

Our Modern Rabbi from Berlin



The first long term Rabbi of our Congregation was Adolph Rosentreter who served from 1885 to 1893 and then, after a short break, from 1895 to 1911, a total of 24 years. He came to St. Louis from Berlin, Germany in 1884 as a 26 year old young man with some members of his family. Less than a year later he was engaged by our Congregation as its Rabbi. One of the reasons he was hired was because he spoke German and was able to give his sermons in German. This was important because many of the members of our Congregation, at that time, had emigrated from German speaking countries and spoke German as their first language. Yiddish speaking immigrants did not come in large numbers until later.

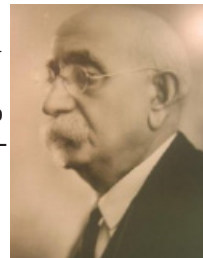
A second very important reason why he appealed to our Congregation was because he was on the more liberal side of Orthodox Judaism. He had received his Rabbinic training in Berlin at the

Hildesheimer Yeshiva. That Yeshiva was founded by Rabbi Azriel Hildeseimer who is credited with being the founder of Modern Orthodox Judaism. It was Rabbi Hildeseimer's conviction that traditional Judaism need not fear the modern Western culture. Nor did Judaism have to accept the non-traditional principles of Reform Judaism which was attracting Jews who thought they could not be modern and Orthodox at the same time.

At that time, the St. Louis Jewish community was either Orthodox or Reform. Conservative Judaism did not exist. The Reform community was made up mostly of Jews who had come here from German speaking countries well before the American Civil War and were already established. Many of our congregants, also being from German speaking countries, had many social connections with the Reform community but wanted to

maintain a traditional adherence to Jewish law so they were very much attracted to a Rabbi who had been trained at a liberal Berlin Yeshiva and who spoke German but was firmly Orthodox.

Under the leadership of Rabbi Rosentreter, B'nai Amoona became the first Modern Orthodox congregation in St. Louis and one of the first, if not, the first, west of the Mississippi.



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