Winetsky was sorely tested, as was the new Rabbi, Rabbi Shapiro. Juxtapose the philosophical split with the need for significant repairs in the Blancke Street synagogue and Congregation Anshe Chesed was faced with a major crisis. How would the synagogue survive if the membership split? Would there be enough money to build a new facility?

Congregation Anshe Chesed's 100 Anniversary Script -3 *"A Tree is Replanted"*

Change – 1954-1977

And changes came. Approximately 1/3 of the congregation left to start a new Conservative synagogue in Linden. This separated friend from friend; families were torn apart and interpretation of religious observance was hotly debated.

Nevertheless, the need for a new building was clear. The Blancke Street Synagogue was in need of major repairs. Even with the exodus of members, it was too small to meet the needs of those remaining. It was long thought that the Hebrew School of 175 students with 6 teachers certainly needed more space. Perhaps most important, the locus of the Jewish population had shifted to the Sunnyside area, the location of the breakaway Conservative synagogue. There was concern that if the Blancke Street Synagogue was not moved, there would be a further risk of losing additional members.

At this time, the members in the two other Linden synagogues –AAA in Tremley Point and the synagogue near Roselle--expressed interest in and began melding into the membership of Congregation Anshe Chesed. This was particularly true as new homes were being built in the Sunnyside area. The decision was made to move and land was purchased on the corner of Orchard Terrace and St. Georges Avenue on May 25, 1954, thus depriving Linden of another movie theatre, the original purpose for the land.

In the new building's fund raising booklet, there is a description of the Shul philosophy: "Our future is ahead of us. We live in a world of challenge and uncertainty but it our duty to carry on the traditions, the spirit, the educational program we have inherited from our ancestors. What we learned from them, we must pass on to our children." It was the belief that the synagogue was at a crossroads. As Sam Hammer, the Shul's president at the time, reflected, "We must go backward or forward.....This is an historic turning point in the career of our Congregation."

The architects – Silberstein and Silberstein, from Linden--designed the building to not only serve religious needs but also to serve social and cultural needs as well. It was intended to be a synagogue community center. Many of the members contributed not only money but expertise, such as Weinberg Electric, Phil Kuznet's plumbing and M. Gordon Construction Company, which built section one of the synagogue.

In a wonderful discussion of synagogue architecture of the period, Kovi Schiff, son, grandson, and great grandson of the Winetsky-Schiff families was so stunned by the beauty of the stained glass windows and intrigued by the architecture of the synagogue that he wrote a college paper about it. In the paper, Kovi describes the modern architecture of the 1950's shul: "This model may be traced back to similar synagogue center complexes (colloquially termed 'shuls with pools') first introduced and popular in America around the 1920's, such as the Brooklyn Jewish Center. The style experienced a renaissance of sorts in post-WWII America with the widespread trend of the population movement away from the cities and out to the suburbs, where expanses of wide-open space lent themselves to sprawling building layouts with articulated spaces."

Kovi also describes the abstract artistic elements: “Outside, an artist’s interpretive design of the congregation’s name containing a menorah is mounted over a stucco front....The main sanctuary features a large metalwork interpretation of a menorah mounted conspicuously above the ark on the eastern wall, and is flanked on its northern and southern walls by beautiful stained glass windows incorporating an abstract collage of Jewish scripture, sayings and symbols.”

Construction for the synagogues was divided into 2 sections. The first section was the gymnasium, classrooms, offices and the pool. The congregation moved into this part of the synagogue before Rosh Hashanah, 1956. Services were held in the gym. Norma Fuerst Allen remembers a dinner served in the gym, when there were no kitchens and all of the food was prepared at Blancke Street Synagogue and driven over to Orchard Terrace.

By the late 1950’s, the sanctuary section of the synagogue was finished and now the synagogue was complete. The building housed many activities – an active basketball team, Jewish Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, a vibrant NCSY chapter, and other groups for children and adults. It was during this period that one of the largest gatherings of NCSY youth conventions was held in the synagogue. There was a nursery school and a very active Hebrew school, directed by Marta Shapiro and Aaron Mann and serving over 150 students. While boys had traditional Bar Mitzvot, the girls had a group ceremony on a Sunday.

Rabbi Jeffrey Sachs, a later graduate of the congregation Hebrew School, explained the times and their relationship to the religious choices that were made during the 1950’s. There was a very strong push from the Conservative Movement, as well as from scholars, such as Dr. Sklar from Brandeis, who were predicting the death knell of Orthodoxy. There was a distinct pull not to look back but to look ahead to the 2nd half of the 20th century for inspiration. Several examples of decisions that were made at the time include:

- Creating a mechitzah, but a low one.
- Conducting the service from the raised Bima
- Walking the Torah through the women’s section

Later on, these decisions would be reconsidered but at the time, they were consistent with the majority’s views.

The Junior Congregation was well-attended and a part of the Hebrew School experience. In fact, you could not be a Bar Mitzvah at Congregation Anshe Chesed unless you attended Junior Congregation. Minyanim were held and there was a sense of vibrancy and excitement throughout the building and the community.

To keep the synagogue running, the lay community contributed. In the 1950’s, Mr. Bauman and Alfred Kahn continued to function in many leadership roles, as did Teddy Katz. Harry Shendell was in charge of the gym and its activities. The choir was directed by Rabbi Baicofsky and then Joe Lieb. The Gabbai was Alex Kimmelman. Fund-raising began changing during this time period as well. The names and amounts that contributors gave was no longer announced publicly but changed to the present custom of private solicitation and collection.

While the religious activities flourished, so did the social and cultural activities:

- The Businessmen’s Lunch and later Dinner attracted large number of attendees, including city officials, the Board of Education members, the retail community and the Kiwanis members. Head “balabusta” was Sara Simon who presided over the kitchen and directed her staff, Sadye Siskind, Elaine Davis, Goldie Glasston and members of the Gordon family, including the matriarch, Mrs. Rose Gordon, as well as many others.
- The Rummage Sale, an excellent fund raiser, was a twice yearly activity, later on managed by Elaine Davis and Linda Pakulski,.
- Original shows continued and took great effort and time. Hazel Levine was often the director and talented members showed up to fill the roles. Who can forget the men in drag, or the dancing women, or Carol Gelber’s beautiful singing solo?
- During the 1970’s, our annual Street Fair began. Orchard Terrace was closed off and hundreds of visitors went from table to table buying wares. There were rides for the children. Breakfast was served and later on hot dogs were grilled. Everyone had a great time, thanks to co-chairpeople, Larry and Norma Fuerst.

The Sisterhood was an essential organization in the life of the synagogue. It had morphed from the Ladies’ Auxiliary to the Sisterhood and every female member of the Shul was a potential member of the organization. Fundraising was its chief function and over the years, the Sisterhood was responsible for many thousands of dollars donated to the Shul – with no strings attached. One of the chief and consistent revenue makers was the Golden Book Cards Project, still headed by Elaine Davis. It was the Sisterhood who ran all of the holiday parties--from Chanukah to Purim—and provided holiday decorations for the Bima. For many years, Lyla Weisbrot ran the Mishloach Manot. As guardian of our funds, Leonard Nueringer praised the hard and lucrative work of the “Sisterhood Ladies.”

Meetings were held regularly with updates on contemporary Jewish issues, with invited speakers discussing a range of topics and even book reviews. It was in the 1950’s that the Neusteins came to Linden, although Dr. Charles recalls driving through Clark and seeing the signs for German groups and wondered if they had made the correct decision. Roz brought her talent for dancing to the Sisterhood, providing programs and classes that lasted for many years.

Throughout the history of Congregation Anshe Chesed, volunteers were the essential backbone providing religious support, financial support, time, and effort. In some way, each of you has contributed to this history and we thank you. The presidents who served during this time were:

- Morris Levine
- Milton Feldman
- Ben Belnick
- Michael Posnock
- Dr. Theodore Katz
- Harold Scheininger
- Dr. Lawrence E. Fuerst

- Dr. Theodore Katz

Remember the times – 1954-1977? There were many things going on in the world:

1. The McCarthy Era when many people were called before the House Un-American Activities Committee and the Cold War was at its height.
2. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's
3. The attitudes of civil disobedience, generated by the "hippie generation" and opposition to the Vietnam War.
4. Space exploration
5. The gas crisis in the early 1970's, when waiting on line for gas for 3 hours was not uncommon.
6. The activities to support Soviet Jewry
7. The various wars in Israel, including the 1967 war with the reuniting of Jerusalem and the 1973 war, which resulted in the return of the Sinai to Egypt.

In Linden, there were socio-economic factors that had an impact on Congregation Anshe Chesed. While many members lived in Linden, throughout this period there was an exodus of children of these same members, who relocated to more western areas, such as Scotch Plains, Westfield, Clark, and Watchung. These same younger members continued to support Congregation Anshe Chesed and reinforced their commitment to a modern Orthodox synagogue. As Linden evolved, there was a beginning of a concern as to what would happen to "our beloved Shul."

Congregation Anshe Chesed's One Hundred Anniversary – Script 4 “The Tree Matures”

Maturity – 1977-1999

The years of maturity from 1977-1999 were challenging for the synagogue and its members:

- Members were growing older and moving to Florida or senior living environments.
- Some died.
- Younger members or those families with children were moving to communities with better schools.
- The population of Linden was changing, attracting those of a lower socio-economic stratum – new immigrants or minority populations.
- Some of the traditional Jewish schools such as Solomon Schechter School and what would come to be known as the Kushner Academy had just begun high schools, although JEC was already established.
- The nation was in a period of unrest with economic swings.
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In some ways, this synagogue always seems to find the right leaders. In the beginning, Rabbi Baicofsky was the leader who helped the Congregation develop and grow for more than 50 years. It was he who fostered an appreciation of tradition and the meaning of having a strong religious home. Rabbi Shapiro saw us through the new building and period of change. In one of the more challenging times, particularly in the late '80's and 90's, the Shul appointed a new Rabbi – Rabbi Steven Dworken--in 1977. He brought with him a beautiful family with a learned wife, Susan, as well as a love of Judaism, a great sense of humor and most important – hope for the future.

When Jane Freeman penned a memorial remembrance of Rabbi Dworken, she spoke about how she chose Congregation Anshe Chesed from all the synagogues in the area. Barry and Jane had just moved from New York to Westfield: “Friends were stunned by my choice. The congregation was aging and had very few children. That meant no Hebrew School, no cohorts for my child. It was a small congregation. Almost every member had belonged since birth – each had a family history with the shul. How would we ever fit in? Why would we want to? And just where was Linden anyway? I answered each of them the same – I chose my shul for its Rabbi. It was as simple as that.”

Her words also describe the kind of Rabbi that Rabbi Dworken was: “Rabbi Dworken was warm and wise, funny and emotional. I began to feel the service personally, to welcome the space each week. Rabbi Dworken greeted me like family each time we met – never asking me about joining, never asking for a donation, but always making me feel at home. After a year, I think he finally broached the subject: ‘Jane, it might be nice to support a shul. It doesn't have to be this one, but you may want to join somewhere.’ I laughed out loud, realizing that I had joined in spirit only, but no one had complained.”

The sentiment expressed by Jane Freeman was spoken about directly by Rabbi Jeffrey Sachs, a graduate of Congregation Anshe Chesed's Hebrew School, now a noted scholar and Rabbi in Israel. When he returned to the Shul as this year's Scholar in Residence, he spoke emotionally about his mentor, Rabbi Dworken. In the footnotes to his chapter on "What a Difference Place Makes: Reflections on Religious-Secular Divides in Israel and America," Rabbi Saks states, "I can only attest to the catalytic impact that my own synagogue rabbi and his family played in my life as a young teenager. I am speaking of Rabbi Steven M. Dworken, z"l, of Congregation Anshe Chesed in Linden, N.J." (277).

Rabbi Dworken impacted individuals to bring them to the Shul or closer to Orthodoxy. He encouraged families to send their children to day schools and both he and Susan opened their homes to congregants. They provided role models for others and broke down the barriers between lay and religious individuals. Rabbi Dworken made each member feel special. It was he who spearheaded the construction of the Eruv, under the supervision of Rabbi Teitz of Elizabeth. Rabbi Dworken's Shabbos and Yontiff sermons were inspiring. Leonard Neuringer remembers asking him if he could somehow compile them so we could reread them later.

His personality extended far beyond the synagogue. Rabbi Ron Hoffberg, the Rabbi of the Cranford Synagogue, and Rabbi Shawn Zell of Clark were dear friends of the Dworken family and there were often activities shared by these synagogues. Even the long time mayor of Linden, John Gregorio, called Rabbi Dworken his friend. He considered himself an "ex-officio" member of the synagogue and would often attend affairs here. He asked Rabbi Dworken to speak at this funeral because Mayor Gregorio considered Rabbi Dworken as HIS Rabbi. Unfortunately that was not to be.

During Rabbi Dworken's tenure of 23 years, UJA, Israel Bonds and Federation continued to be important. Such speakers came to Linden as Senator Bill Bradley (New Jersey's own), Senator Wayne Morse (Oregon) and Ambassador Yitzak Rabin, then Ambassador from Israel to US. and Chaim Potok, author of The Chosen.

This inclusive spirit created vibrancy within the synagogue, despite the declining membership. The lay community responded. Leonard Neuringer continued the role of "Shul Manager," making sure that the money was there to keep up Shul maintenance and payments. He took over this responsibility in the early 1980's, having been "shown the ropes" by Mr. Kahn and to this day, Leonard performs so many of these functions. Alfred Kahn and later Bob Markman and Edward Klein served as Gabboyim. Meanwhile Rabbi Dworken worked part time, beginning in 1989 for Yeshiva University, helping to place Rabboyim in Orthodox synagogues. He later became Executive Vice President of the Rabbinical Council of America. For two years, we were very fortunate to have an "Intern Rabbi," Rabbi Rueven Spolter. His classes were wonderful and members praised his work. He had the additional responsibility of helping to attract new members.

Another addition to the Congregation Family was the arrival of Cantor Shimon Vogel in 1983, who added many services. Not only did Cantor Vogel read Torah, but he chanted and sang for all our services. He taught our Bar and Bat Mitzvah students, so that they would be prepared

for their special days--and to this day, he prepares the explanation of the Torah portion of the week for the Shul bulletin.

In the office, Betty Heller, who worked during the 1960's and 1970's, was a friend to all. Gloria Parrish Cohen, mother of Sandi Newman, basically was Rabbi Dworken's "inside person." She kept the finances, ran off the Shofar, did the mailings and helped with many other jobs. Not only did we rely on Gloria--Rabbi Dworken did as well. We are grateful to her for many years of service. Following Gloria was Ted Rosenberg, first a member, then a Shul president, and finally our Shul Administrator. We are fortunate to have had several people over the years to assist us in maintaining the synagogue, including Joe Palmer, Reggie Mickens and his sister, Marilyn, and Anthony Peoples.

One of the unsung heroes of our Shul, is a gentleman who died before his time. Bobby Holtzberg never missed a minyan if he could help it. Twice a day, every day, Bobby would be counted in the "magic 10" and relied upon. He lit the Yahrzeit lights and was in charge of the board outside the synagogue that announced events and service schedules. He fulfilled his responsibilities quietly, without expecting thanks from anyone. When he died, he had years of sick leave accumulated from his job with the state of New Jersey, a testimony to his overall dedication.

We again turn to those people who gave so much of themselves to the Shul – the presidents. Serving during this period were:

- Charles Winetsky
- Theodore H. Rosenberg
- Dr. Theodore Katz
- Morton P. Weitzman
- Herb Jaffe
- Irving Sturm
- Co-presidents, Morton Weitzman and Charles Winetsky
- Leonard Neuringer

The Sisterhood functioned effectively during this period, with Minnette Raiffe, Roz Neustein and so many others helping to sustain it. There were fundraising activities that continued, so that money was generated for the Shul. Sisterhood members continued to do the Kiddishim for services and augment the various celebrations of holidays.

Ellen Winetsky, followed by Jane Freeman, chaired our well-attended "Sunday Breakfasts," catering not only to our stomachs but to our minds, souls and hearts. Jane and Ellen estimate that there were over 100 speakers during the life of the program. The committee that supported the breakfasts included Larry Weiner, Sid Isler, Marty Essner and especially, Harvey Kofman.

Visiting the sick and making sure that congregation members had basics were important functions of the Bikor Cholim and Chesed Committees, chaired by Ellen Winetsky and Harvey Kofman. Prior to the formal organization of these committees, these important mitzvot were done informally. Ruth Markman, for example, used to visit congregation members as did others.

Pearl Rakin, for example, would shop for those who could not get out. Other members regularly collected funds on an as-needed basis. With the formation of this committee, the services were formalized, with a clear function. Congregation members were provided services with calls, visits, meals, etc. when there was a need. In addition, Ellen and Harvey visited hospitals or nursing homes and provided services to local families in mourning.

The YAC Day Camp was an institution that was notable. While it did not begin with Rabbi Dworken, it certainly flourished. At its height, it had over 250 children. Many directors served the camp, from Fran Krebs to Abbie Halperin to Michael Newman and Ann Frank, Camp Administrator. It was the first Jewish day camp in the area- the only game in town. It generated enough profit, so that to this day, we are able to access the money. A by-product of the camp was romance among its staff. Sandi and Michael Newman met there as did Melissa Cohen and Todd Bernstein. The camp closed in August, 2002, as other camps opened in the area.

As the synagogue and the world raced toward the 21st century, there was a clear realization that life would be changing. Synagogue membership grappled with tough decisions. How was the synagogue going to sustain itself financially? Where were the new members going to come from? What would ultimately happen to the Synagogue?

“New Growth” ...Script 5

1999-Present

It is now 1999...Is there a doctor in the house? Anshe Chesed is in need of life support. The synagogue's future is precarious. Membership is dwindling as members move to retirement communities or that big retirement community in the sky...Gan Edin. Can Anshe Chesed survive or will the shul follow the path of 90% of other synagogues with an older membership-- and die a slow, painful death?

As we look around this room tonight, we know the answer. Anshe Chesed is alive and growing and our future is bright as we begin our next 100 years! How did this happen? A miracle? Yes. But a miracle due to faith, hard work, and the dedicated leadership of our Rabbis and synagogue members. To quote Dovid Helfgot: “The Rabbi provides the vision for the growth of the shul. He is the compass and sets the ship in the right direction; he charts the course.”

Rabbi Carey Friedman arrived in 1999 and with his wife, Marsha, and young family, and he began to make Anshe Chesed a home for young, Modern Orthodox families. Under his leadership, the Mechitza was raised, The Gertrude Weil Institute of Jewish Learning was instituted and the building of a mikvah was proposed. Rabbi Friedman was instrumental in the arrival of Yeshiva Zichron Leima, which provided needed revenue for the shul and gave hope that a substantial Jewish community could be developed in Linden.

Rabbi Friedman recruited our first five young families...our Pioneers. The Newmans and Helfgotts were among those first families who took the risk to move to Linden and raise their children here. Would there be Jewish children for their children to play with? Would there be other couples of their age? Would the money invested in their home hold its value? Later they were joined by the Leibowitz's and the Weiss'. Sandi and Michael Newman describe those early days: “It was hard with such a small group but we were friends with everyone. If anyone needed anything, we knew we could count on each other.”

In 2006, Rabbi Aryeh Stechler, his wife Danya and family came to Linden. As described by Josh Weiss, “Rabbi Stechler was noted for his scholarship, his vision for the shul and desire to see results.” Religiously, he initiated several new practices. The Torah was now carried only through the men's section with women able to kiss the Torah in the back of the sanctuary. Davening by the Ba'al Tefillah was moved to the sanctuary floor, facing the Bima, not on the Bima. Discussion of building a Mikvah was moved to the “front burner.” Little by little we were succeeding--6-8 families moved into Linden during this time.

It was time for the new generation to assume leadership roles. This transition is reflected in our presidents during this time. Norma Fuerst Allen, our only female president, served from 2000-2003. Elliot Rudnitzky served from 2003 to 2009 and was our longest serving President. Dovid

Helfgot became our first president of the “new “ generation, serving from 2009-2012. Sender Gross, our current president, has served since 2012.

Rabbi Joshua Hess, Naava, and their young family arrived in Linden in August, 2009, right before the High Holy Days. As Rabbi Hess’ tenure continues, the synagogue is truly fulfilling its promise; the willow tree is flourishing once again. His warmth and charisma continue to draw young families to Linden; his devotion to Torah and community ensure that they stay. His Dvar Torah’s remind us to find the best in ourselves, to live lives that reflect yiddishkeit. Now five years later, we look back in astonishment at what has been accomplished....The Ziga Roshansky Mikvah nears completion. New kosher options in the area include Clark Bagels, Rita’s, Dairy Queen and Shop-Rite Bakery. Approximately 30 new families have moved into Linden with others waiting in the wings. It is beautiful to see the shul on Shabbat with our older members joining with the young families davening, enjoying Kiddush together. Congregation Anshe Chesed is strong and flourishing. Thank you, Rabbi Hess. Thank you also to those leaders who worked closely with him during these past few years-- Dovid Helfgott, Josh Weiss, and Sender Gross. A special appreciation and grateful thanks go to our 21st century gabboyim including Dovid Helgott, Sender Gross, Richie Mayer, Charles Isler, and David Pincus.

Thank you, Michelle Pincus, for your efforts on behalf of membership—and to Justin Hirsch, who along with Josh Weiss, developed our youth program. Thank you also to Malka Isler who has taken our Gemillut Chesed Committee into the next century—with a computerized Meal Train! A special thank you thank you to Dassy Zell and Sandi Newman for their incredible catering accomplishments! Most importantly, thank you to the entire shul family. Linden is now firmly established on the Jewish map.

Tonight’s 100th Anniversary celebration represents Anshe Chesed at its finest—a perfect example of what can be accomplished when generations work together. Tonight’s landmark event is chaired by Norma Fuerst Allen and Sandi Newman. We’d like them to come up to the front. Ellen Winetsky is presenting the flowers from a very grateful and appreciative community, for all that Norma and Sandi have done to make this evening so successful. Thank you. [Note: Ellen will have the flowers and bring them to the front and present them to Sandi and Norma.]

When Jacob blesses his children on his deathbed, he curses the anger of Shimon and Levi saying their tribes will be divided among the people of Israel and will be lost. Why did one tribe survive while the other was lost?

The difference was that Shimon accepts Jacob’s verdict and considers himself doomed. He becomes the poorest tribe, passing into oblivion, merging with Yehuda.

Levi, however, was shocked to the core by this prophesy and decided to alter his ignominious fate. He undergoes a radical change of heart and habit and emerges as the spiritual leader of Am Yisrael. By sheer will and commitment, he defied his destiny, proving at some level that we are masters of our fate.

So, too, Anshe Chesed--after a glorious past--appeared destined to fail. Like Levi, our shul leaders did not listen to naysayers and negative prophecy. With determination, faith, and strong leadership, the synagogue has revived itself and is renewed. No longer on life support, Anshe Chesed is now a vibrant community viewed by young Orthodox families as a wonderful place to live and raise their children. So we say "thank you" to all who played a role in our "rebirth." We can be proud of what we have accomplished. We look forward to 100 more years of prayer and learning at Anshe Chesed. May we all enjoy many simchas here together. Let us raise our glasses and all say together: CHAZAK! CHAZAK! VENISCHAZEIK! Be strong. Be strong and may we be strengthened! L'CHAIM!!!!