

Wimple

Yitzhak

Robert Hambuch

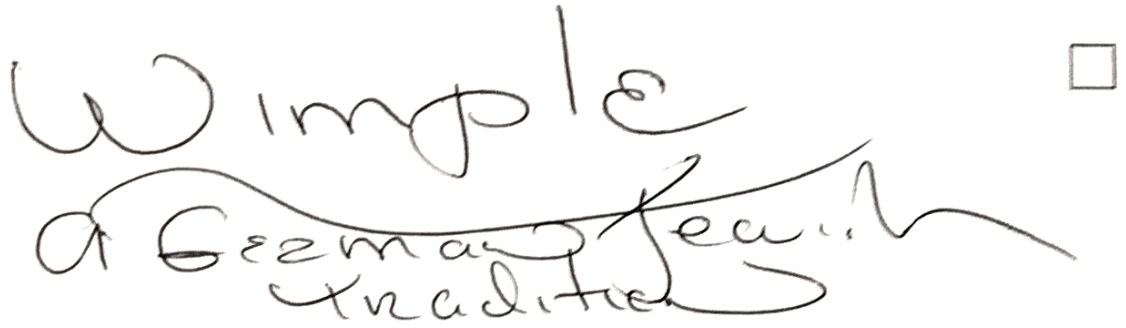
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May 1, 2017

Dear Margo

I am so sorry that I will not be with you for the Torah dedication. Enclosed please find a CD-ROM that survived the Holocaust (please do not clean it), an explanation of the German CD-ROM minhag and a brief history of our synagogue.

RIC VSN  
Best wishes  
Randy



By Herb Geduld

**JUDAISM ENCOMPASSES SUCH A KALEIDOSCOPE of cultures and customs that even an active, observant Jew can go through life and suddenly be confronted by a totally new facet of our diverse culture. It happened to me some years ago in Nice, France, where I had gone on business. I was passing the evening hours in my hotel watching French TV when a program on Jewish customs appeared.**

The wimple is an ornate, embroidered or painted cloth used to bind up a Torah scroll after it has been read. It is made from swaddling cloth used to bind a baby at his circumcision. Thus, almost from the moment of birth, a direct link is established between the child and the Torah.

**per minute  
or Less!**

[CLICK HERE!](#)

The custom of preparing a wimple -- the word means "cloth" or "veil" in old German -- began about 400 years ago in Germany and spread from there to Alsace, Switzerland, France and the Low Countries. As German Jews emigrated to other lands, especially America, they brought the custom with them but it has remained confined to a limited section of Ashkenazic Jewry.

After the circumcision, the swaddling cloth is cleaned and the boy's mother embroiders or paints the cloth with the child's name, birth date, blessings and appropriate Biblical phrases.

Many have families had wimples prepared by local artists with themes depicting the family history, occupation and hopes for their new-born son. Some superb examples of artistic wimples are in the collection of the Jewish Museum in New York and the Israel Museum. These usually include colorful Bar Mitzvah and wedding scenes in early anticipation of these happy future events.



Ever wish you could have your own Judaic instructor ...for free?

The custom of presenting the wimple to the synagogue varied from community to community. In some German congregations the completed wimple was brought to the synagogue as soon as the mother, according to Jewish law, was allowed to enter the synagogue after childbirth. In others, it was brought as late as the third birthday of the child.

The father of the child would be called to the Torah where he presented the wimple to the congregation. It was then used in the *gelilah*, or binding ceremony, after the Torah reading and remained on the Torah until the following week. The wimple was then placed in the synagogue's collection and brought out again to be used to bind the Torah when the boy became a Bar Mitzvah.

One of the poignant stories associated with the wimple occurred a few years ago at the

dedication of the exquisite new synagogue at the Haifa Technion. At the opening ceremonies, the synagogue was presented with a number of Torah scrolls that had been rescued from the Holocaust. One of the Technion professors, a refugee from Nazi Germany, was overcome with emotion when, upon being called up to the Torah, he found the scroll being read was bound with *his* wimple, given decades previously to his now destroyed childhood synagogue in Frankfurt.

the  
jerusalem  
fellowships

The preparation and presentation of a wimple has not died out. There are still a few families who practice this vanishing folk art. It is a beautiful, meaningful *minhag* (custom) which, in this age of hands-on Judaism, and our emphasis on decorative arts, is worthy of widespread rebirth and revival. ☺

Jewish historian, cultural maven, and JWR contributor Herb Geduld lives in Cleveland.

HISTORY: EZRA-HABONIM  
HABONIM  
CF  
Chicago

### The Jewish Center

It all started in the summer of 1935. All newcomers from Germany who lived on the south side of Chicago received invitations from Sinai Congregation for special High Holy Day services which were conducted in German at the Emil Hirsch Center, 4622 South Parkway, by Rabbi Herman Schaalman. These Reform services did not appeal to most of the worshippers, especially the older people. As a result, a group of young men and women organized the Jewish Center. They met in the spring of 1936 for a community Seder in a room provided by K.A.M. Temple. During the summer of 1936, various social events were held and the Center negotiated with Sinai for the establishment of a separate service for the High Holy Days. German liberal services were led by Rabbi Schaalman. Helmut Spitzer served as cantor, and Kurt Heim was the organist. Walter Rosenau was the first president of the Center when it instituted monthly Friday night and Festival services. Equally popular were the Sunday afternoon socials, which featured Jewish cultural programs. In 1937, Dr. Ewald Jaffe and Mr. Adolph Hesky served as cantors. By 1938-39, the Center reached an all time high membership of approximately 1600. In 1939, services were led by Rabbi Dr. Felix Lubasch. Later that year, Dr. Fritz Bamberger came to Chicago, was elected the spiritual leader of the Center, and conducted the High Holy Day services. A second service, which was necessary to accommodate the large membership, was conducted by Dr. Manfred Swarsenski. Mr. Isadore Horwitz succeeded to the presidency.

### The Friday Evening Congregation

Conservative Friday evening services began in October, 1939. Reverend Siegfried Weinberg, who was brought to Chicago by K.A.M. Temple, invited a small group of men to weekly Friday evening services. A choir, under the direction of Mr. Max Janowski, was added. Social gatherings followed the services. Mr. Eric Glaser became the first president, followed by Dr. Otto Koehler. Mr. Julius Steiermann succeeded him. In 1942, a Youth Group was created and two Hebrew classes were begun. In 1943, Cantor Lowenthal was brought to Chicago for the High Holy Day services. When Max Janowski joined the Navy, Mr. Alfred

Mandel took over as accompanist for the choir. In December 1944, the congregation moved to its own home at 56th Street and Ellis Avenue. There, Saturday morning, Bar Mitzvah, and Festival services were introduced. The new synagogue was chartered by the State of Illinois on April 20, 1945 under the new name of Habonim. Shortly thereafter merger talks were held with the Center.

### Habonim Jewish Center

On January 6, 1946, the merger was accomplished. A new charter was granted under the name Habonim Jewish Center, and Mr. Charles Burin was elected first president. In August 1946, Rabbi Bernard Wechsberg of Denver, Colorado was appointed its spiritual leader. A Religious School was opened in 1946 for 16 students. Rabbi Wechsberg established the Weekly Adult Education Forum. In addition to the previously organized Sisterhood and Youth Group, the Men's Club, Senior Group (later known as the Mr. and Mrs. Club) and the P.T.A. were established. A volunteer choir, under the direction of Mr. Max Janowski, continued until 1959, when a professional quartet was engaged. In 1947, the first Consecration Service for the beginning students of the Religious School was held. In 1948 the Bat Mitzvah ceremony and the Kristallnacht Memorial Service were introduced. A second home was established at 53rd Street and University Avenue. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on March 21, 1948, and the synagogue was dedicated on November 7, 1948, ten years after Kristallnacht. The dedication ceremonies lasted for an entire week, beginning with a Torah procession from 56th Street and Ellis Avenue. An annual Melaveh Malkah program was introduced in 1951. Sunday School for 5 and 6 year-olds also opened that year. As many members moved to South Shore, the synagogue building was sold in 1956. The synagogue moved temporarily to 57th Street and Harper Avenue. On June 24, 1956, groundbreaking ceremonies took place at the new location of 76th Street and Phillips Avenue. The synagogue was dedicated on September 8, 1957. The name was shortened to Congregation Habonim. The cantors who had served Habonim were Ludwig Rosenbusch and Reverend Mendel Lewkowitz. In 1955, Reverend Leopold Fleischer of San Francisco was appointed Chazzan. Rabbi Philip Rabinowitz succeeded Rabbi Wechsberg and was followed by Rabbi Naphtali Rubinger. Victor Wolf followed Charles Burin as President, who was then succeeded by Victor Hirschfelder, Isadore Horwitz, Herman Cohn and

ph Ruebner. Under the leadership of Rabbi Wechsberg, a Hebrew High School was established on Phillips Avenue. Habonim joined the United Synagogue of America during the tenure of Rabbi Rabinowitz. During the presidency of Herman Cohn, merger negotiations began with Ezra Congregation. In 1973, under the leadership of Ralph Ruebner and Henry Bierig, the Chairman of the Board, the merger was accomplished.

## EZRA

What is most remarkable is the fervor and the spirit that brought together a group of young immigrants who had fled from Nazi persecution and had settled on Chicago's north side. In 1936 they established a sports and social club, the Sport Center of Jewish Youth, which in 1938, became the North Center of Jewish Youth. The first Friday evening service was held in the Sanctuary of Temple Emanuel, then at 701 West Buckingham Place, on November 10, 1938, coincidentally the day after the infamous Kristallnacht in Nazi Germany. The first leaders of this new group were Mr. Paul Freund, Mr. Kurt Irwin, Mr. Martin Mainzer, and Mr. Paul Baer. The locations of its gatherings were at 1026 Wilson Avenue, and for a while, at 3158 North Broadway Avenue. Religious services were occasionally held in the sanctuaries of Temple Emanuel, Lincoln Park Congregation, and Anshe Emet Synagogue.

In 1941, the name of the Center was changed to Jewish North Center in order to emphasize the desire of the leadership to develop a nucleus of young Jewish immigrants as part of a religious and social center for men and women of all ages. Efforts to form a congregation had to be postponed when America entered World War II in 1941, since many of the young members enlisted in the armed forces while the older generation was busy helping in the war effort. We remember the men from our ranks who gave their lives in the service of their new country; Mr. Kurt Eisenberger, Mr. Guenther Alexander Marx, Mr. Kurt Reinheimer and Mr. Rudi Rosenthal.

Finally, in 1944, a resolution was adopted to change the name again, this time to Jewish North Center Congregation, and in 1946, the Congregation was incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois. The growth of the congregation paralleled the social and economic improvement of its members.

Religious services were first conducted by Mr. Paul Lang, and

Mr. Max Vogel chanted the liturgy. In 1940, Cantor Leopold Stern was engaged to conduct services. He chanted the prayers and at times gave sermons. He also assisted in establishing a religious school. Mrs. Alice Selan beautified the services for over 14 years, beginning in 1942, playing the organ.

In 1948, Temple Ezra acquired its first permanent location, a lovely but small building located on Aldine between Clark and Halsted. The growth of the Congregation and the size of its permanent home necessitated holding High Holy Day Services at larger rented facilities, mainly at the Masonic Lodge on Wilson Avenue, and for many years at the People's Church at Sheridan Road and Lawrence Avenue. Mr. Paul Lang continued to conduct High Holy Day Services in the sanctuary.

In 1946, the first full time Rabbi, Dr. Davin Schoenberger, was engaged. Upon his suggestion, the Congregation's name was changed to Temple Ezra, after the scribe Ezra, who it is said, was sent in 458 B.C.E. from Babylon to Jerusalem to restore the burnt scriptures and the law and to rebuild the Temple.

Dr. Schoenberger remained with us until 1956. He was succeeded by Rabbi Dr. Joseph Liberles, who served until 1961. On March 17, 1957, Ezra dedicated its second home at 5658 North Winthrop Avenue, a former Greek Orthodox Church building. It then engaged Rabbi Dr. Ira Sud who occupied our pulpit until 1975, when he assumed the status of Rabbi Emeritus.

Cantor Stern served the congregation faithfully until his untimely death in 1958. He was succeeded by Cantor Zvi Ben-Shalom, and in 1961 by Cantor Moses Schwimmer, a survivor of the Holocaust, who served us until 1976.

From the early beginnings, religious services were conducted in the conservative ritual, and in 1962, after almost 25 years, Ezra joined the United Synagogue of America, the national umbrella organization of the Conservative Movement.

In 1967, the Congregation acquired the synagogue building at 2620 West Touhy and changed its name to Ezra Congregation in order to identify with the Conservative Movement. Formal dedication of the new synagogue took place on September 10, 1967. Beginning in 1968, Rabbi David Graubart joined us on the High Holy Days as associate

Rabbi with Rabbi Sud to conduct the second service in Bonem Hall.

The first Ezra president was Dr. Henry Schloss, followed by Mr. Morris Wieseneck, Mr. Eugene Marx, Dr. Franz Steinitz, Dr. Fred Herzog, Mr. Sidney Heins, Dr. Manfred Hoffmann, Mr. Herbert Prauer, Mr. Howard Sherman, Mr. Jack Heiman and Mr. Fred Sinay, several of whom served more than one term.

The position of Chairman of the Board was established in 1955, and Dr. Rudolph Lackenbacher was elected to this prestigious office. Upon his death in 1966, until 1982, a number of our Past Presidents filled this position in succession. In 1982, the honor of Chairman of the Board was bestowed on Mrs. Alice Selan.

### EZRA-HABONIM

In the summer of 1973, Ezra and Habonim merged. Rabbi Ira Sud became the spiritual head of the newly merged Congregation. Mr. Fred Sinay was elected its first President, a post he occupied for two terms. He was succeeded by Mr. Ralph Ruebner, Mr. Gerhard Bergmann, Mr. Howard Sherman, Mr. Fred Sinay, Mr. Howard Hoffmann, Mr. Irving Loundy, Mr. Fred Sinay, Mr. Ralph Ruebner, Ms. Ede Snyder and Mr. Ralph Ruebner.

Dr. Shlomo D. Levine was elected Rabbi in 1975, at which time Rabbi Sud assumed the position of Rabbi Emeritus until his untimely death in 1986. In 1976, Cantor Henry Danziger arrived from London, England, to replace Cantor Schwimmer. He served the Congregation until 1982 and was succeeded by Cantor Erik Goldberger who served until 1987. Cantor Johanan Bickhardt served as interim cantor until 1988 when Jerome Padorr was selected to chant our liturgy. Cantor Toby Lou Hayman followed as Hazzan in 1991 and served until 1993. Rich Moline has been our Hazzan since then. Reverend Leopold Fleischer served as Associate Cantor and Cantor Emeritus until his death in 1995. Rabbi Levine was followed by Rabbi Robert Rhodes in 1992. Rabbi Rhodes served until 1994. Rabbi Henry Balser was selected our spiritual leader in 1995 and served us until 2001. Rabbi Shlomo Levine returned to his home at Ezra-Habonim in 2001 and currently serves as our Rabbi.

Our former Rayim, Sisterhood and Men's Club, and our Parent-Teacher Organization (P.T.O.), Adult Education, U.S.Y. and

Kadima all strengthened our congregational life. We maintained a high quality religious school with classes for our children from four to thirteen, as well as post-Bar and Bat Mitzvah classes. The school was dedicated in 1987 to the memory of Rabbi Sud and renamed the Rabbi Ira Sud Religious School.

After the merger of Ezra and Habonim, a few of our younger member families, who had moved into the northern suburbs, studied the feasibility of establishing a branch. With our help, expertise and spiritual guidance, it did not take them long to accomplish the difficult endeavor of founding a new congregation. It became the Northbrook Congregation Ezra-Habonim. Ten years ago they dedicated a beautiful synagogue on Landwehr Road in Northbrook. The dream of the former newcomers "not to rest until we are established firmly in our homeland" had become a reality. The dedication of that synagogue and the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of our own congregation had taken place in the same period.

In 1986 the congregation enjoyed one of its proudest hours with the installation of the twelve multicolored, faceted windows. The windows were designed by our member, Willie Wind, Z'L, who had also designed the first Israeli postage stamp. He also supervised every detail of the fabrication and installation of the windows. They depict the High Holy Days, Shabbat, Festivals, the Tribes of Israel and the Burning Bush. These windows are now permanently displayed at Ezra-Habonim, the Niles Township Jewish Congregation in Skokie, Illinois.

On November 9, 1988, we commemorated the 50th Anniversary of Kristallnacht. The day-long event included an inter-faith luncheon, an outdoor adult vigil, followed by a candlelight vigil by the children of our school, U.S.Y. and Kadima. There was a concluding service and performance of a commissioned cantata entitled, "KRISTALLNACHT." The cantata was performed by the Halevy Chorus and Jerome Padorr. It was the world premiere performance of the cantata.

We remained at 2620 West Touhy Avenue until the summer of 1997. A sad chapter entered our congregational story and disrupted our family harmony. After a year-long legal controversy concerning our future, a large segment of the Congregation merged with Niles Township Jewish Congregation, the building was sold, and the assets were divided. We remained in West Rogers Park and started anew as renters in the Temple Menorah building. We are committed to the West Rogers Park

Jewish Community, but we welcome guests and new members from nearby areas. In 1998 we joined our Religious School with Congregation B'nai Emunah's school in Skokie.

The Chicago group merged with Ner Tamus of Chicago and came

### EPILOGUE

to an end when Ner Tamus's building was sold. There remain

What lessons can we learn when we recall, even briefly, the history of our congregation? Only a few synagogues were founded during those darkest days in our people's history with the explicit purpose of "never to forget" and to preserve the memory of six million of our brethren. We remember our people who fell victim to the most heinous crimes in human history. And even today there are dark forces at work that would like the world to believe that these historical facts never occurred. So it remains our sacred obligation to strengthen our ranks that we may continue to sustain our synagogue as a living memorial.

Article IX of our Constitution reads as follows:

"The 9th of November shall be dedicated to the Memory of the Destruction of the Synagogues in Europe and the brutal racial and religious persecution suffered by the Jews. Each 9th of November a Memorial Service shall be held in our Synagogue and there shall be no other activities within our Congregation or its affiliated organizations which are not in consonance with this Yahrzeit Day."

May we continue to serve that noble purpose.

Chazak, Chazak, Ve'nitchazek.

Ralph Ruebner, President.

us in Chicago's Rogers Park, in name only, the Ner Tamus, Ezra Habonim Egalitarian Minyan which has a handful of members from the former Ezra-Habonim. A few families remain members of Ezra-Habonim, the Niles Township Jewish Congregation. This is a 20 year history. An end of an era of German Jewish emigration.