



KESHER ISRAEL - 100 YEARS
A C E N T E N N I A L C E L E B R A T I O N

**ORTHODOXY AT A TURNING POINT,
A NATIONAL CONVERSATION
PANEL #3:
NEW GENERATIONS, OLD INSTITUTIONS**

**GUEST PANELISTS:
DR. ERICA BROWN
DR. STEVEN COHEN
RABBI ELIE KAUNFER
DR. JONATHAN SARNA**

**MODERATED BY
GARY ROSENBLATT**

**SUNDAY EVENING
FEBRUARY 27, 2011
7:30PM**

KESHER ISRAEL: A HISTORY

In the winter of 1910, six merchants living in Georgetown, met to discuss the “possibility of forming a Hebrew society for worship and other communal activities.” Joseph Bremmer, Joseph Scher, Max Whitkin, L. Brenner, Mr. Rakysen, and Mr. Gamzy, all Eastern European immigrants, founded the Georgetown Hebrew Benevolent Society, based out of the home of Harris Levy on 28th and M Streets, NW, with “about 25 persons.” On March 16, their registration application to the DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs as a domestic non-profit corporation was approved. Their first president was a man named Abe Mostow. We don’t know much about Mr. Mostow and the other founding families, but we do know that thanks to their efforts, we enjoy a wonderful Modern Orthodox shul and can celebrate the seeds of community that they planted a century ago.

That autumn, for their first High Holidays together, they moved to 3062 M Street, NW, a larger space located above a storefront. They borrowed a *sefer Torah*, hired a cantor, sold tickets for \$3 each, and began holding religious services. Over time, their numbers increased, and “out of a small *kehvre* grew a large *farein*”—from a small group of 25 people, they became united as one community. In 1915, the leaders of the community purchased a small house at 2801 N Street NW, converted it into a shul, and renamed themselves “Keshet Israel Congregation.” Over time, they outgrew the small house and the need to expand became apparent.

With a membership of 150 people, and a Ladies Auxiliary that raised \$10,000 (a lot of money in those days!) for the building, the cornerstone of the new building was laid on February 1, 1931, and a new chapter began to unfold. On September 6, just in time for *Rosh Hashanah*, the new **Keshet Israel Synagogue of Georgetown** formally opened its doors....

*To mark the special occasion of our Centennial Celebration, and to enhance the intellectual and spiritual life of our community in Washington D.C., Keshet Israel is hosting a year-long salute called “**Keshet100: Celebration and Reflection.**”*

The centerpiece of this endeavor is a four-part series called “**Orthodoxy at a Turning Point: A National Conversation.**” These panel discussions, which will take place over the course of the anniversary year, will explore the major themes and pressures surrounding Orthodoxy -- the historical, social, textual, and halakhic dimension of what we live and practice. The topics will include Orthodoxy and Innovation, Women and the Future of Judaism, Spirituality and the Future of Institutions, and The Denominations: The Ways We Believe Now.

TONIGHT’S PROGRAM

Orthodoxy at a Turning Point, A National Conversation: Panel #3: New Generations, Old Institutions

Jewish religious and social life has for many centuries perpetuated itself by means of institutions, for the building of which the Jews have historically demonstrated a kind of genius. Continuity has been premised on the affiliation of new generations to old institutions. What happens when that affiliation weakens? Will the search for personal satisfaction usurp the work of maintenance and development? What are the social and spiritual consequences of the difference between a minyan and a shul? Can ‘customization’ replace community?

Dr. Erica Brown is the scholar-in-residence for the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and consults with the Jewish Agency and other Jewish non-profits. Her forthcoming book is *In the Narrow Places: Daily Inspiration for the Three Weeks*.

Dr. Steven Cohen, a sociologist of American Jewry, is Research Professor of Jewish Social Policy at HUC-JIR, and Director of the Berman Jewish Policy Archive at NYU. His current research interests focus on the emerging patterns of Jewish identity and community among Jews in their 20s and 30s. He serves as Research Director of Synagogue 3000, Senior Counselor to the Chancellor at JTS, and Director of the Florence G. Heller / JCCA Research Center. In 2010, he received the Marshall Sklare Award of the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry and was cited as one of the Forward Fifty (for the second time). His book, *Sacred Strategies*, of which he is a co-author, recently won a National Jewish Book Award.

Rabbi Elie Kaunfer is co-founder and executive director of Mechon Hadar, which recently launched the first full-time egalitarian yeshiva program in North America. He is pursuing a doctorate in liturgy at the Theological Seminary, where he received an MA in liturgy and ordination. Dorot Fellow and Wexner Graduate Fellow, he was selected as an inaugural AVI CHAI Fellow, known as the “Jewish Genius Award.” Elie is the author of *What Independent Minyanim Can Teach Us About Building Vibrant Jewish Communities*. In 2008, he was named one of 50 Top Jewish Leaders, and the Jewish Week named him one of “36 Under 36.” In 2009, he was named one of 50 Top Rabbis in America.

Dr. Jonathan Sarna is the Joseph H. & Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University. Dubbed by the Forward newspaper in 2004 as one of America’s fifty most influential American Jews, he was Chief Historian for the 350th commemoration of the American Jewish community, and is recognized as a leading commentator on American Jewish history, religion and life. In 2009, he was elected to the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Gary Rosenblatt has been editor of and publisher of the Jewish Week of New York, the largest and most respected Jewish newspaper in America, since the summer of 1993. He has won numerous journalism awards from both the Jewish and secular press for his writing and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 1985, the first time an article in the Jewish media was cited. He is founder and chairman of The Conversation, an annual retreat for American Jewish leaders and emerging leaders.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Kesher Israel begins its 100th year in September 2010. Events honoring the Centennial are scheduled between September 2010 and December 2011, with something for everyone in mind. From lectures to social gatherings, from walking tours to cultural events, activities have been planned to celebrate and honor the unique and rich history of our synagogue. This is just a taste of what is to come!

- September 13, 2010** *Orthodox Judaism: What it Was, What it Is*
Kickoff Lecture by Rabbi Dr. Barry Freundel
- October 10, 2010** *Orthodoxy at a Turning Point: A National Conversation*
Panel #1: Orthodoxy and Innovation
- November 7, 2010** *Orthodoxy at a Turning Point: A National Conversation*
Panel #2: Women and the Future of Judaism
- December 11, 2010** *Kesher Israel Celebrates! A Night in Monte Carlo*
- December 12, 2010** *Tzvi Daremblum Memorial Lecture:*
Jonathan Safran Foer and Leon Wieseltier in Conversation
- February 27, 2011** *Orthodoxy at a Turning Point: A National Conversation*
Panel #3: Spirituality and the Future of Institutions
- March 13, 2011** *Kesher Israel Celebrates! A Gala Dinner*
- May, 2011** *Israel and the Jewish Soul:*
A Discussion of the Place of Israel in our Lives and our
Beliefs with Elie Wiesel
- June 2011** *Orthodoxy at a Turning Point: A National Conversation*
Panel #4: The Denominations – the Way We Believe Now

And this is just the beginning...

Kesher Israel: The Georgetown Synagogue

2801 N Street, NW
Washington, DC 20007
(202) 333-2337
info@kesher.org

centennial@kesher.org
<http://centennial.kesher.org>
[facebook.com/kesherisrael](https://www.facebook.com/kesherisrael)
twitter.com/kesherisrael