

1957 Golf Manor Synagogue Grows

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1957

Agudas Israel Roster Is Doubling Following Its Move to Golf Manor; Rabbi Indich Views Suburban Shift

What happens when a Synagogue moves to the suburbs?

In the case of Golf Manor Synagogue, the answer seems to be that membership increases at a tremendous rate, and religious school enrollment runs well ahead of estimates.

Golf Manor Synagogue (Agudas Israel) moved from 521 Forest Avenue, in the heart of Avondale, to Stover Avenue, Golf Manor, in the heart of suburbia.

The first thing that happened, says Rabbi David Indich, was that membership went from 200 affiliated families to 350.

"Our religious school facilities were obsolete the day we opened," he said, "we Build four classrooms, expecting a religious school enrollment of 40 or 50. When we opened, we had 125"

Rabbi Indich expects that by the end of next week there will be 150 more affiliated families.

Golf Manor Synagogue is an Orthodox congregation, and that meant that the move from Avondale poses special problems. For one thing, an Orthodox congregation may not leave one house of worship until another is ready to receive it.

"That is why we decided on a prefabricated building," Rabbi Indich explained. "United States Steel had one that could go up rapidly. The roof was on 90 days after work started."

There was a house on the Synagogue property, and Rabbi Indich said the congregation used it for services from June 16, when the congregation moved, until the Synagogue was ready just before the High Holidays.

Rabbi Indich, his wife and two children, moved to Golf Manor 11 weeks before the congregation came out and this posed a problem for him of getting to Synagogue on the Sabbath.

"I used to walk 5½ miles each Sabbath," he explained, "and then I'd stay over and ride back. People used to see me walking along Reading Road and offer a ride, but I couldn't accept."

The new Synagogue is modern and pleasant. It has a small chapel for regular services, and a large sanctuary for large groups.

"Unfortunately," he said, "the average American thinks

Orthodoxy is something with horns, and that it is a gloomy religion. But Orthodoxy can be as modern as tomorrow.

"Look at our chapel. What could be more modern or cheerful? We have modernized in a lot of respects. We use English in our services.

"English is something everyone understands. Today most Orthodox Jews don't understand the Hebrew prayers they read. Our congregation now is in a suburb where there are many younger people. Some of our members belong to our congregation and a Reform congregation, too."

Rabbi Indich said that another modern innovation in his Synagogue is standardized prayer books so that everyone can follow the service.

"In an old style Orthodox Synagogue," he said, "everyone knows the prayers and what they mean, and they know where the rabbi is reading. So everyone has his own prayer book, and often no two are alike."

He said that his Synagogue will have permanent pews, unlike older type Synagogues where worshippers are free to move about as they please during services "and it often seems like bedlam."

While Golf Manor Synagogue has modern aspects and is doing all it can to fit into the suburban setting, Rabbi Indich said that no change is being in the forms of Orthodox worship.

"We want to be as modern as our religion permits," he said, "but we believe in every part of the Jewish law, and keep every part. We place our religion above ourselves."

"We believe that every God-given law has a God-given reason behind it, and that whatever reason we may find for it, there will always be a larger reason that we never can attain."

Rabbi Indich said he hopes his congregation doesn't become too large, because "I don't believe in supermarket religion." He said that if a congregation becomes too large, the rabbi can't know each member.

"We're living in an age when everything is super," he said. "I want to avoid it."