

A8 NEWS-SUN FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1983

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Beth Emeth to build

Beth Emeth Congregation president Arthur Leist, left, and Fred Kuentz, Del E. Webb Development Co. president, right, sign purchase contract for land on Meeker Boulevard, Sun City West, where the congregation will build a synagogue. At center is Saul Fidelman, Beth Emeth land chairman. Beth Emeth has started a building fund. Donations are being accepted by Rose Sellers, financial secretary, Beth Emeth Congregation, 10105 Cameo Drive.

(News-Sun photo)

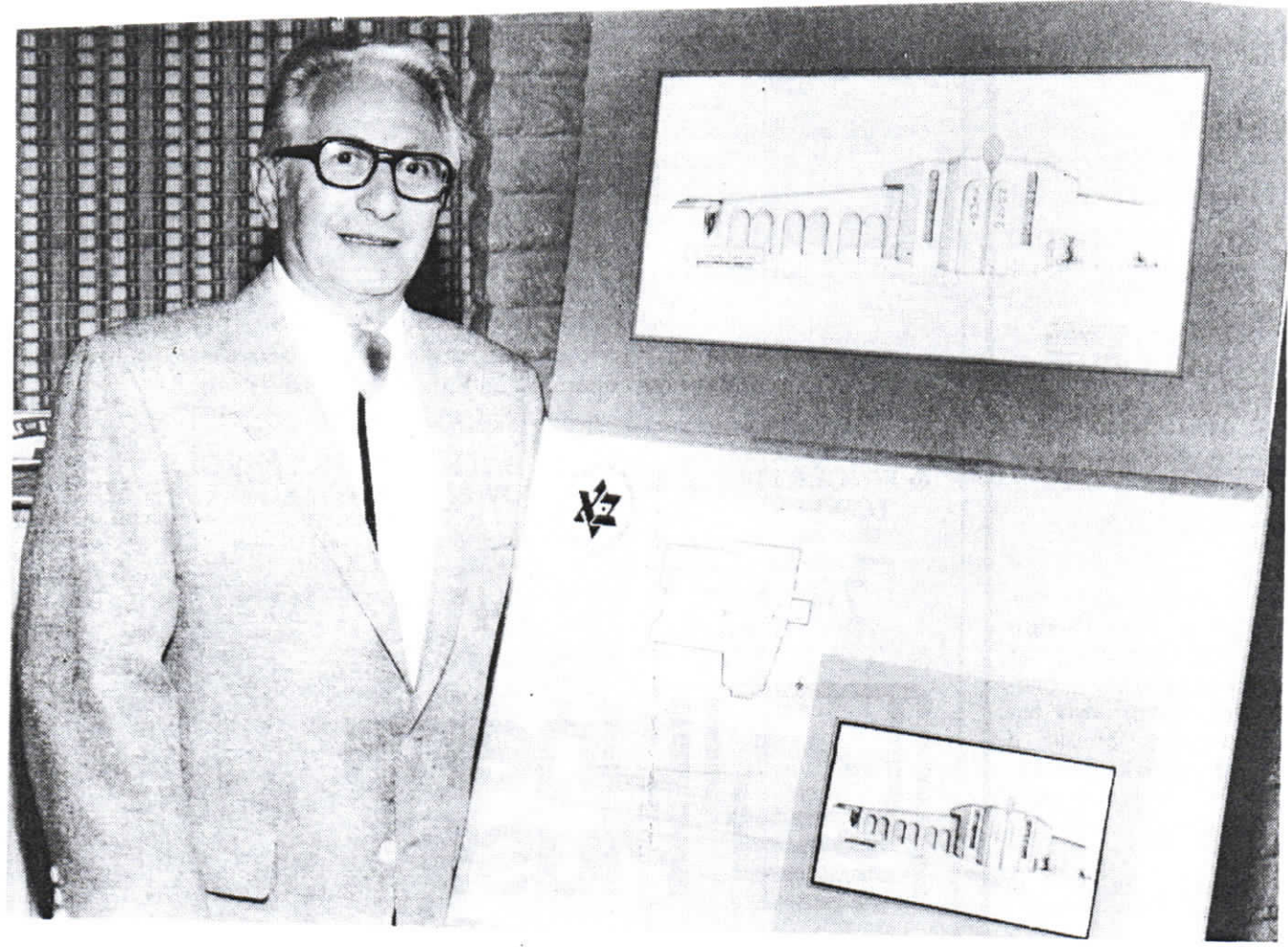


Future site

10-8-83

Arthur Leist, left, President, and Saul Fidelman, land chairman, check sign at future site of Beth Emeth Conservative Synagogue on Meeker Boule-

vard in Sun City West. The synagogue will serve residents of the Sun Cities, Yougntown, Peoria, El Mirage and Surprise. (News-Sun photo)



Beth Emeth plans 12-31-83

Artist Max Gimpel exhibits drawings of the proposed Beth Emeth Synagogue to be erected on Meeker Boulevard in Sun City West. The synagogue will serve the Sun Cities and environs. A building fund

drive is under way to finance construction which is expected to be started during 1984 and meetings are being held with architects. Further information: Arthur Leist, president, 584-2483.

Beth Emeth rich

Synagogue monument to tradition

Fourth in a weekly series
By **KIMBERLY HICKS**
Daily News-Sun staff

When he designed the synagogue for the Beth Emeth Conservative Congregation nearly 10 years ago, Max Gimpel did more than draft plans for a building to accommodate the Sun Cities' growing Jewish population.

Gimpel, a Sun City resident and congregation member, created a house of worship rich in the symbolism, history and tradition of Judaism.

■ A stained glass entry/exit window above the lobby doors highlights the Jewish holidays with symbols and inscriptions in Hebrew.

■ The Lions of Judah flank the tablets of the Ten Commandments above a Holy Ark in the chapel, while the Biblical account of the burning bush is symbolized on its doors.

■ A calligraphic sculpture on the memorial wall inside the sanctuary pays homage to the six million Jews who died in the Holocaust. A flame, the universal symbol of memorial, is made up of Hebrew letters which spell "Sh'ma Yisrael," or "Hear O Israel," the prayer uttered by Jews facing death.

The flame rises from a mass grave; the bodies of the men, women and children are made from calligraphic lettering which, in Hebrew, spells "I believe with a perfect faith," the chant of the Jewish martyrs who died for God.

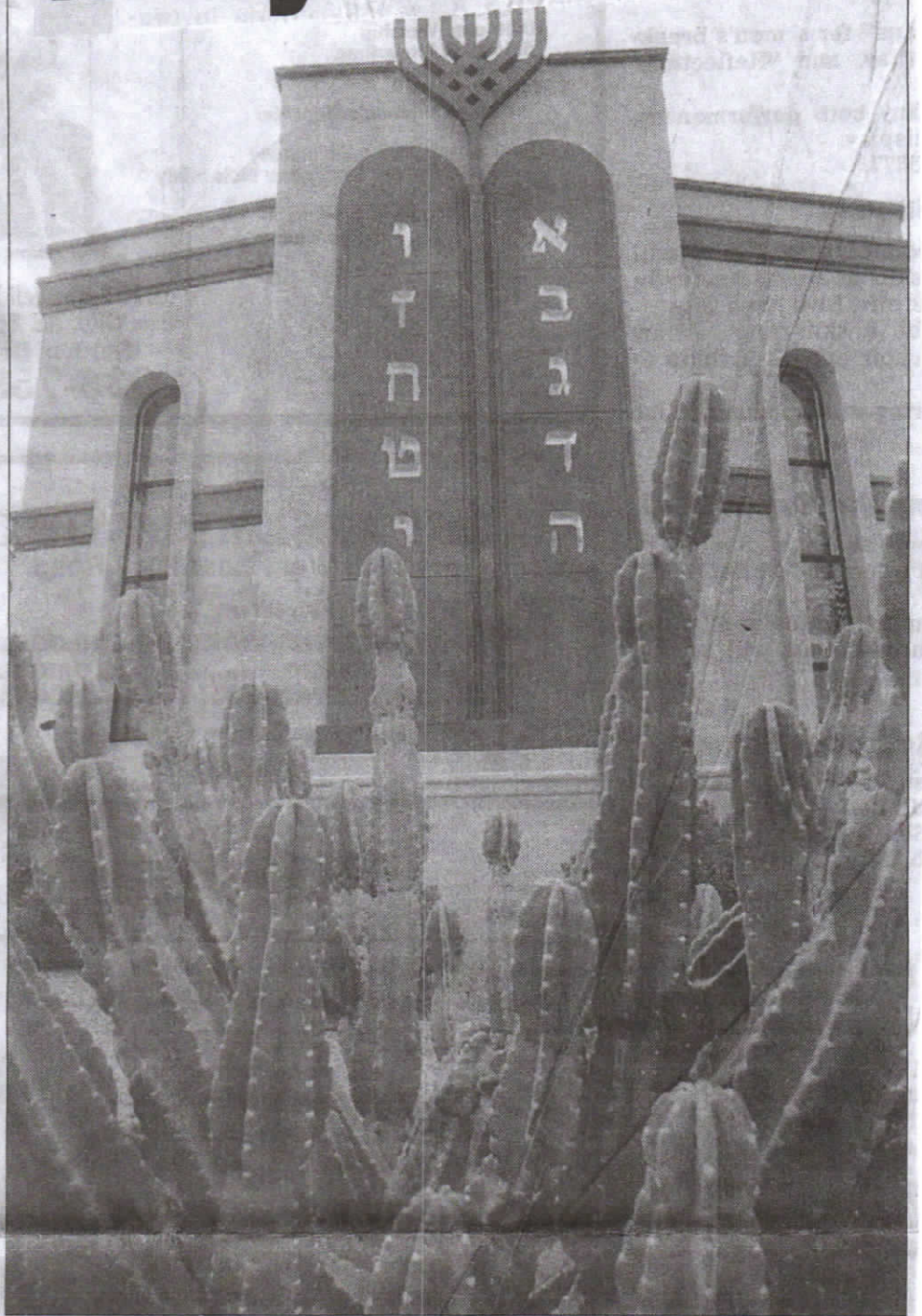
■ Wall fixtures which combine the seven-armed menorah and the Star of David, the symbols of Judaism, hang to the right and left of the altar. They also are depicted in stained glass windows inside the rabbi's office.

■ A "Tree of Life" hangs in the lobby. Its leaves are small placards engraved with news of happy events, such as birthdays and anniversaries.

A longtime artist, instructor and designer educated at the Vienna Art Academy in his native Austria, Gimpel calls the synagogue the crowning point of his long and varied career.

His credits include designing the U.S. Navy chapel at Subic Bay, the Vienna Theater Association and logos

in symbolism



Stephen Chernek/Daily News-Sun

The eastern wall of Beth Emeth Conservative Congregation synagogue in Sun City West features a seven-armed menorah flanked by the tablets of the Ten Commandments. The exterior design of the synagogue complements the inside, which is rich the symbolism, tradition and history of Judaism.

for the Plotkin Judaica Museum in Phoenix and the 25th anniversary of Sun City.

"I can't tell you how proud I was to see this be developed," he said, standing outside the 11,000-square-foot

synagogue at 13702 W. Meeker Blvd., Sun City West.

In just over two years, Gimpel's extensive research into the roots of Jewish faith and pencilled etchings were transformed into an elaborate, \$1 million religious edifice.

Beth Emeth Conservative Congregation synagogue opened its doors in May, 1987, featuring a 220-seat sanctuary, 280-seat social hall, library, chapel, lobby and gift shop and a kosher kitchen.

Gimpel incorporated three features unique to synagogues into his design.

The synagogue faces east, toward Jerusalem. It houses a Holy Ark on the altars of the chapel and sanctuary to harbor the Torah, the scroll containing the first five books of the Bible, and the symbols on the doors of the Holy Ark face the congregation.

Gimpel designed the Holy Ark inside the sanctuary with bronze doors adorned by a calligraphic design depicting the architecture of Old Jerusalem. Across both doors, the spirit of God hovers over the holy city.

On the left door, Gimpel's design reflects the message: "If one observes the laws of the Torah and believes in God, there will be peace in the world," in Hebrew.

The right door features buildings in Old Jerusalem, the spiritual root of Judaism.

Just above the doors of the Holy Ark inside the sanctuary are the words, "Be aware before Whom you are standing" in Hebrew.

"Most of the time, at the Holy Ark, you'll see the Ten Commandments. For this design, I chose to show the first two words of each command," Gimpel said.

Above the Holy Ark, an eternal light burns.

The eternal light is a fixture on the wall of all synagogues, Gimpel said, expressing the ever-presence of God.

His design depicts cupped hands protecting the flame.

The ceiling of the sanctuary is supported by five solid wooden beams — each 54 feet in length — which stretch upward from the rear toward the altar and the Holy Ark.

"As you walk in, you see the ceiling beams leading up to the eastern wall. What I tried to do was express that your focus is on the Holy Ark, and the hope that your prayers go upward," Gimpel said.

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Planting memories



Steve Chemek/Daily News-Sun

Rabbi Dr. Seymour Moskowitz, left, prays at the ceremony dedicating the Gertrude and Joseph Burdoo Biblical Garden at Beth Emeth Congregation in Sun City West Wednesday, which marked the Jewish holiday of Tu B'Shevat. Congregation members and visitors may select a plant and purchase it in memory of a loved one. A similar service was conducted at Temple Beth Shalom in Sun City.

Daily News-Sun • Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2000

Children flock to Hebrew school in Sun City West

HUCK HEEMAN
DAILY NEWS-SUN

When Alan Bright was installed as rabbi at Beth Emeth Congregation of the West Valley last August, he immediately became aware of a need for services outside the norm for his assembly.

"I had been the cantor here for more than a year," Bright said. "During that time, I had heard it mentioned a couple of times that we should look at organizing some bar and bat mitzvah classes, but nothing had been done about it at that time."

Officials at Beth Emeth were not convinced of the need for organized Hebrew schooling in the retirement community.

But more calls came in from parents asking if such classes could be started.

"We are the only conservative synagogue in the West Valley," Bright said. "With the influx of young families in Surprise, Goodyear and other areas here, there was nowhere nearby for them to take their children to learn. We finally got the hint, and started to organize some classes."

Once presented with the opportunity to build their congregation, members of Beth Emeth welcomed the younger members with open arms.

"It's a lot to ask for people to change their way of doing things and their way of thinking," Bright said. "But our people here have been behind this from the start, and with their support we are starting more programs geared toward our younger families."

One program is a capital campaign to build an addition to the temple, a wing that will house Beth Emeth's new Hebrew school. With 60 percent of the funding in place, Bright estimates the new facility will open within 18 months.

In the meantime, the 23 students who comprise Beth Emeth's first class of its Hebrew school will use the temple's meeting rooms for their lessons. Bright was pleasantly surprised by the initial turnout, and now believes the number of students will double within a year.

"With the results of the Hebrew school so encouraging, we've decided to expand into some other programs as well," Bright said.

An adult bar and bat mitzvah class will start next month, and adult Hebrew education classes are already in place. Bright plans to start a class soon for converts to the Jewish faith.

Bright is beginning his third year with Beth Emeth, and is into his second year as the congregation's spiritual leader. A Realtor by profession,

Bright has lived in the Valley for four years after coming to Arizona from London, England.

"The congregation is very supportive of what we're doing here," Bright said. "We're even talking about expanding the complex beyond the new school. They're taking it well."

For information about Beth Emeth and its programs, call 584-7210, or contact the temple by e-mail at bethemeth@lycos.com.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Students attend a class at the Hebrew school at Beth Emeth Congregation of the West Valley.

(over)



Hanukkah meets Thanksgiving

By Tina Gamez
DAILY NEWS-SUN

It last happened in 1881 and it won't happen again for another 79,043 years. Hanukkah and Thanksgiving have come together.

"The actual confluence of Hanukkah coming together with Thanksgiving, it's an interesting thing, but it's not central," said Rabbi David Rosenberg of Beth Emeth Congregation in Sun City West.

Rosenberg said there is much to be thankful for and Hanukkah celebrates that. "We just light the candles to remind us, that we were able to vanquish or beat up the enemies who tried to make us give up our Judaism," so it's the same as Thanksgiving in many ways."

Jewish people really like Thanksgiving more than anything else, he said, "because it doesn't saddle them with religious issues. Religion is not something everyone wants to get wrapped up in, in this day and age."

Rosenberg added that Jewish people as a group are "not that religious in that sense. We really just like to live well and be thankful that they are free to do as they want, worship as they want.

"People want more of a



Ethel Cogen, left, and Linda Stanger display chocolate coins, a Hanukkah tradition. [Tina Gamez/Daily News-Sun]

brotherhood of man, being thankful for living in a wonderful land. We have freedom," he said. On Thanksgiving, "We thank God for giving us a country that is rich and plentiful."

Rosenberg was at his girlfriend Linda Stanger's house in Sun City Grand. Stanger's cousin, Ethel Cogen, and boyfriend, Frank Clark, are visiting from Cincinnati.

Stanger said she finds Hanukkah and Thanksgiving coming together "interest-

ing. Because it's never happened before in my lifetime and it's nice to get to spend time with dear family and celebrate two wonderful holidays."

Cogen said she is excited about both holidays coming together. She hasn't spent Hanukkah with her family since she was a child. When in college, she went home for Thanksgiving and the Christmas recess, but never Hanukkah. "What a special part of the miracle of the eight days of Hanukkah,

that I get to spend both Hanukkah and Thanksgiving with my family this year," she said.

As for Clark, it is his first Hanukkah and he said Thanksgiving is his favorite holiday. "To be able to celebrate that, and then take part in Hanukkah is just extra special."

Stanger's parents and Cogen's mother live in Sun City West and their moms, Eleanor Meschko and Frances Cogen, are cousins.

As far as holidays go, Rosenberg said Christmas is their biggest competition for Hanukkah. The children used to get toy money. "We never gave gifts. Now we have to give gifts" each of the eight days for Hanukkah.

The group celebrated Hanukkah at a candle lighting ceremony at Beth Emeth Wednesday, then went out for dinner at Archie's Deli in Surprise to have latkes.

On Thanksgiving, they're going to the Wigwam for a buffet dinner, then lighting a candle on the menorah in the evening.

They're eating dinner out so the cousins could spend more time "running around" instead of cooking. Cogen added: "We cram two-weeks activities into one week."



Sun City West Beth Emeth Congregation Rabbi David Rosenberg lights candles Tuesday at the house of his girlfriend, Linda Stanger of Sun City Grand, while her cousin, Ethel Cogen, and boyfriend, Frank Clark, both of Cincinnati, look on. [Tina Gamez/Daily News-Sun]