

The History of our Name

(from a document published circa 1930 with an update at the end)

Our Congregation derives its name from a person and family rather than from a location or from sacred objects.

In the latter part of 1917 the Congregation, then bearing the name "Beth Elihu," for Elias Einzig, found itself in need of funds to complete a new synagogue at Garfield and Beaubien Avenues. Mr. Einzig, one the most generous members of the congregation from its very beginning, voluntarily offered to relinquish his claim to the congregation's name in order to raise funds for the construction of the new building. The person or family that raised the most would be rewarded by having the congregation renamed in his honor.

The sons, and daughters, of Mr. and Mrs. Moshe "Morris" Gunsberg (wife Johanna) who were Sigmund, Ignatz, Sam, Joseph (who was still in Europe at this time), Louis, Paul, Louise (Gunsberg) Kellerman, Ethel (Gunsberg) Krause and Theresa (Gunsberg) Feder acquired this great distinction for their large contribution to the Building Fund (about \$ 45,000) and renamed the Congregation for their father, Moshe "Morris" Gunsberg.

Moshe Gunsberg was born in Hegyfalva County, Vas Hungary, 1848. He acquired a good religious and secular education in the schools of Nemetkersztur, a city close to his birthplace. There he engaged in business and married his wife, Johanna. He came to Detroit in 1909, where his children were established. (The first Gunsberg son, Sigmund and wife Fanny, came to Detroit in 1902).

A strictly observing, pious Jew, Mr. Gunsberg never compromised his strict adherence to the Jewish faith and succeeded in inculcating the holiness of the Torah and beauty of religious life in his children. For many years, Mr. Gunsberg took an active part in the religious life of Detroit, as Treasurer of Congregation Mogan Avrohom for 15 years, an office he still held in 1930.

Mr. Gunsberg was also instrumental in organizing the Yeshivath Yehudah, named for the late Rabbi Judah Levin, which grew from one student to include in its roster all the orthodox rabbis in the city of Detroit.

He was an ardent supporter of Palestine and never missed an opportunity to contribute to the cause of the Holy Land. He additionally influenced his children and his many friends on behalf of many worthy Jewish causes.

He lost his wife, Johanna, in 1920, his youngest son Paul in 1924 and his daughter, Ethel Krauss, ex-president of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society, in 1926. This might have crushed him had he not been possessed of the spiritual virtues of the much tried Job.

Of his sons, Sigmund was Vice-President, Treasurer and a Director of the congregation for many years, as well as Chairman of the Talmud Torah Committee since its inception. Sam held the Presidency for four years and continued to serve on the Executive Board and several committees after his presidency. Louis was Treasurer of the building Fund, and served on the Board of Directors for a number of years.

Members of the Gunsberg family continue to participate in our Congregation. Renee Gunsberg was honored at the 100 Years Celebration as a representative of the rich history of B'nai Moshe. She is the granddaughter-in-law of Moshe Gunsberg. Larry Gunsberg and Michael Grand are great grandsons of Moshe Gunsberg and have both served as presidents of the synagogue. The Gunsbergs continue their active participation in the life of B'nai Moshe and the traditions of Judaism.