

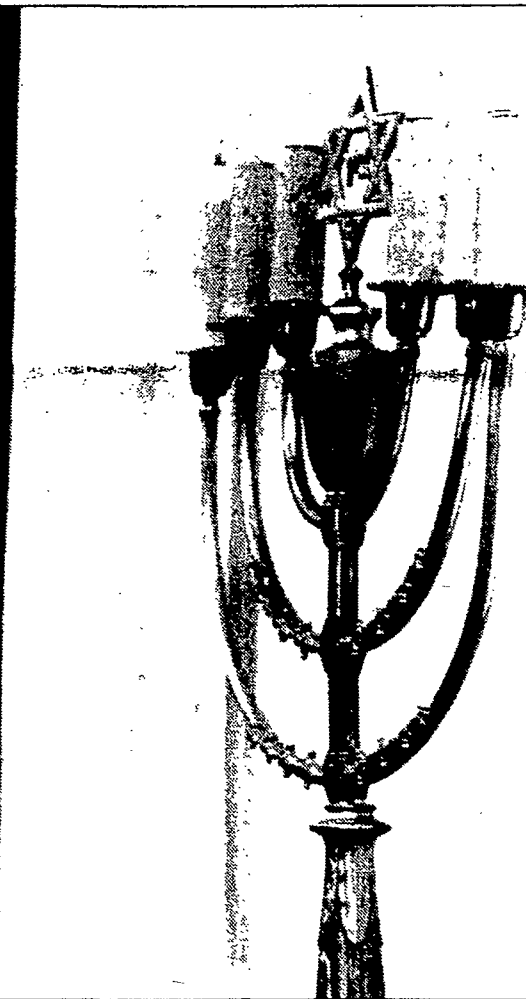
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David Levine, senior rabbi of Rochester's Congregation Shema Yisreal, leads his members in charismatic prayer during a Saturday morning Shabbat service. The 10-year-old congregation — which has more than 150 members — celebrates all the feasts of the Jewish year, including Passover, Shavuot, Yom Kippur, and the feast of the Tabernacles.



Musician Asher Gelbart plays the flute during the Shabbat service.



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not taught anywhere else," Appel said of the congregation. "A Jew can remain a Jew and believe in Jesus."

Moreover, it is a way to reach his family, Appel said.

"It's a much more powerful witness to my family that I'm a member of this congregation rather than another church," Appel remarked.

That witness to families and other Jews is drawing attention from the broader Jewish community, Rabbi Levine acknowledged. The main response so far from Jewish leaders has been to ignore the movement, to simply say that it is not Jewish. In recent years, however, critical articles have begun to appear in Jewish publications, saying the movement is not good for Judaism.

Such critiques — and concerns about driving Jewish away people from the movement because of lingering mistrust of Christians' motives — is why the movement must be headed by Jews, Chernoff explained. Gentiles may belong to individual congregations as full members, but may join the MJAA only as associate members.

"That's the reason why the MJAA has to be an authentic Jewish organization," Chernoff said. "It must stay in Jewish hands, because there is a fear this will be a Gentile conspiracy."

But Chernoff is firm in his belief that the movement will overcome those fears, and that Jewish people will some come to accept Jesus as the Messiah.

"The belief in Jesus is biblical," Chernoff concluded. "It's the pinnacle of the Jewish faith."

PHOTOS BY
S. JOHN WILKIN
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



The Messianic services include charismatic and spontaneous prayer. Congregation member Mark Herman raises his hands in praise.



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