

A Short History of the Allerton Hebrew Congregation, Liverpool

**Compiled from notes prepared by Rev Hyman Goldman
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The main impetus towards the foundation of the Allerton Hebrew Congregation can truly be attributed to the change of residence of one man, Rev. Hyman Goldman, who, in 1950, decided to remove his residence from the Sefton Park district to the Allerton area.

For many years he had been a member of the Greenbank Drive Congregation, whose synagogue was situated only a short distance away from his former residence. As his new abode was beyond reasonable walking distance from Greenbank Drive (and Rev. Goldman is one who strictly observes the regulation which forbids Orthodox Jews to use transport- public and private-on Sabbath and festivals), he felt that provision of facilities for divine worship in the vicinity of his new home would be a useful and necessary Jewish amenity to the Allerton neighbourhood

He did not at that time envisage any grandiose scheme such as that which was subsequently planned and executed; he wanted only a Bethel (house of God) - a "minyan" - where Jews could assemble for worship and study, and within whose walls children, who might not be receiving any Jewish education, could be taught the eternal principles of Judaism.

Rev. Goldman discussed his proposal with his two sons, who advised him to contact other Jewish residents of Allerton and see whether they would be interested in his proposition. He therefore contacted several Allerton residents, but in the main they were members of various other congregations and did not evince much enthusiasm for his plans. They did not seem unduly perturbed over the long distances between their homes and the synagogues they attended. Rev. Goldman was not dismayed by the apparent lack of support; he was convinced that if a synagogue were established in Allerton nearby residents would attend it in preference to going to other synagogues

One whom he approached and who displayed much interest in the plan was Mr. Solomon Rubin, a member of the Liverpool Old Hebrew Congregation, Princes Road, who promised his support if a suitable site for a synagogue could be found.

Rev. Goldman commenced seeking accommodation, for which he advertised in the local press. Among places he subsequently inspected were the Liverpool University Athletics Club, the Mather Avenue centre of the Territorial Army, and the Rose Lane County Primary School. Finally he learnt of the Mosley Hill Church Hall in Rose Lane. He found the secretary, Mr. T. Price, very sympathetic and eventually Rev. Goldman's request was put before Canon F. H. Perkins, the then Vicar of the church. The church granted Rev. Goldman the use of the hall, with chairs and a table, for Friday evening and Saturday morning services, for the remarkably low fee of 15s a week.

Actually, the premises contained two halls and there was a proviso that should the larger one be required by old age pensioners who frequently met there, Rev. Goldman's congregation would be required to use the smaller hall. This condition was willingly accepted.

The acquisition of the use of the Rose Lane premises marked what can be called the first milestone in the history of the Allerton Congregation. It did more. It initiated a friendship, which exists to this day, between the Mosley Hill Parish Church and the Allerton Hebrew Congregation, which is in keeping with that spirit of good will which has for two centuries subsisted between Christendom and Jewry in this city.

With a suitable assembly hall now available, a meeting of a group of people who were interested in the scheme was convened by Rev. Goldman's younger son, Mr. Solomon Goldman, and held on January 13, 1952, at the home of Rev. Goldman, who presided. Those who attended the meeting were: Rev. H. Goldman, Mr. S. Goldman, Mr. S. Kaufman, Alderman I. I. Levin, Dr. A. J. Goldman, Mr. N. Shieldhouse and Mr. Solomon Rubin.

Rev. Goldman unfolded his plan for the inauguration of Sabbath services at Rose Lane and stated he was prepared to act as the officiant. The meeting decided to circularise Allerton residents

informing them of the progress made to date and of plans for the future, and inviting them to a meeting at which the matter could be further discussed. The group elected Alderman Levin as provisional chairman and Mr. S. Goldman as provisional honorary secretary.

The planned meeting took place on January 27, 1952, at the Rose Lane Institute. Those who attended were: Rev. Goldman, Mr. H. Fisher, Mr. S. Goldman, Dr. A. J. Goldman, Mr. L. Inestone, Mr. L. Lander, Alderman I. I. Levin, Mr. J. M. Mass, Mr. M. Packman, Mr. Solomon Rubin, Mr. Simon Rubin and Mr. H. Selby.

The meeting, after some discussion, decided that the group be called the Allerton Hebrew Congregation, that it be an independent body, and that services be commenced forthwith.

There and then the following were elected: Mr. Solomon Rubin, parnas; Rev. H. Goldman, gabbai; Alderman I. I. Levin, chairman; Mr. Leslie Lander, treasurer; Mr. Solomon Goldman, honorary secretary; and Messrs. H. Fisher, L. Inestone, Simon Rubin, H. Selby, M. Packman and Dr. A. J. Goldman, council.

Rev. H. Goldman was invited, and agreed, to accept the office of minister and chazan to the congregation. Membership fee was fixed at 1 shilling a week and, in order to acquaint residents of the fact, an advertisement was put in the *Liverpool Jewish Gazette* to the effect that regular services were being held. An Ark was presented by Mr. Solomon Rubin and two Sifrei Torah were loaned by the Grove Street Congregation. A parochet was made by Mrs. H. Goldman.

Services were now being held regularly every Friday evening and Sabbath morning, and the group developed into a very happy gathering of local inhabitants. Attendances at the services were not always satisfactory: the synagogue was a novelty for the district and members still attended their own place of worship. There were times when there was difficulty in finding a minyan and members became very discouraged, but they were spurred to carry on by Rev. Goldman and gradually a nucleus of regular worshippers was formed. They included Messrs. L. Inestone, S. Raphael, L. Lander, H. Selby, M. Dworetzki, Solomon Rubin, A. Jacobs, N. N. Bracey, Solomon Goldman, F. S. Barnett, M. Silver, A. Yaffe and M. D. Aaron.

The number of worshippers increased and at the first High Festivals services, in 1952, there were more than a hundred. The services were conducted by Rev. Goldman,

assisted by Mr. H. Cashdan, and on Erev Yom Kippur Rev. Goldman delivered a sermon and launched an appeal for local communal charities. It realised £40. Rabbi Morris Nemeth, senior minister of the Greenbank Drive Congregation, addressed the congregation on Yom Kippur.

It is of interest to note that the first simcha celebrated at Rose Lane was the birth of twins to Mr. and Mrs. C. Howard, and the joyous occasion was marked - it was October 14, 1952 - by the calling to the reading of the Torah of Mr. Howard, the proud father. Another joyous occasion was the bar mitzvah of Malcolm Eleen.

At the first Simchat Torah service the Bridegrooms of the Law were Rev. H. Goldman and Mr. H. Selby.

The Rav of Liverpool, Rabbi Z. Plitnick, addressed the congregation on several occasions during the year.

There was always a possibility that the church authorities might require the use of the rooms on the days on which High Festivals would fall, and the officers of the congregation were always seeking more permanent premises. They realised that those at Rose Lane were only temporary. A house in Allerton Road was found to be eminently suitable, but sufficient funds were not available to acquire the property. An approach was made to the Grove Street Congregation, with a view to an amalgamation by way of joint purchase of this house, but the combined financial resources were still insufficient. Nevertheless, the quest for a site still continued.

The congregation decided to affiliate to the Merseyside Jewish Representative Council.

The first annual meeting was held on January 25, 1953. It was well attended and the following were elected: Rev. H. Goldman, parnas; Mr. L. Inestone, gabbai; Alderman I. I. Levin, chairman; Mr. L. Lander, treasurer; Mr. S. Goldman, hon. secretary; and Dr. A. J. Goldman, Messrs. F. S. Barnett, N. N. Bracey, H. Brodie, H. Fisher, A. Jacobs, S. Kaufman, J. M. Mass, Solomon Rubin and H. Selby, council.

At a meeting held at 21 Gressingham Road the hopes of the congregation were heightened by the chairman, Alderman Levin, who reported that he had approached the Liverpool Corporation to see whether a suitable plot of land could be purchased. He was informed that a plot of land was available in Mather Avenue, three quarters of an acre in area, with frontages to Mather Avenue and Booker Avenue.

Alderman Levin was requested to approach the Corporation to see whether they would sell this piece of land to the Allerton Congregation. The Housing Committee of the Corporation allocated it to the Allerton Congregation for the erection of a synagogue. The City Council approved the committee's proposal, but at a Council meeting on February 4, 1953, the Town Clerk announced that he had that day received objections signed by 35 owners or occupiers of nearby property objecting to a synagogue as detrimental to the character of the neighbourhood. (The chairman of the Housing Committee was then Alderman H. N. Bewley). The City Council rejected the objection and on October 7 confirmed the recommendation of the Housing Committee.

The cost of the land was £1,261, and the following members made donations towards its purchase: Dr. A. J. Goldman, Messrs. L. Lander, J. M. Mass, Saul Rosenblatt, L. Inestone, S.

Kaufman, H. Selby, M. Freedman, H. Brodie, A. M. Yaffe, H. Fisher, N. N. Bracey, A. Jacobs and D. Marshall.

It is of interest to note the names of the trustees of the land. They were Messrs. S. Goldman, L. Inestone, L. Lander and H. Selby. Mr. J. F. Harrison was elected as auditor.

Meanwhile, to recur to Rose Lane, the numbers were still increasing and the High Festivals services were held there for a second year. They were again conducted by Rev. H. Goldman, assisted by the Rev. S. D. Cutler. The Kol Nidrei appeal on this occasion realised £80. At the Simchat Torah services held that year the Bridegrooms of the Law were Mr. L. Inestone and Mr. L. Lander.

During the ensuing year no decision was taken in regard to building on the site which had been acquired, though constant consideration was given to planning a building. A fence had to be erected to separate the neighbouring building line from the site of the synagogue.

Meantime, on February 7, 1954, the second annual meeting was held. The treasurer was able to report an increasing membership. The income was double that of the preceding year. The following were elected: Messrs. Solomon Rubin, honorary life president; L. Inestone, senior warden; A. Jacobs, junior warden; L. Lander, senior treasurer; S. Kaufman, junior treasurer; I. I. Levin, chairman; S. Goldman, hon. secretary; J. F. Harrison, hon. Auditor; and Dr. A. J. Goldman, Messrs. F. S. Barnett, N. N. Bracey, H. Brodie, G. Brosgarth, H. Fisher, C. E. Gordon, N. Jacobs, S. Kaufman, J. M. Mass, S. Richard and H. Selby, committee.

The tempo was now quickening. The site for a synagogue had been purchased and vital decisions had to be taken. The possibility was mooted of the compensation payable by the War Damage Commission in respect of the old Islington Synagogue, demolished as a result of enemy action, being utilised for the construction of the Allerton Synagogue, and Mr. J. Maurice Mass undertook to arrange a meeting between the Islington trustees and the Allerton leaders for this suggestion to be discussed.

It was at this stage that the Allerton officers considered whether a communal hall should be erected in advance of a synagogue, and that part of the hall be used as a temporary synagogue. This suggestion was proposed by Mr. Rosenblatt and Mr. Kaufman. It was felt that if a synagogue were built first it would be well-nigh impossible to raise sufficient funds to build a hall subsequently, but that if a hall were erected first it would produce revenue available for a mortgage whereby the money required for building a synagogue might be borrowed.

Mr. Mass strongly objected to the hall preceding the synagogue on the ground that the Childwall Congregation were considering building a hall, which, in his view would be sufficient for the communal needs. He further felt that the Allerton Congregation were possessed of insufficient funds to undertake building a hall, for which project the War Damage compensation in respect of the destroyed Islington Synagogue would not be available. Mr. Mass's objections were not sustained and the Allerton committee took the decision to build a hall before embarking on the construction of a synagogue.

The decision was put into effect and Mr. David J. Lewis was appointed architect. Contracts for the new synagogue hall were entered into and work thereon duly began.

The High Festivals services for the third year were held in the Rose Lane Institute. Rev. H.

Goldman, assisted by Mr. L. Chinn and Mr. L. Hillman, conducted them. The Bridegrooms of the Law were Mr. A. Yaffe and Mr. F. S. Barnett. Here one must mention the work of the treasurer, Mr. L. Lander, and the hon. secretary, Mr. S. Goldman, who, apart from the clerical work involved for the congregation, took it upon themselves to canvass for more members and to spend each Sunday collecting membership fees. Membership had now risen to 120.

The third annual meeting was held on March 13, 1955. It was reported that the land in Mather Avenue had been paid for and that donations to the building fund totalled £1,238. The following were elected: Messrs. I. I. Levin, chairman; L. Inestone, senior warden; A. Jacobs, junior warden; L. Lander, senior treasurer; S. Kaufman, junior treasurer; S. Goldman, hon. secretary; J. F. Harrison, hon. auditor; and F. S. Barnett, N. N. Bracey, H. Brodie, G. Brosgarth, M. Freedman, H. Fisher, N. Jacobs, J. M. Mass, S. Mass, S. Rosenblatt, A. A. Summers, H. Selby and Dr. A. J. Goldman, council.

Mr. Mass subsequently resigned. Messrs. M. E. Bancroft, S. Kaufman, L. Lander and S. Rosenblatt were elected to constitute a finance committee, and Messrs. I. Bakerman, S. Dale, S. Mass, M. E. Bancroft, M. Freedman, S. Rosenblatt, W. Bandell and A. S. Summers were elected to the building committee under the chairmanship of Mr. S. Rosenblatt.

The foundation stone of the hall was laid on April 17, 1955, by Mr. Saul Rosenblatt. Those present at the ceremony included Rabbi Plitnick, Rev. S. Segal, Dr. I. J. Lipkin and Mr. Bertram B. Benas, honorary officers, members of the council and members of the congregation. Rabbi Plitnick delivered an address and the service was conducted by Rev. Goldman.

Two months later a Ladies' Guild came into being and the first chairman was Mrs. Kaufman.

With regard to the construction of the synagogue hall, mention must be made of two members of the council, namely Mr. S. Kaufman and Mr. Saul Rosenblatt, who gave very valuable help, especially Mr. Kaufman who spent a great deal of his time supervising the construction. He also obtained seating for the use of the temporary synagogue.

Great help in the building of the hall was also afforded by Mr. M. Freedman, who had been introduced to the congregation by Rev. Goldman. He made substantial financial contributions, particularly at a time when funds were urgently needed, and it is true to say that were it not for his help, notably on occasions when the congregation's bank was pressing for funds and when the builders wanted payment, apart from the fact that the cost was much more than had been anticipated, the hall might never have been built.

In the last year at the Rose Lane Institute the services were again conducted by Rev. Goldman, assisted by Mr. Hillman. The Bridegrooms of the Law were Mr. Harris Cohen and Mr. S. Raphael.

The hall was duly completed and services were held in it from January 7, 1956. It was formally opened on March 11, 1956, by Mr. Freedman. Present were the then Lord Mayor (Alderman R. R. Bailey), the then vicar of Mosslev Hill Church (Canon F. H. Perkins), Mr. Lewis, Rabbi Plitnick, Mr. Benas and Dr. Lipkin (president of the Merseyside Jewish Representative Council), as well as honorary officers and many members of the congregation. A reception was held after the ceremony.

At the beginning of 1956 a hall management committee was elected. It comprised

Messrs. M. E. Bancroft, F. S. Barnett, J. F. Harrison, A. A. Summers and Dr. A. J. Goldman.

When the congregation moved into the new premises in Booker Avenue, Mrs. T. Lyons presented it with the Ark and reading desk in memory of her father, Mr. Solomon Rubin, and her husband, Mr. Lewis M. Lyons.

Hebrew and religion classes were organised and Mr. A. D. Silver was appointed headmaster. Mr. L. Inestone became chairman of the education committee and took an active interest in enrolling the children and taking care of the finances.

The first bar mitzvah held in the new hall was that of David Jacobs, son of Mr. A. Jacobs, junior warden, and Mrs. Jacobs. This was early in 1956.

Here one must mention various individuals who encouraged and supported movements to augment congregational funds. Donations were made by the following: Messrs. M. Freedman, L. Lander, S. Kaufman, H. Fisher, S. Rosenblatt, H. Selby, H. Brodie, J. F. Harrison, H. Tasker, M. F. Bancroft, J. Gould and .1. Philips, and Dr. A. J. Goldman.

Loans were advanced by Messrs. L. Lander, S. Kaufman, M. Freedman, S. Rosenblatt, I. Bakernian, P. Swift, M. Silver, S. Raphael, J. Allan, A. M. Mark, J. Silverman, M. Robinson and M. Charles.

The following rendered help by voluntarily increasing their seat rentals substantially: Messrs. S. Kaufman, S. Rosenblatt, H. Selby, M. Freedman, M. Tasker and N. N. Bracey, Dr. A. J. Goldman, L. Lander and I. Bakerman.

Ellis Joseph and Manny Charles founded the Allerton Jewish Drama and Variety Society.

Mr. Charles became chairman of the functions committee and organised many dances and concerts. He was assisted by Messrs. H. Brodie, S. Mass, S. Kaufman, L. Inestone, N. N. Bracey, S. Dale and E. Joseph.

At the 1956 annual meeting Mr. J. F. Harrison replaced Alderman Levin as chairman and Mr. Kaufman succeeded Mr. S. Goldman as hon. secretary.

It was during this year that Rev. Goldman tendered his resignation as minister and reader and the Rev. Felix Harris was appointed to assume those offices, as well as that of headmaster of the Hebrew and religion classes, which were making rapid progress, in succession to Mr. Silver, who had resigned. In recognition of his services Rev. Goldman was elected minister emeritus.

At the 1957 annual meeting Mr. Kaufman was elected chairman in succession to Mr. Harrison, and Mr. F. W. Joseph was elected hon. secretary.

It was during 1957 that negotiations commenced for the building of the synagogue proper. The question of raising funds for this purpose became a matter of urgency. Mr. J. Maurice Mass informed the congregation that War Damage compensation in respect of the destruction of Islington Synagogue might be available and this money might be secured for the Allerton Congregation in order to build a synagogue. Acting as solicitor to the trustees of Islington Synagogue, he submitted to them the proposal to assign to Allerton Congregation any compensation which might be due to the trustees in

respect of the War Damage compensation.

The trustees of Islington Synagogue instructed their solicitors, Messrs. Mass, Davidson & Co., to prepare the necessary application on their behalf and they engaged the services of Mr. Bertram B. Benas as counsel. Mr. Benas, accompanied by Mr. Mass, appeared on behalf of the trustees of the Central Synagogue, Islington (to use its full title) before the Special Committee of the United Synagogue, London, delegated by the War Damage Commission to conduct enquiries in respect of compensation of war damaged property of Jewish congregations.

They were informed that the Commission would consider only claims either for a reconstructed synagogue on the same or some other site in the locality, or else the money would be likely to be diverted for a similar purpose in some other part of the country.

Mr. Benas submitted that although the trustees were not minded to reconstruct the Central Synagogue in Islington, in view of the change in residential conditions which represented the present settlements of the community, it was the fact that it was sought to build a new synagogue in Allerton for the Allerton Hebrew Congregation, which had been established to meet the requirements of Jewish inhabitants in that suburb of Liverpool.

He also explained that while not all the members of the Allerton Congregation had been themselves former members of the Central Synagogue, Islington, yet there were family associations between the two congregations and the religious traditions of the older congregation were in consonance with those which were followed by the new congregation of Allerton.

In due course the application on behalf of the Allerton Congregation was favourably considered and the War Damage Commission grant was to be made to the trustees of the Central Synagogue, Islington, on the understanding that the fund would be devoted exclusively to the scheme presented on behalf of the Allerton Congregation for the building of its synagogue and appurtenances.

Mr. Eric Levy, F.R.I.B.A., of Manchester, was appointed architect for the synagogue in July, 1957.

The War Damage Commission would not assess the claim on what was going to be built to replace the war damage, but rather upon what had been destroyed. It was, therefore, necessary to "reconstruct" the Central Synagogue, Islington, by way of drawings and to assess what would have been the cost of rebuilding it on the original site.

After many months of negotiation, during the course of which Mr. Levy, Mr. Kaufman and Mr. Mass went repeatedly to see the War Damage Commission, the amount ultimately paid was £44,066.

A building committee was elected and comprised: Mr. S. Kaufman, Mr. Saul Rosenblatt (chairman) and Dr. R. S. Benson. Mr. S. Learman was co-opted and was very helpful on the technical side. Added help was given by Mr. M. Robinson and Mr. L. Inestone.

The initial plans for the erection of the synagogue were rejected by the City Architect, but, with the help of Alderman Levin, a revised plan was prepared by Mr. Levy, in collaboration with

the City Architect, and this was approved by the City Council's Planning Committee.

In October, 1958, Messrs. Tysons (Contractors) Ltd. were engaged to build the synagogue and on December 7, 1958, its foundation-stone was laid by Mr. Isaac Dover, in the presence of the then Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress (Alderman and Mrs. H. Livermore); Mrs. E. M. Braddock, M.P.; Mr. R. M. Bingham, Q.C., M.P. for Garston; Canon F. H. Perkins, vicar of Mosley Hill Church; and the Rev. H. M. Springbett, minister of Allerton Presbyterian Church. The consecration was followed by a reception, over which the Lord Mayor presided.

The Islington trustees sanctioned the gift to Allerton of various silver ornaments for Torah scrolls.

Mr. Kaufman, a member of the building committee, offered many ideas and suggestions and his patience and understanding in dealing with numerous matters of detail were very helpful.

The building operations progressed and the synagogue was ready for occupation a fortnight before the 1959 High Festivals. The Rev. F. Harris and the newly-elected chazan, the Rev. Norman Zalud, officiated.

Rabbi Plitnick preached on the first day of Rosh Hashana, the Rev. F. Harris on the second day and the Rev. H. Goldman on the eve of Yom Kippur. Mr. Joseph and Mr. I. Bakerman were given the honour of being the first Chatan Torah and Chatan Bereshit respectively in the new synagogue.

The synagogue was consecrated and formally opened on January 17, 1960, by Mr. Leslie Lander, the treasurer. The guest preacher was Dayan Morris Swift, of London. Among those present were Alderman and Mrs. H. N. Bewley (the then Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress): Mr. T. Alker, the Town Clerk; Mr. J. W. T. Smith, the then Chief Constable; Lord Cohen of Birkenhead; Mr. Richard Bingham, Q.C., M.P.; and members of the City Council.

The civic party were greeted at the entrance to the synagogue hall by Mr. S. Kaufman, chairman of the congregation, and the members of the building committee.

On their arrival, the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress were greeted by a guard of honour furnished by the Jewish Lads' Brigade. The service was conducted by Rabbi Z. Plitnick, the Revs. F. Harris, N. Zalud and H. Goldman, assisted by the choir of the Childwall Hebrew Congregation, conducted by Mr. R. Dorfman (choirmaster of the Old Hebrew Congregation). Following the service there was a reception, which was later followed by a dinner to commemorate the opening.

Thus, from a meeting of seven single-minded individuals on a bleak morning in January, 1952, there developed within the space of a mere eight years a beautiful synagogue, hall and Hebrew classes, consecrated for religious purposes for the present and future generations of Liverpool Jewry.