

A Short History of Tikvat Israel

"HOPE OF ISRAEL"

Serving the Jewish Community for Nearly 50 Years

Like two rivers that flow together to form a third and greater river, Temple Israel and Beth Tikva merged in April 1997 to create Tikvat Israel. Though the history of Tikvat Israel is short, it is fed by streams that trace their source back nearly half a century to the roots of the Jewish community in Montgomery County.

Temple Israel was founded in 1951 as the Langley Hebrew Congregation. It received a donation of ten acres on University Boulevard in Silver Spring and built a large new synagogue, spacious library, social hall, and Hebrew School. Under the energetic leadership of Rabbi Lewis A. Weintraub, the congregation flourished. At its height, Temple Israel had a membership of 750 families.

Beth Tikva saw its start in October 1959 when ten families gathered to form a synagogue. In the winter of 1960, Beth Tikva was chartered as the Rockville-Wheaton Synagogue and its Sisterhood was established. Initially meeting in each others' homes, Beth Tikva grew and began to use community facilities. It first met at the Wheaton Woods Recreation Center, then at the Millian Methodist Church, and later at Wheaton Woods Elementary School. In 1961, the congregation formally adopted the name Beth Tikva — House of Hope.

As the Jewish population of Montgomery County grew over the next two decades, Temple Israel and Beth Tikva enjoyed physical and spiritual growth. Both congregations began a tradition of stepping up to meet the challenges of a growing Jewish community. Through hard work, generous donations and devoted leaders, they succeeded in meeting the needs of their members and their children. Both synagogues became recognized for the quality of their Hebrew schools, the beauty of their Shabbat and holiday services and the strong sense of community and friendship that filled every activity.

To meet the pressure of growth, Beth Tikva in 1962 bought six acres of land on Baltimore Road in Rockville to construct a synagogue, and the congregation dedicated its new building in November 1965. Its Rabbi then was George Vida, who retired in 1968. Its cantor was Mark Levi, who retired in 1984. Rabbi Howard Gorin became the congregation's spiritual leader in 1980. Cantor Rochelle Helzner came to Beth Tikva in 1984.

Over the years, Beth Tikva made many improvements and additions to its structure. In 1984, Beth Tikva undertook an ambitious capital campaign to build an addition for its growing membership of over 300 families. With the strong support of the congregation, it added a large social hall and religious school wing that doubled the amount of available space.

The changing demography of Silver Spring in the 1990s led Temple Israel to make the painful decision to sell its building and to seek a merger with another Conservative synagogue. Temple Israel's members chose Beth Tikva, in part, because the two congregations shared similar rituals and traditions and both were committed to egalitarian treatment of men and women in all aspects of religious life. On April 15, 1997, the two congregations merged and adopted a new name, Tikvat Israel — the Hope of Israel.

Today, the success of the merger is seen in growing bonds of friendship, in religious services, social activities and in a common devotion to the Jewish community. With over 500 families, Tikvat Israel looks now to the next phase of its growth.

As in the past, its members are prepared to meet new demands that require enlargement of our facilities to give our children an adequate Religious School, to offer adults broader educational opportunities and to provide space for our seniors, youth groups, Sisterhood and Men's Club to meet in fellowship and prayer. Just as Temple Israel and Beth Tikva met the challenges of their day, Tikvat Israel stands ready to play its part and truly be the Hope of Israel for the next 50 years and beyond.