**Congregation Beth Israel**

7000 Canal Boulevard

The orthodox Congregation Beth IsraelHouse of Israelunited several small orthodox congregations that had been organized on the basis of ethnic origin, around 1904. The consolidated congregation worshiped for a short time in the synagogue of the former Tememe Derech congregation, one of the component groups, at 500 Carondelet Street. It moved to the renovated residence of former Mayor Joseph Shakespeare, 1616 Carondelet Street, two years later, and in 1924 it built an elaborate 1200-seat synagogue in Byzantine-style architecture, designed by Emil Weil, on the same site (now a location of the New Home Ministries). At that point Beth Israel claimed to be the largest Orthodox congregation in the South.

In 1970, in response to the members migration away from center city, the congregation built a more intimate building in the Lakeview area. This synagogue was modern and uncluttered. A large outdoor menorah welcomed congregants and visitors, and numerous plaques inside honored its members, past and present, emphasizing the congregations solidarity with tradition.

Two art glass windows occupied the entire lengths of the north and south walls. Milton Pounds of Covington designed and created these glass murals, as well as the smaller windows at the front. The hand-blown Blenko glass intentionally incorporated small imperfections, and the variegated tones provided character and texture. Grey, deep yellow and black glass were the dominant colors, with strong dark curving lines.

The Exodus window, on the lake side of the sanctuary, recounted a three-part story: the oppression of the Jews in Biblical times and in the twentieth century, their wandering to escape persecution, and their joyous return to Israel. Opposite it, the Creation window portrayed the recession of the Great Flood, followed by the Creation and the Garden of Eden (with a glowing sun), and then (in dark colors) the Tower of Babel.

Flanking the Ark were two striking Old Testament scenes: Moses raising two tablets with the law on Mt. Sinai and Abraham preparing to sacrifice his son Isaac. In line with Jewish prohibition of creating the human image, the faces are blank. The central dome was surrounded by what Mr. Pounds described as a flowering array of blending colors.

The foyer contained a traditional window from the earlier synagogue, and the smaller sanctuary also held furnishings of historic and sentimental value.

*Visited September 1997*

*Epilogue: This synagogue filled with ten feet of water in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Attempts to salvage the seven wet Torahs failed, and they, along with 3,000 holy books, were buried, as tradition prescribes. Services were held in the synagogue of the Reform Congregation Gates of Prayer until the Modern Orthodox congregation dedicated a new synagogue at 4004 West Esplanade Avenue in Metairie* *in 2012 on land purchased from its neighbor, Gates of Prayer.*

*The dalle de verre windows, however, suffered only minor damage. Most are in storage, and one from a Carondelet Street synagogue can be viewed at the new synagogue.*

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