

# History of the Lower Merion Synagogue Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania

The early years 1954 – 1981  
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Source: Lower Merion Synagogue, *Journal of Dedication*, May 31, 1981, pages 4 & 6.

## HISTORY

*"From a small log cabin on the Main Line to a main link connection with time honored tradition," this, in brief, is the story of the Lower Merion Synagogue.*

*Founded in 1954 by a small group of committed young Jewish couples, the L.M.S. has always been noteworthy for the spirit of its dedication to the perpetuation of authentic Jewish values.*

*The impetus of this unique congregation has always been derived from the dynamism of a new breed of American Jew. Though young in years and small in numbers, this new breed more than compensates by its intensity of devotion to Torah, its fellow Jews, and to all of mankind.*

*As in times of old, the L.M.S. has become the focal point for the spiritual fulfillment of its membership. The voices of children and adults ring out constantly in prayer and devotion. At any time the visitor may be treated to the joys of sacred study which are an ongoing activity at the synagogue. Classes in Jewish subjects ranging from Talmud to Cantillation imbue both participants and spectators alike with a heightened sense of Jewish awareness.*

*People-oriented activities are also very much a part of the L.M.S. scene. An active Soviet Jewry Committee works constantly on behalf of our less fortunate brethren behind the iron curtain. Our Israeli Action Committee fosters an interest and dedication to the Land of Our Fathers. Cultural and social activities reflect the multifaceted nature of our membership, whilst adherence to Halacha provides the cohesive framework for unity with individuality.*

*The following are a number of important milestones in our synagogue's history:*

- 5714-15 - Services are inaugurated at Shalva, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Leon Korngold, Princeton  
1954 and Cambridge Roads, Bala Cynwyd.
  - High Holiday Services, 5715 are held in a log cabin at Manayunk and Conshohocken Roads in Cynwyd.
- 5716-17 - To accommodate the Wynnefield members of Lower Merion Synagogue, services are  
1956 held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Borck at 51st Street in Wynnefield.
- 5717-18 - On July 2nd, the L.M.S. receives its charter and is Incorporated by the Commonwealth  
1957 of Pennsylvania.
  - On July 10th, the L.M.S. acquires title to the Philip and Sophia Littman Estate at 123 Old Lancaster Road, Bala Cynwyd.
- 5718-19 - Rabbi Jerome Herzog is appointed spiritual leader of the congregation.  
1958
  - On Sunday, June 15th, amidst a gala celebration and in the presence of a large crowd consisting of dignitaries, organizational representatives, members and friends, Dedication Day exercises are held on the grounds of L.M.S.
- 5720-21 - On November 10th, the L.M.S. receives the "Pioneer Synagogue Award" from the  
1960 Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations.
- 5721-22 - Rabbi Aaron Rothkoff appointed spiritual leader of Lower Merion Synagogue.  
1961

## HISTORY (Continued)

- 5722-23  
1962 - Extensive renovations are embarked upon. Spearheaded by Mr. Sam Goodman, the synagogue sanctuary is enlarged into its present form. Mr. William Hecht gives unstintingly of his time and expertise to achieve this goal.
- 5724-25 - Rabbi Eli Lazar is appointed spiritual leader of Lower Merion Synagogue.  
- In April, the L.M.S. hosts first Pennsylvania College Shabbaton. From this date forward, L.M.S. continues to host and support Jewish collegiate youth activities of every type.
- 5727-28  
1967 - Rabbi Abraham A. Levene appointed spiritual leader of L.M.S.  
- Lower Merion Synagogue plays host to Yavne of Philadelphia.
- 5728-29  
1969 - Lower Merion Synagogue makes its facilities available to the Wynnefield Hebrew Day School (now Torah Academy of Greater Philadelphia), enabling the day school to continue its Pre-school program.  
- Rabbi Abraham Levene is chosen by students at University of Pennsylvania to be spiritual advisor to newly formed Jewish Residence House.
- 5730-31  
1970 - Rabbi Abraham Levene appointed advisor to Philadelphia Yavne – College Youth Organization.
- 5732-33  
1972 - Lower Merion Synagogue aids Jewish students at Haverford-Bryn Mawr Colleges in starting a kosher eating house.  
- L.M.S. loans its facilities to Akiba High School which is cramped for space.
- 5734-35  
1974 - Due to an ever expanding membership, L.M.S. is forced to hold High Holiday services in a tent on the synagogue grounds.
- 5735  
1975 - Lower Merion Synagogue starts a Pesach food store on its premises jointly with the Torah Academy of Greater Philadelphia. This activity which takes place each spring is now held at the Torah Academy premises with continued L.M.S. participation.
- 5736-37  
1976 - New Synagogue quarters necessitated by continued growth; discussion on building initiated.
- 5737-40  
1977-80 - Membership votes unanimously in favor of expansion. Banquet honoring Rabbi Abraham A. Levene, in celebration of his tenth anniversary as spiritual leader of the Lower Merion Synagogue, was held on June 17, 1977, 3 Tammuz 5737. This banquet officially opened the new building campaign. Plans for a new synagogue building are drawn up; financial arrangements are made and, in May 1980, ground is broken for a new building.
- 5741  
1980-81 - High Holiday services are held, for the first time, in the new building. A completion dinner honoring Efraim Korngold was held on December 21, 1980. Plans are finalized for the Building Dedication on May 31, 1981.