

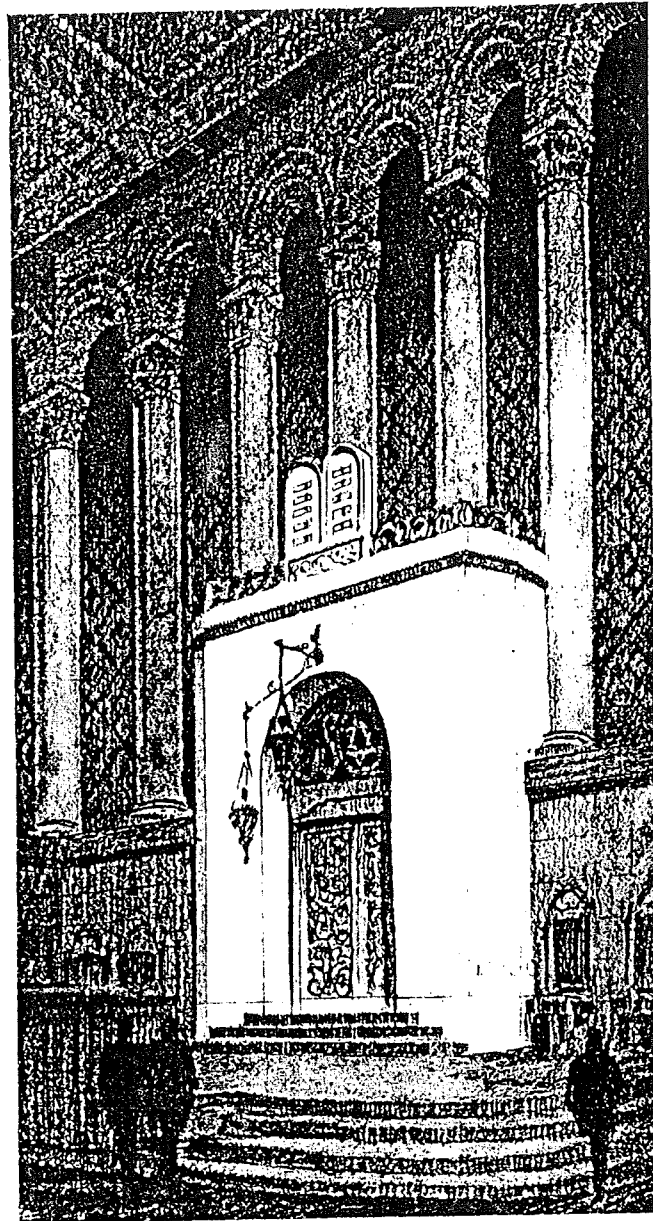
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Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel Archives

INVENTORY OF THE ARCHIVES

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Ark,  
Temple at  
Broad and  
Columbia  
Streets  
1892-1957



REFORM CONGREGATION KENESETH ISRAEL ARCHIVES

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Inventory of the Archives  
Compiled Summer of 1983 by Douglas Kohn,  
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## INTRODUCTION

to the

### REFORM CONGREGATION KENESETH ISRAEL ARCHIVES

The Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel Archives contains the records of the Congregation, dating from the founding of the Congregation in 1847 to the present date. Particularly interesting items included in K.I.'s archival holdings are Board of Trustees minutes from 1847 to 1892, Rabbi Krauskopf's personal diary of his travels to Russia in 1894, hundreds of sermons and sermon notes of Rabbi Korn, anti-zionist correspondence of Dr. Fineshriber and the original 1847 constitution of Keneseth Israel. The archives, which volumetrically totals approximately 40 linear feet of materials, also includes a fine collection of photographs, scrapbooks and tape recordings. The Archives is the treasure trove of K.I.'s history.

### INTRODUCTION TO THE ARCHIVES INVENTORY

Through the generosity of a long-time Keneseth Israel congregant, the Congregation secured the services of an archivist for the Summer of 1983 to arrange the until-then unarranged archives. The holdings were inventoried and arranged into records groups and subgroups. Nearly all the records were transferred to appropriate acid-free, alkaline-buffered storage boxes and folders, and leather-bound volumes received leather-reconditioning treatment. The records are presently in a safe archival environment, and await a climate-controlled "archives space" to be prepared for them.

The intellectual arrangement of the archives was constructed in such a manner so as to portray the Congregation in as faithful a presentation as possible. The Archives' holdings are divided into four Records Groups and one Collection. The Records Groups reflect four areas of records-generation each with its unique provenance and role in the history of the Congregation.

The Record Groups are:

1. The Records of the Rabbis
2. Records of Officers of the Congregation
3. Records of Departments
4. Records of Auxiliary Groups

The Collection is entitled Collections. Into each of these major groupings are assigned subgroups. The subgroup is the basic unit of the Keneseth Israel Archives. This inventory is arranged first by Records Group, and within each Records Group each subgroup is described.

Every subgroup has been assigned a short subgroup code to be used as a mnemonic device, and to facilitate arrangement and storage of the materials. Wherever an asterisk (\*) appears before the subgroup code, this indicates that this subgroup has been processed and that a finding aid is available to these records. For all other subgroups, inventories are available.

The most important records in the Archives, \*KRA The Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf Records, 1881-1929, and \*FINE The Rabbi William H. Fineshriber Records, 1924-1929, are processed and guides are available to them. These records are not indexed to correspondents and subjects; the container listing serves as a guide.

## *Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel*

### *ORIGINS and ASPIRATIONS*

Keneseth Israel, founded in March, 1847, was the fourth congregation to be established by the expanding Jewish community of Philadelphia. Orthodox in observance at first, Keneseth Israel adopted Reform in 1855, and thus became the first progressive congregation in Philadelphia and only the fifth in the entire country to take the way of radical experimentation. For almost forty years, Keneseth Israel was the only Reform congregation in Philadelphia. Keneseth Israel means congregation or assembly of Israel. The term Keneseth Israel is frequently used in the Midrash to represent the entire people of Israel as a religious entity.

The Congregation still holds to the goals of its founders: to maintain a synagogue as a center of worship, religious education and communal gathering; to foster a "living Judaism" not only in the synagogue, but also in the homes and lives of its members and their families; and to adjust the teachings and practices of old to the needs of each new generation of American Jews. Rich in years and distinguished in history, Keneseth Israel maintains its dedication to the creative survival of Judaism as an eternal "light to the nations."

### SYNAGOGUE BUILDINGS

The members of Keneseth Israel now occupy the Congregation's fourth synagogue, dedicated in 1957. After meeting in rented halls for several years, the founders purchased and renovated an old church building on New Market Street, above Noble in 1854. Ten years later the Congregation moved into a newly constructed building at Sixth and Brown Streets, and Adath Jeshurun took over the old synagogue. The third structure in Keneseth Israel's migration, located on the east side of Broad Street between Columbia and Montgomery (part of which is occupied today by Temple University), was dedicated in 1892 and served the Congregation until 1957, when the present synagogue building in Elkins Park was opened.

### RABBIS

Prior to 1861, services were conducted by a number of cantors and readers, each of whom stayed for only a few years, but in the twelve decades since 1861, Keneseth Israel has been led by only six senior rabbis. Dr. David Einhorn, one of the greatest intellectuals of his day, a firebrand abolitionist and author of the prayer-book which formed the original basis of the Union Prayer Book, was our Rabbi from 1861 to 1866. He was succeeded by Dr. Samuel Hirsch, the former Chief Rabbi of Luxemburg, a scholarly teacher who was widely known as the author of a number of Hegelian philosophical works. Hirsch was followed by Dr. Joseph Krauskopf, a member of the first graduating class of the Hebrew Union College, one of the first rabbis to be ordained in the United States, a dynamic and creative mentor who led the Congregation for the thirty-six eventful years from 1887 to 1923. In 1924 Dr. William H. Fineshriber was called to the pulpit of Keneseth Israel, the first American-born rabbi to serve the Congregation, one of the most eloquent speakers of his generation. Fineshriber was succeeded in 1949 by Dr. Bertram W. Korn, who grew up in Keneseth Israel and was Confirmed under Dr. Fineshriber. A distinguished historian and Rear Admiral in the Chaplain Corps of the U.S. Naval Reserve, Dr. Korn was the first rabbi in American history ever to have been promoted to "flag" rank in a military service.

Rabbi Simeon J. Maslin was elected the sixth Senior Rabbi of Keneseth Israel in 1980. Holding degrees from Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and Chicago Theological Seminary, Rabbi Maslin is the author of numerous articles and two volumes on Jewish practices. He served both the oldest congregation in the Western Hemisphere (Mikve Israel-Emanuel of Curacao) and the oldest congregation in Illinois (K.A.M. of Chicago) before coming to Keneseth Israel, the oldest Reform congregation in Greater Philadelphia.

### TERMS USED IN INVENTORY

- 1. Records documents created in the course of work by staff members, Rabbis, or congregants.
- 2. Papers documents created by an individual apart from official association with the Congregation.
- 3. Collection artificial accumulation of documents created by the archivist reflecting subjects or formats.
- 4. Dates dates in subgroup titles are the outside range of dates identified in the records. They do not indicate the period of tenure or lifespan of the creator of the records. Dates in parentheses indicate the greatest bulk of materials.
- 5. Quantity indicated by linear measurement in feet.

RECORDS OF THE RABBIS, 1881-1979

This record group consists of records of four rabbis who served K.I. from 1887 to 1979. These include:

- \*KRA The Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf Records, 1881-1929
- \*FINE The Rabbi William H. Fineshriber Records, 1924-1949
- KORN The Rabbi Bertram W. Korn Records, 1934-1979
- \*LEVY The Rabbi J. Leonard Levy Records, 1895

Materials regarding these and other rabbis who served Keneseth Israel during her history also can be found in GEN The General Collection, and PHO The Photographs and Oversize Records Collection.

\*KRA The Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf Records, 1881-1929

Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf (1858-1923) was one of the most prominent Jewish leaders of his time. Rabbi of Keneseth Israel from 1887 to his death, he was a great speaker and was active in local and national Jewish and civic activities. The records include seven series: Correspondence, Russia and Europe Trip (1894), Lectures and Publishing, The Patriotic Society, Krauskopf's 25th Anniversary at K.I., Death Records, and records of Mrs. Krauskopf. Included is Krauskopf's diary of his trip to Russia, greetings on his 25th anniversary, and some manuscript copies of his discourses and lectures. The Urban Archives at Temple University maintains the bulk of the Krauskopf correspondence, and the Delaware Valley College Doylestown, has the Krauskopf material of the National Farm School. 1 foot.

\*FINE The Rabbi William H. Fineshriber Records, 1924-1949

Dr. William H. Fineshriber (1878-1968) was Rabbi of Keneseth Israel from 1924 until 1949, and Rabbi Emeritus from 1949 to 1968. His records are mainly correspondence arranged in five series: Correspondence, 1934-1949, The Motion Picture Issue, 1933-1937, "Reform Advance," 1940-1942, The American Council for Judaism, 1940-1945, and Writings and References, 1924-1936. Included is much correspondence with colleagues, Rabbis Louis Binstock, Nelson Glueck, Samuel H. Goldenson, Joseph Klein, Bertram W. Korn, Morris Lazon, Emil Leipziger, Julian Morganstern, and Louis Wolsey. Topics include anti-semitism, anti-zionism, Hebrew Union College, social welfare agencies and Temple committees. 2 feet.

KORN The Rabbi Bertram W. Korn Records, 1934-1979

Dr. Bertram W. Korn (1918-1979) Rabbi of K.I. from 1949 until his death, was a noted historian of American Judaism, and a long-time chaplain in the Navy Chaplaincy Corps. He reached the rank of Rear Admiral before his Navy retirement in 1978, being the first Jew to achieve flag rank in the U.S. chaplaincy. Dr. Korn also was a child of the Keneseth Israel Religious School, and confirmed at K.I. The records include chaplaincy records, sermons and sermon notes, writings, programs and clippings of events, and some correspondence. The sermons comprise the bulk of the records. Also included are a scrapbook and a photo album. See also OBJ, the Objects Collection for Korn military objects, and PHO Photographs and Oversize Collection, for a large collection of photographs of Dr. Korn. 8½ feet plus one oversize box.

\*LEVY The Rabbi J. Leonard Levy Records, 1895

Includes one manuscript writing of 14 pages entitled, "Put Yourself in His Place," November 3, 1895. This item is dedicated to a Miss Minnie Strauss. Levy (1865-1917), an English-trained rabbi who had studied with Chief Rabbi Herman Adler of the British Empire, and Samson Raphael Hirsch, served K.I. as Associate Rabbi from 1893 to 1901. During that time he was instrumental in establishing social welfare institutions in Philadelphia. In 1897 Levy took a leave of absence from K.I. to serve in the Spanish-American War as a Chaplain. On his return Rabbi Levy accepted a call to become the rabbi of Congregation Rodeph Shalom of Pittsburgh. A fine orator, 16 volumes of Rabbi Levy's sermons have been published. 1 item.

RECORDS OF OFFICERS OF THE CONGREGATION

This record group includes records of presidents, secretaries and an executive secretary of the Congregation, David I. Mitchell. Also included in this record group are the records of William Armhold, who served Keneseth Israel as chazan from 1865 to 1924. Although Armhold was not an officer or administrator of the Congregation, his great tenure of service rates him as an institution of the Congregation.

\*ARM The William Armhold Records, 1865, 1890, 1895, 1900, 1921-1922

William Armhold (1829-1924) came to K.I. to serve as chazan in 1865, and remained active until his death in 1924 at the age

of 94. He was Reader of the Congregation and a teacher in the religious school for upwards of 50 years. Born in Germany, Armhold was trained there and came to America in 1853. Armhold served in Pittsburgh before accepting the call of K.I. The records include clippings of milestone events in Armhold's life, and items from a free trip to Europe in 1900, compliments of D. Snellenberg and Co. This trip was awarded to Armhold due to his being elected one of the eighteen most popular clergymen in Philadelphia. Armhold's passport is included in the records. 1 folder.

\*DM The David I. Mitchell Records and Papers, 1976, n.d.

David I. Mitchell (1929-1977) was temple administrator from 1966 until 1977. Mitchell was a native Philadelphian, he was a Bar Mitzvah and confirmand of Congregation Rodeph Shalom. Mitchell served as administrator of Temple Emanu-El in Tucson, 1959-1964, and Congregation Beth Israel, San Diego, 1964-1966 before coming to Keneseth Israel. The records include an undated typescript essay of 17 pages, entitled, "The Hand of God," and a tape recording of the celebration of Mitchell's tenth anniversary at K.I., 1976. 2 items.

PRES Records of the Presidents of the Congregation, 1883-1885, 1939, 1953-1983

This record group contains the records of the presidents of the Congregation. The earliest records are 37 pieces of correspondence of David Klein, 1883-1885 (President, 1883-1891) in English and German. Topics include memberships, the Hebrew Union College, and the UAHC. Included is one letter from Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch. Also in the President's records are six inches of Louis Hirsch correspondence, 1939 (President, 1938-1941), six inches of Sylvan Drucker records, 1953-1983 (President 1959-1961), and records of Presidents Charles Pollock, 1964-1968, Louis Schwerin, 1968-1971, Richard Oberfield, 1971-1973, Paul Jaffe, 1974-1976, Horace Stern, 1976-1978, Louis Doull, 1978-1980, and Joyce Fishbein, 1980-1982.

1 foot plus 1 letterbook.

\*SEC The Records of the Secretary of the Congregation, 1892-1903

This subgroup contains congregational correspondence of the Congregation secretaries, Benny Salinger and Elias Braunschweig (Secretary 1894-1918). Topics include membership, events, usage of the Keneseth Israel facilities, local and national organizations, insurance, and the Rabbis. 2 inches.



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RECORDS OF DEPARTMENTS, 1877-1983

This record group contains the records of departmental areas of the Congregation. Presently there are two subgroups in this record group:

- \*BKK The Blanche Kohn Kober Papers and Records of the Keneseth Israel Archives, 1916-1978
- \*SCH Religious School Records, 1879-1983

- \*BKK The Blanche Kohn Kober Papers and Records of the Keneseth Israel Archives, 1916-1978

Blanche Kohn Kober, a long-time K.I. congregant and a confirmant of the K.I. religious school, has been active in many areas of Congregation life. Mrs. Kober was a president of the Keneseth Israel Sisterhood, an officer of the K.I. PTA, and the Chairperson of the K.I. Archives Committee. Her papers include correspondence between her and Rabbis Fineshriber and Feibelman, and her pre-confirmation classbook, 1931. The records of the Archives, 1974-1978, include correspondence, exhibit notes, memoranda, and research requests. 10 folders.

- \*SCH Religious School Records, 1877-1983

Keneseth Israel founded its religious school in 1849, only two years after the founding of the Congregation. The records include an attendance book, 1877-1929, and much confirmation material, including service programs, class yearbooks and class pictures. The earliest class picture dates to 1880. 3 feet and 1 bound volume.

RECORDS OF AUXILIARY GROUPS, 1868-1980

This record group contains the records of auxiliary groups of the Congregation including:

- \*ALUM The K.I. High School Alumni Records, 1914-1919, 1923-1929
- \*KSKI The Knowledge-Seekers of Keneseth Israel Records, 1887-1892
- \*MEN Men's Club/Brotherhood Records, 1930-1940
- \*OG-AK Orphans' Guardians-Arnold Kohn Records, 1868, 1887-1903

- \*PTA The Parent-Teachers Association Records, 1946-1951, 1973-1974
- SIS The K.I. Sisterhood Records, 1912-1980
- \*URS The United Relief Society Records, 1875, 1878-1880

Records of ALUM, MEN, PTA and SIS also may be found in GEN The General Files. Also, records of the following K.I. auxiliaries may be found in the General Files:

- Bnai Brith K.I. Lodge #101
- College of Jewish Studies
- K.I. Junior Congregation
- KIFTY
- Committee for Reform Judaism
- Retired Adults
- Scouts

- \*ALUM The K.I. High School Alumni Records, 1914-1919, 1923-1929

The Keneseth Israel High School Alumni was chartered in 1910. It's stated purpose was to assist the Congregation, discuss informally topics of general interest, and strive to promote sociability among the younger members of the Congregation. The Alumni built the Alumni Building, a social hall and classroom building, which was dedicated in 1914. The records are minutes of the Alumni, 1914-1919, 1923-1929. See also PHO Photographs and Oversize Records, for the 1910 Charter of the Alumni. 3 volumes.

- \*KSKI The Knowledge-Seekers of Keneseth Israel Records, 1887-1892

The Knowledge-Seekers of Keneseth Israel was organized on November 27, 1887 as a society devoted to the purpose of acquiring the knowledge of the "best current magazines of America and Europe." The group studied and discussed articles and abstracts, and built a library. Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf was the first President of the Knowledge-Seekers, and the initial driving force behind it. The records include minutes, 1887-1892. 2 volumes.

- \*MEN Men's Club/Brotherhood Records, 1930-1940

The Men's Club of Keneseth Israel runs social programs for its members, charitable events for the Congregation and other organizations, and is a general resource for the Congregation. It is now called the Brotherhood. The records include two scrapbooks of events. 2 scrapbooks.

\*OG-AK The Orphans' Guardians-Arnold Kohn Records, 1868,  
1887-1903

The Orphans' Guardians Society was founded in 1868 by Rabbi Samuel Hirsch. Its purpose was to provide care for Jewish orphans, and it did that for a great many years. Arnold Kohn was the President for many years. Now the Orphans' Guardians Society is part of the Organization for Jewish Children. The records include the original charter of the Orphans' Guardians, and correspondence of Kohn and the Secretaries of the Society, Oscar Klonower and Samuel Goodman, 1887-1903. 3 inches.

\*PTA The Parent-Teachers Association Records, 1946-1951,  
1973-1974

The Parent-Teachers Association was established in the Fall of 1946 to foster cooperation between the teachers and the administration of the K.I. religious school and the parents. The records include minutes of the initial organizational meeting, general meetings and Executive Committee meetings. 5 folders.

SIS The K.I. Sisterhood Records, 1912-1980

The Sisterhood of Keneseth Israel was established in 1912, and ever since has been a major element in the life of the Congregation. The records include minutes of Sisterhood Board meetings from the first meeting, scrapbooks of events over many years, minutes and programs of the Evening Sisterhood (A group of professional and working women who could not meet during the day), early correspondence, and a record of K.I. participation in the war effort of the Second World War. 2 feet and 3 oversize boxes.

\*URS The United Relief Society Records, 1875, 1878-1880

In 1875 the United Relief Society was founded to act in part as a burial society and partly as a money-lending society. This time period was one of the creation of many Jewish social agencies, and the United Relief Society was one of them. The records include the constitution, some correspondence and some financial records. 4 folders.

COLLECTIONS

The Collections of the K.I. Archives were created either in the Summer of 1983 or earlier by thoughtful congregants who recognized the need for a vertical-file type of general records-keeping system. Collections were created by the archivist in the Summer of 1983 which reflect special physical formats such as objects, or to control certain loose-provenance records such as the vital records of minutes, marriage records and constitutions. There are six collections in this grouping:

- GEN General File
- OBJ Objects
- PERS Personal Prayer Books and Bibles
- PHO Photographs and Oversize Records
- PUB Publications
- VIT Vital Records

Span dates are not included in the titles of these groups. The GEN General File and PHO Photographs and Oversize Records are not inventoried, but are used like a vertical file.

GEN General File

This is a library-like vertical file which was created by congregants who worked with the Archives in the mid and late 1970's. Arranged alphabetically, topics include biographical files of rabbis, congregants and prominent figures, events, K.I. auxiliaries, buildings and related organizations.

4 feet.

OBJ Objects

This collection includes objects that due to their special physical requirements need to be housed separately. Included are plaques, books, flags, a hat of Dr. Korn, a name plate and kiddush cup, the shovel used at groundbreaking, and two large framed posters.

2 archives boxes, 1 oversize box, some large unboxed items.

\*PERS Personal Prayer Books and Bibles

This is a collection of personal prayer books and bibles that have become the property of the Archives. These items belonged to K.I. rabbis, congregants and families of congregants. These volumes were collected by the archivist in 1983. The K.I. Library also possesses a collection of personal prayer books and bibles which has not been inventoried. 35 items.

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PHO Photographs and Oversize Records

Included are photographs arranged into seven subjects: Constituent Groups, Dinners, General, Personalities, Rabbis, Religious School, and Temples (Buildings). These photographs are not inventoried. Also includes five oversize print boxes and five oversize poster-storage folders for inventoried items, including photographs, citations, constitutions and charters. Included is the original 1847 Constitution of Keneseth Israel.  
4½ feet, 5 oversize boxes, 5 poster folders.

\*PUB Publications

Included are yearbooks of the Congregation, 1899-1929 (incomplete), memorial Books of Remembrance, 1952-1980, and weekly Sabbath service programs, 1963-1983 (1975-1983). Bulletins (1897-1915, incomplete) are maintained in the Archives, and Bulletins from 1918 to the present are maintained in the safe in the administrative offices. Printed Confirmation material can be found in \*SCH Religious School Records. 3 feet.

\*VIT Vital Records

The Vital Records are records of the existence of the Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel and of life-cycle events of congregants. Included are series: Constitutions and By-laws, Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes, Conversions, Marriage Records, Death Records, and Cornerstone materials of 1891. Deeds, mortgages and searches regarding early K.I. property can be located in GEN General Files.  
2 feet plus 11 oversize boxes.