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# A History of Ahavath Achim Congregation, 1887-1927

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A history of Atlanta's Ahavath Achim Congregation is somewhat indicative of the gradual changes which affected the religious identity, philosophical outlook, and general lifestyles of Eastern European Jews as they immigrated into the American South. Established by several dozen orthodox men in south-central Atlanta in 1887, Ahavath Achim grew in membership to more than 1900 members by 1979. The eventual transition from orthodox to conservative Judaism reflected in great measure the Americanization process which engulfed the progeny of the founding generation. Yet adherence and application of Jewish tradition in a constantly modernizing and increasingly secularizing environment retained for Ahavath Achim members their link to their Eastern European past.

Initially, the congregation was founded and grew as a response to a need to express a collective identity and feel kin to those of similar religious custom, geographical origin, and historical experience. Customs imported from eastern Europe, memories of overt oppression by a succession of nefariously anti-Semitic czars, and a reluctantly embracing American environment inspired many early members to maintain their fierce attachment to Jewish religious orthodoxy. Strict and uncompromising observance of the Sabbath and holidays, adherence to *kashrut* (dietary laws), and attachment to family linked the founding generation with its ancestors. Existing ethnic distance from non-Jews in Atlanta before World War I and social unacceptance by elements of the previously settled German Jewish community in Atlanta prolonged the congregants' reliance on one another.

Eventually over a period of several decades, the first American-born and American-educated youth of Ahavath Achim members were exposed to liberal and materialistic influences. Those who grew up in America entered colleges and graduate schools, learned more English than Russian, and even mingled freely without fear of corporal harm with the non-Jewish population of Atlanta. It was in fact the youth of the Eastern

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European immigrants to Atlanta who initiated the assimilation of their parents. New choices and enticing options were conveyed by the younger generation to the center of the Jewish family, the home. Who among the older generation who had witnessed pogroms and government-sanctioned anti-Semitism in Russia knew where first base was in baseball or what a first down was in football? Who of the older generation had time to care when sustenance of the family was an all-encompassing preoccupation?

The cumulative absence of enforced residential restrictions and the gradual removal of religious quotas for universities and the professions stimulated the immigrant and his children to take full advantage of opportunities in the American South. From our research it would appear that with regard to economic development in Atlanta after the Civil War's devastation of the city, Jewish commercial and merchant enterprises filled a need and a partial void. Though anti-Jewish feeling existed in some measure in Atlanta prior to World War I, its virulence and strength were somewhat muted. Non-Jews were not being directly threatened by newly established Jewish business endeavors.<sup>1</sup>

As bare subsistence living was slowly transformed for some Jews to eventual affluence, priorities were refocused, bringing gradual change in their approach to their new environment. In religious practice, the founding generation of Ahavath Achim rigidly adhered to its Jewish tradition, however, which had sustained its followers when political unrest and economic insecurity had perennially prevailed in Russia. Change in religious practice and in the liturgy of the synagogue was accepted reluctantly. It took four decades of existence for the congregational leadership to accept English as a viable language for prayer; it took a half century of existence for the congregation to accept the seating of men and women, a practice not sanctioned in most orthodox synagogues. Those who disagreed with a change of religious practice found themselves establishing new congregations, embracing another form of Jewish tradition, or grumbling loudly but staying with Ahavath Achim. The initial absence of Jewish community solidarity and the non-existence of day schools for formal Jewish education focused attention upon the synagogue. For those who retained their affinity with Ahavath Achim, the synagogue itself in the first half century of the congregation's existence became a structural symbol for religious identity.

When Rabbi Harry H. Epstein arrived in Atlanta in 1928, the congregation was seeking direction, refreshing rabbinic leadership, and a definition of its future course. Rabbi Epstein provided the congregation with self-confident guidance and even bold initiative. For more than a half century thereafter, he repeatedly sought to interlace into the fabric of the founding orthodox tradition new threads of modernity. His success at bridging the gap between Jewish tradition with American modernity rested in his own background, a background of pious and impeccable Jewish scholarship advantageously linked to his American upbringing.

The history of Ahavath Achim in its second half century is, therefore, one which reflects Rabbi Epstein's firm and guiding hand and is sufficiently rich in content to warrant a separate detailed study in the future.

Around 1846 the first Jew settled in Atlanta, more than 100 years after Mikve Israel, the first Jewish congregation in Georgia, was established in Savannah. By 1875 Atlanta's Jewish inhabitants numbered approximately 500 out of a total city population of nearly 30,000. Nearly all of the Jews in the city at this time were of German extraction. They had brought with them to America the rudimentary tenets of reform Judaism which called for Jewish practice to respond liberally anew to each generation's demands. By the time the first Eastern European Jew arrived in Atlanta, the first German Jews had already established their livelihoods, mostly in retail trades and manufacturing. Many were no longer peddling from their backs or from carts; they were assimilating into American society with a religious ideology that enabled them to accept easily the values, mores, and culture they encountered. Immigrating German Jews had recently tasted the fruits of civic equality in portions of pre-state Germany. They brought with them to the American South similar expectations and were able in some degree to fulfill their anticipated goals.

The Eastern European Jew had a very different recent historical past.<sup>2</sup> Liberalism, emancipation, and prospects of assimilation were blunted in Czarist Russia. When Eastern European and German Jews encountered each other in Atlanta, there was little of a shared experience other than religious affiliation. Mutual disdain was evident on many levels: socially, culturally, and in terms of religious practice. For the Eastern European Jews in Atlanta, the German Jews were not pious enough; for the German Jews the Eastern Europeans were uncultured inhabitants of the ghetto who neither had command of English nor an understanding of the norms necessary for easy integration into Atlanta society. These profound differences prompted the Eastern Europeans to establish their own congregations in the late 1880s, one of them Ahavath Achim (Brotherly Love) and the other B'nai Abraham. Further influencing Eastern European Jewish clannishness was the inability or unwillingness of the non-Americanized immigrants to gain acceptance as social equals with the non-Jewish community.

Exactly when the first Eastern European Jew came to Atlanta is unclear, although a small number were members of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation. Many of the founders of Ahavath Achim had fled Russia because of the czar's impositions. A small minority of those who fled went to Palestine prior to and during the formative years of the Zionist movement. Most came to America and some of those who founded Ahavath Achim sojourned in parts of Europe or in northern cities such as Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore before coming to Atlanta. Initially, some of the Eastern European founders of Ahavath

Achim were transients in and out of Atlanta, peddling dry goods between September and December, returning north to their families thereafter. Those who remained in Atlanta displayed a group solidarity from the outset, concentrating residentially near Gilmer, Decatur, Moore, and Butler Streets, not too far from the site of the present State Capitol. In this area of the city where Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium now stands, Eastern European Jews established their synagogues, fraternal orders, and educational facilities.

From their earliest beginnings in Atlanta, Eastern European Jews were very poor. Many were peddlers, trading off their backs, then from a pushcart, and then progressing to a horse and wagon. For some, the culmination of their economic efforts meant the eventual opening of a dry goods store in the Decatur Street area. As peddlers, they would equip themselves with a variety of clothing items, dresses, material, and hats; and if successful enough to have a horse and wagon, they would set off for Augusta, Macon, or Columbus on a Sunday or Monday. Most tried to return to the city by Thursday night or Friday morning to be with their families for the Sabbath.

As they had done in Russia, some Eastern European Jews in Atlanta became middlemen in the commerce between the city and the country. Very few, however, whether of German or Eastern European background, were engaged in farming. The official restrictions against owning land in Russia carried over to an informal early reluctance to acquire land in Atlanta. It is noteworthy that though harsh governmental restrictions were not present in Atlanta, many Eastern Europeans lived as if such restraints were universally evident. Though residential limitations were absent, they still lived close together in an informal ghetto. Though land could have been acquired, a latent fear of government confiscation precluded its purchase. Instead of seeking to acquire property or possessions, an almost impossible task for a financially indigent immigrant group, the Eastern European Jews focused their energies on recreating the spiritual and religious environment that had held them together in the "old country." This, together with the concern for one another, provided the philosophical foundation for the Ahavath Achim Congregation.

In September, 1877 five Eastern European Jews filed a petition with the Superior Court of Fulton County seeking a charter for the establishment of Ahavath Achim. The charter specifically identified Ahavath Achim as a religious and charitable institution. It stated that the

object of said institution is the establishing of a church of the Jewish Faith for promoting the cause of Jewish religious education and charity. The particular business will be the conducting of religious services, collecting dues from the members of the congregation . . . [for] such of its members as may be in need by reason of sickness or abject poverty or in other distress that may see them objects of charity.<sup>3</sup>

Though chartered in 1887, more than a dozen founding members

reportedly held religious services in private homes in earlier years. The first place of worship for the synagogue was at 106 Gilmer Street and then at 120 Gilmer Street. In 1895, due to an increasing membership, the congregation moved to several rooms on Decatur Street and then in 1901 to its first synagogue at 37 Piedmont Avenue. As in many Eastern European congregations established in the South in the late 1800s, primary attention was given to the immediate needs of the community. These included the establishment of a cemetery committee and a committee to attend to the sick, the employment of a *shohet* (a man qualified to slaughter animals in the proper ritual manner) and a *mohel* (a man qualified to perform the ritual circumcision), and the provision of care for the less well-off. In 1896, the congregation employed its first cantor.

Membership dues were fifty cents per month with admission to membership denied anyone who received three blackballs. An applicant for membership had his background carefully scrutinized with religious orthodoxy the primary criterion for acceptance. As is the case today, most new members joined the congregation just prior to the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur holidays that occur in the late summer and the early autumn. For those in the congregation who were periodically absent from the city, special payment provisions were devised. Some gave service instead of money to the congregation. For those not capable of paying, a member in good standing would pay that share. No one religiously inclined and indigent was denied membership in the congregation. From the earliest minutes of the congregation there is evidence that poor or destitute members of the Jewish community *at large* had their burial costs defrayed by the congregation. Membership in the congregation doubled from thirty-five to seventy families in September, 1893 when the B'nai Abraham Congregation merged with Ahavath Achim.

It was not unusual for a young Eastern European congregation to lack a full-time spiritual leader initially. Most of the congregants at Ahavath Achim knew Hebrew, the daily prayers, and the appropriate melodies. They were able, therefore, to lead the services when necessary. Furthermore, the financial commitment to a full-time rabbi was not feasible from the resources of Ahavath Achim during its first decade. In fact, there is some question about when a rabbi joined the congregation. The first rabbi explicitly associated with Ahavath Achim was Rabbi Mayerovitz, who joined the congregation in 1901. Rabbi Mayerovitz, who knew English well, was the principal of the daily Hebrew and Sabbath educational school, and he also performed the functions of the *mohel*. A son of one of the early leaders of the congregation, wishing to preserve his anonymity, reported with some candor and personal remorse that Rabbi Mayerovitz's accuracy as a *mohel* was sometimes questionable.<sup>4</sup>

Rabbi Mayerovitz served the congregation in its first structure known as the Gilmer Street synagogue. According to the handwritten membership list found in the cornerstone of this building, there were 115

members in 1901. Situated at 37 Piedmont Avenue and Gilmer Street, this red brick synagogue with two tall spires served the congregation until 1920. Women and men were separated with the former relegated to a U-shaped balcony; the president and vice-president of the congregation sat on the pulpit with the rabbi; and sermons were almost exclusively in Yiddish. Weddings and bar mitzvah celebrations were open to the general Ahavath Achim community with private parties given at the celebrant's house. The downstairs portion of the building had several rooms which were used sparingly as classrooms for religious school purposes. A chapel was located downstairs for use in daily prayer worship. Architecturally, the synagogue reflected the orthodox tradition imported from eastern Europe; space was not provided for the religious training of youth.

Within the Ahavath Achim congregation the degree of religiosity of its members and the manner in which the services were conducted served to engender fraternal tensions. There were two diverse viewpoints: one maintained that the customs were not religious enough and were too reflective of the new American environment, while a second group believed that the services were too old-world in orientation. Over these strains the orthodox community split several times.

Those who pursued the intent of the second group believed in part that their children were being distanced from Judaism and Jewish practices. The service conducted almost totally in Hebrew and Yiddish had little meaning for these youngsters. Their fathers, some of whom had been in Atlanta for several decades and were making English their entry ticket into American society, chose to separate from Ahavath Achim. An unspecified number of congregants established Congregation Beth Israel in 1906 some two blocks distant from the Gilmer Street synagogue. Although this congregation disbanded in 1914 and many of its members returned to Ahavath Achim, the fact that English was used as a means of prayer during its short life of eight years had an effect ultimately upon the demand to have English adopted in the Ahavath Achim service. Such an innovation became the reluctant practice after Rabbi Epstein began his ministry in 1928.

Another congregation evolved out of the issues of contention within Ahavath Achim. Again the cause lay in the nature and degree of perceived religiosity. Dissatisfied orthodox members of Ahavath Achim were greatly annoyed with the practice of allowing non-Sabbath-observing members the privilege of conducting the services; particularly, they objected to the Decatur Street businessmen who kept their shops open on the Sabbath. Other factors of disenchantment, including personality clashes, gave rise to Congregation Shearith Israel in 1904. From 1907 until 1970, Rabbi Tobias Geffen was rabbi of Shearith Israel. Geffen's own style of religious orthodoxy and Rabbi Epstein's style were later to

clash, precipitating an informal separation within Atlanta Jewry of Eastern European orthodox origin.

In the years prior to World War I, the membership of Ahavath Achim continued to grow.<sup>5</sup> Some Russian Jews were sent to Atlanta by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, while others came because a family member was able to pay passage for the trip from either the North or directly from Russia. Those who arrived in Atlanta indigent and without relatives were often given temporary housing in homes of Ahavath Achim members. It was not uncommon for the congregation to take up a collection for a newcomer so that he could begin to support his family. Many who began this way received their initial start from Heyman Mendel, one of the wealthiest of Russian immigrant Jews in Atlanta.<sup>6</sup> Newcomers quickly understood that learning English would be instrumental in social and economic advancement. Some learned it in the home of relatives, while others went to night school. The constant influx of new immigrants into the congregation in the early 1900s necessitated a philosophical reconciliation between strict orthodoxy and more modernizing and secular influences. What to retain and what to reject as cultural baggage imported from the ghetto and what to absorb from the on-going Americanization process were vexing questions repeatedly faced by Ahavath Achim members. The steady stream of newcomers in concert with the older, less American-aculturated segments of the congregation helped preserve the traditional ties and orthodox practices of Ahavath Achim. On the other side of the spectrum, it was the youth who steadily pulled the newer immigrants toward unwanted modification of religious service, liturgy, and practice. In the absence of a Jewish day school or *Yeshiva*, most of the young people of Ahavath Achim were educated in public schools. It was from this influence that the seepage of liberalism, materialism, and change began to affect Ahavath Achim's traditional orthodoxy.

Until Rabbi Epstein's arrival, the synagogue structures which housed the Ahavath Achim congregation were almost exclusively devoted to worship. They were neither centers for Jewish education nor centers for Jewish social activity. To be sure, even prior to the building of the Gilmer Street synagogue in 1900 Ahavath Achim had employed a traditional religious teacher for the education of its male youth. In 1901 a religious school was established, but its classes were scheduled to complement public school education.

For the older generation who had been systematically denied the opportunity to matriculate into public schools in Russia, giving the next generation such an opportunity was paramount. Religious education was not to be cast aside, but successful secular educational training invariably meant access to college and, ultimately, to the professions of law and medicine, options the founding generation never fully enjoyed in Europe. A concern for education was in keeping with the age-old recogni-



tion of many Jewish parents that material things could be taken from Jews, but no one could take away their learning and education.

For Ahavath Achim members, the absence of sufficient capital and the clear decision not to build classrooms in the synagogue prevented the establishment of a combined religious and secular educational program. The same condition prevailed when the Washington Street synagogue was built in 1920. In fact, the lay leadership of the congregation reportedly rejected any notion of making the synagogue into an educational center.<sup>7</sup> However, by the time the Washington Street synagogue was constructed, an alternative institution existed two blocks away in the immediate residential environs of Ahavath Achim members. This building, the Jewish Educational Alliance (JEA), afforded Ahavath Achim youngsters a "house" for their Jewish education.<sup>8</sup>

Most of the early Hebrew training received by youngsters of Ahavath Achim members was provided by the family. It was transmitted to them by their parents or grandparents or by a teacher who would be brought to the home or the home of a friend. Before 1900, some Hebrew instruction took place in the various rooms rented by the congregation and, intermittently, at the Gilmer Street synagogue. Daughters of Ahavath Achim members received virtually all of their Jewish education from relatives at home, although there was at least one instance where a young girl was tutored at the home.<sup>9</sup> It was also uncommon for young girls to attend synagogue on a regular basis. More generally, synagogue attendance for the youth of Ahavath Achim, at least through the 1920s, became more of a social event than a religious occasion.

From its founding in 1905, the JEA served the Hebrew educational needs of Ahavath Achim youth. The physical separation of religious from secular educational training gave special importance to the JEA while distancing Ahavath Achim youth somewhat from the synagogue. The JEA had been established with the primary goal of promoting "a knowledge of and devotion to the American language and American laws, customs, and institutions." In addition to housing the United Hebrew School which taught children of German Jewish origin as well, the JEA became a meeting place for various social clubs and youth-oriented organizations. Likewise, city-wide Jewish charities worked out of the Alliance Building at 90 Capitol Avenue. These included the Montefiore Relief Association; a Free Loan Association; the Federation of Jewish Charities (a precursor of the present Jewish Welfare Federation); the Jewish National Fund, which purchased land and settled immigrants in Palestine; and, eventually, the Atlanta chapter of the Zionist Organization of America. It was not uncommon for a boy to go to the United Hebrew High School after school and stay on to play basketball with his friends, returning home at 7:30 p.m.<sup>10</sup> On Sundays there were lectures, plays, concerts, and other forms of entertainment. Although the JEA was initially funded with mostly German Jewish financial backing, by 1913

several Russian Jews were serving on its board of directors. The fact that the United Hebrew High School was created by leaders of Ahavath Achim and housed in the Alliance building was evidence of the social intermingling that took place between the two Jewish communities. This interaction was generated originally by pragmatism; after 1913 the Jewish communities drew closer because of the external threat that the Leo Frank case posed to them collectively.

Nevertheless, complete integration of the Jewish community did not occur as a result of the anti-Semitism so graphically illustrated by Frank's lynching or by the racial epithets directed at Jewish school children in 1914.<sup>11</sup> The arrest of Frank for the alleged murder of Mary Phagan and his lynching caused some Ahavath Achim members to carry guns for their personal protection. For others, it meant closing shop and temporarily leaving the city. For a few who vividly remembered the Russian pogroms that forced them to come to the United States in the first place, history was repeating itself.

Distance between the German and the Russian Jewish communities of Atlanta continued due to their respective commitment to and identity with their place of origin and historical political philosophy. German Jews had little patience for the Balfour Declaration of 1917 which promised Britain's assistance in the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Like their assimilated brethren in England, German Jews in Atlanta did not countenance the idea that perhaps non-Jews might consider them less than loyal Americans if they supported the idea of a Jewish home in Palestine; Eastern European Jews, on the other hand, were staunchly behind the concept of Zionism, the Jewish return to Palestine, and the upbuilding of the Jewish homeland. When the celebration of the Balfour Declaration took place at the Forsythe Theatre in late 1917, the audience was almost exclusively Eastern European in origin.<sup>12</sup> The German Jewish community led by Rabbi David Marx took an extremely hostile attitude toward the issuance of the declaration in particular and toward Zionism in general. It was only later after the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 that both communities were welded together by a bond of common commitment.

Once again in 1920, the growth of Ahavath Achim necessitated a larger synagogue structure. From 1900 to 1920 the congregation had grown from 115 members to over 400. The Washington Street synagogue accommodated between 1500 and 1800 people. In its sanctuary, as in the Gilmer Street synagogue, there was a balcony where women were seated apart from the men. In the downstairs portion of the synagogue, two or three classrooms were designated for use by the United Hebrew School. Next to these classrooms was a large hall where the expanded Hebrew School met. Also meeting in these rooms in the early 1920s were the recently formed Sunday School, Bible Class, and Free Loan Association.

Presiding over the physical transfer from Gilmer Street to Washing-

ton Street was Rabbi A. P. Hirmes, who was a learned teacher with great depth of knowledge. His conduct of the services was characterized by a predictable consistency, a rhythmic falsetto, and a disregard for the clock. On a personal level, he remained remote from the congregation's youth and barely spoke passable English. Hirmes had succeeded Rabbi Yood in 1919 after Yood left the city for committing an unpardonable indiscretion. Yood was considered a brilliant fellow and, unlike Hirmes, was considered sufficiently approachable by the youth of the congregation.<sup>13</sup> Neither rabbi enjoyed the leadership stature of the congregation's lay leader, Morris Lichtenstein.

Lichtenstein originally operated a pawn shop and then entered the insurance business. Without being a college graduate and without expressing Jewish orthodoxy in abundance, he grew to be typed as the "Jewish mayor" for the Russian Jews. His popularity overshadowed that of either Yood or Hirmes. After his death in 1926, there was an absence of real leadership in the congregation. It was this void that was so ably filled by Rabbi Epstein when he arrived in 1928.

During the decade prior to Rabbi Epstein's arrival, the congregation began to answer some of the demands placed upon it by its assimilating youth. Yet even the creation of programs for the American-educated generation were not sufficient for some members; it took Rabbi Epstein's organizational abilities to mold and restructure what had been initiated in the early 1920s. The Bible School created for young men between the ages of fourteen and nineteen became a mechanism for continued Jewish education after one's bar mitzvah. In 1924 a Junior Congregation was organized in which young men assisted in the conduct of daily services. A Sunday school was also developed in the early 1920s to augment the activities of the United Hebrew School. Women members organized themselves into a sisterhood in September, 1920 and took upon themselves the task of developing and expanding the Sunday school.

These organizations emerged in the 1920s because of the initiative of Ahavath Achim members devoted to Jewish tradition and learning. The absence of a forceful rabbi and the death of Morris Lichtenstein required a firm hand to guide the congregation. Many young people were drifting away from Judaism, only attending religious services out of a deference to their elders. There was a need to lead the congregation in a manner which would at the same time reconcile traditional attitudes with growing assimilation. Having come from a rabbinic family, Rabbi Epstein straddled both generations: though a young man, he assured the founders of Ahavath Achim of his learning and stature while his command of English brought the youth back to the synagogue. The emphasis placed upon the synagogue as a light of learning turned many heads away from the Alliance and even perhaps delayed the full integration of the Russian Jewish community with the established German Jews in Atlanta. After fifty years of existence, Ahavath Achim could have slowly

disintegrated into many other congregations or championed conservative Judaism as an immediate compromise to the "Americanization" process. There is no doubt that Rabbi Epstein arrested any decline in Jewish identity.

Yet without the strength, fortitude, and concern of its members, Ahavath Achim would not have grown in size while retaining its traditional Jewish consciousness. Central to the congregation's founding tradition was a concern for one another. Practical expression of that concern inspired the creation of the congregation's Free Loan Association in February, 1923.<sup>14</sup>

Like the Free Loan Association established at the Alliance, this association granted small short-term loans of between \$50 and \$200 to deserving members who needed money for private or business purposes. Loans were made without interest, and only the endorsement of one of the congregation's leaders was needed for loan approval. Initial capital for such loans was obtained from contributions and from an annual fund-raising banquet. Rarely was a loan forfeited.

Association loans proved very helpful for small businessmen who wrote checks on a Friday to pay their week's bills, but who had not as yet collected outstanding revenues from clients similarly constrained by limited budgets. Monies received on Sunday from the Free Loan Association were deposited in local banks to cover the checks written the previous Friday. The benefit of these loans to the small Jewish businessman was obvious: it gave a merchant the valuable option of not pressing for payment of bills and clients so treated generally remained loyal, particularly when credit was hard to obtain. Thus, the process served both merchant and client admirably.

This informal Jewish bank gave many a "greenhorn" capital that might not otherwise have been obtainable. More importantly from the viewpoint of the history of Ahavath Achim, its creation was indicative of the philosophical concern of its founders who shared their economic resources with their less fortunate compatriots. The Free Loan Association continued well into the 1960s; its long duration and success represented in poignant fashion the deep group solidarity Ahavath Achim members experienced together.

## NOTES

Research for this article was undertaken in 1977 and 1978 at the request of the officers and Board of Trustees of Ahavath Achim Congregation. The article is a revised and abbreviated portion of the book entitled, *A History of Ahavath Achim Congregation, 1887-1977*. The book was commissioned to honor Rabbi Harry H. Epstein's jubilee year with the congregation. A variety of material was utilized in writing both the book and the article. They included congregational meeting minutes, old by-laws, articles in the *Southern Israelite*, *Atlanta Constitution*, *Atlanta Journal* and the

synagogue bulletin. Of unique worth were the personal archives and collections of congregation members and of Rabbi and Mrs. Harry H. Epstein. In addition, more than seventy hours of interviews with more than two dozen veteran members were used to substantiate facts and clarify nuances. Though the manuscript of the book was carefully read by Rabbi Epstein and his associate, Rabbi David H. Auerbach, I alone am responsible for this article and its contents.

1. John Higham in *Send Them to Me* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), p. 164 makes a similar general assertion when comparing the acceptance of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in the North with those in parts of the South.
2. For an initial discussion of differences in the histories of Eastern European and German Jews, see Howard Morley Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 53-116 and 181-98.
3. *Petition for Ahavath Achim's Congregational Charter*, State of Georgia, Fulton County to the Superior Court, filed by Morris Mack, Attorney for the Petitioners, 17 September 1887.
4. Interview with J. L., 23 October 1977, Atlanta, Georgia.
5. Steven Hertzberg, "The Jewish Community of Atlanta from the End of the Civil War Until the Eve of the Frank Case," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 62 (March 1973): 253.
6. Interview with Rabbi Harry H. Epstein, 25 November 1977, Atlanta, Georgia.
7. *Ibid.*
8. For a brief history of the Alliance, see *The Jewish Outlook* for April 1913 and June 1913.
9. Interview with Esther Kahn Taylor, 30 January 1978, Atlanta, Georgia.
10. Interview with Dr. I. Joseph Glazer, 21 November 1977, Atlanta, Georgia.
11. Interview with Herbert Taylor, 30 January 1978, Atlanta, Georgia. Herbert Taylor's father, Charles, was one of the first secretaries of Ahavath Achim Congregation. Herbert Taylor married Esther Kahn Taylor, see fn. 9.
12. Interview with Ida Goldstein Levitas, 3 November 1977, Atlanta, Georgia. Ida Levitas's father, S. J. Goldstein, was involved in Ahavath Achim affairs from the early 1900s.
13. Interview with Sam Eplan, 28 November 1977, Atlanta, Georgia. Sam Eplan's father, Leon Eplan, was a founding member of the congregation. Sam Eplan himself participated in many of the crucial decisions regarding the synagogue's growth and development; and interview with J.L., 23 October 1977, Atlanta, Georgia.
14. *Ahavath Achim Synagogue Brotherhood Souvenir Program, 1940.*