

*May is Jewish American Heritage Month. To participate, Mickve Israel's History and Heritage Committee is offering brief articles about Mickve Israel and American Jewish history.*

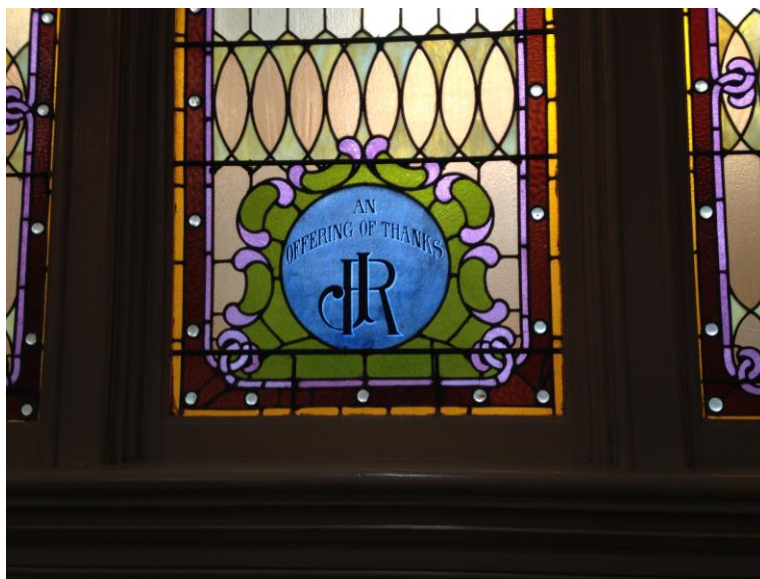
## **UNDERSTANDING MICKVE ISRAEL'S STAINED GLASS WINDOWS**

### **First of a Series**

#### **WHO IS J.R.?**

by Toby Hollenberg

Some may think I'm referring to JR from the old TV series "Dallas". However, I'm actually referring to the initials, JR, appearing on one of the beautiful stained glass windows on the Gordon Street side of Mickve Israel's sanctuary – "An Offering of Thanks - JR"



The mystery can be solved by locating a white marble plaque – also on the Gordon Street side of the sanctuary - on the wall near the Exit door to the atrium, elevator, and stairwell which says, "Erected by CONGREGATION MICKVE ISRAEL, in memory of JOSEPH ROSENHEIM in grateful appreciation of fifty-five years of continuous, faithful, devoted and efficient service as Secretary, President and President Emeritus. 1840-1929."

Joseph Rosenheim is the great-grandfather of Judy Byck who provided interesting information, and copies of articles about him as well as pictures,

to better understand the significance of the stained glass window bearing his initials.

Judy shared that Joseph's wife, Amelia, had been ill with a heart ailment for quite a long time. The doctors here were not able to find a cure or treatment so Joseph took Amelia and the family (five children and the nanny) to Germany to seek help from a specialist there. As Judy tells it, the doctor said that he couldn't help her and that if she wanted to die on American soil, she should go back home immediately! Amazingly, she lived for 19 more years! She was able to be at her childrens' weddings and become a grandmother.



The window also bears the words, "Thou Hast Answered Us" and pictures a dove with the Hebrew word "Shalom" in its beak. Clearly, the Rosenheims felt that God answered their prayers for Amelia's healing. The window continues to be a reminder of the blessing of continued life that was bestowed on them. It is one of five similarly designed and vividly colored windows installed in the late 1800's. Interestingly, this is the only sanctuary window which honors someone who was living at the time. The others are all in memory of those whose names they bear.

Joseph Rosenheim was born in Richmond, Virginia and came to Savannah in 1865 with his 19-year-old bride, Amelia Sternberger. His father was instrumental in starting Richmond's Reform congregation. Joseph was in the wholesale and retail business until 1914 when he retired as head of Joseph Rosenheim Shoe Company. He was a revered leader in Savannah's Jewish community and additionally devoted time and resources to such causes as the Hebrew Orphan Home in Atlanta and the National Jewish Hospital in Denver. His devotion to Congregation Mickve Israel was unwavering. As noted in the address given at the dedication of the plaque, "to this congregation he devoted himself and gave of his time, his talents and his means with a fervor born of the intenseness of his highly spiritual nature. His participation in the movement which culminated in the erection of this edifice is a part of the Congregational records."

I am personally inspired by the fact that there are so many who are still part of Mickve Israel whose family's names appear on the magnificent stained glass windows in the sanctuary. The sunlight often shines through the windows onto the succeeding generations who now grace our pews. One meaningful instance was on the occasion of Amelia Eichholz's Bat Mitzvah when she was photographed next to the window which was erected in honor of her great-great-great grandmother and namesake, Amelia Rosenheim: "An offering of thanks – JR".

***Celebrate Jewish American Heritage Month by exploring the Gutstein Museum, our sanctuary, and our Slany Torah exhibit to learn more about our congregation's story as well as Savannah and American history.***