



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
**AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES**

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**A Finding Aid to the  
Kaufmann Kohler Papers**

**Manuscript Collection No. 29**



## Collection Summary

<b>Title</b>	Kaufmann Kohler Papers
<b>Dates</b>	1851-1959 (bulk 1900-1925)
<b>Collection Number</b>	MS-29
<b>Repository</b>	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Kohler, Kaufmann, 1843-1926 Kohler, Edgar Julius, 1875-1941 Kohler, Johanna, ca. 1848-1932 Kohler, Lilli Kohler, Rose, 1873-1947 Kohler, Max J., 1871-1934
<b>Extent</b>	5.2 linear feet (13 Hollinger boxes)
<b>Language of the Material</b>	English, German, and Hebrew

## Administrative Information

### Biographical Sketch

Kaufmann Kohler, the eldest child of Moritz and Babette (Lowenmayer) Kohler, was born in Furth, Bavaria, into a family and community of staunchly Orthodox Jewish persuasion. In Talmudical academies in Mayence and Altona, he attained a mastery of Talmudic knowledge.

At twenty he became a disciple of the dynamic Orthodox leader, Samson Raphael Hirsch, to whom he attributed much of his Jewish idealism. But at the universities of Munich (1864-1865), Berlin 1865-1867), and Erlagen (Ph.D., Nov. 13, 1867), he broke with Orthodox Judaism. The critical methods of his university study told him that Judaism was an historic growth, not every part of which was of equally divine character and value, and in his doctoral dissertation, *Der Segen Jakob's*, he made a strong plea for modernizing religion. This thesis limited his prospects of obtaining a rabbinical position in Germany, and after two years of post-doctoral study at the University of Leipzig, he was called to the Beth-El Congregation in Detroit, arriving in the United States on August 28, 1869.

Exactly a year later he married Johanna Einhorn, daughter of Rabbi David Einhorn. After two years in Detroit, during which time he led his congregation farther away from its Orthodox background, he was called to Temple Sinai, Chicago, where he introduced many elements of radical reform. At the beginning of 1874, he instituted Sunday services besides the regular Saturday observance, an innovation which evoked violent criticism and denunciation. In September 1879 on the retirement of his father-in-law, Kohler succeeded him as rabbi of Temple Beth-El, New York, where again he introduced supplementary Sunday services, and continued to do battle with his conservative critics and Orthodox denouncers, maintaining his right to decide what was permanent and vital in Judaism, and what was ephemeral. In 1885, in a series of lectures published as *Backwards or Forwards*, he attacked Alexander Kohut's definition of traditional Judaism.

This polemic led both men, the leading Jewish scholars in America, to action. On Kohut's side, it was one of the factors which resulted in the foundation of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (January 2, 1887) to defend and strengthen traditional Judaism. On Kohler's side, it led him to call the Pittsburgh Conference, with the adoption of the radical Pittsburgh Platform (November 1885), at first repudiated even by some Reform Jews, but later accepted as a statement of principles by American Reform Judaism. Kohler was one of the founders, and for many years president, of the New York board of Jewish Ministers. Succeeding Isaac M. Wise as president of the Hebrew Union College at Cincinnati on February 19, 1903, he raised its academic standard notably. Kohler himself taught homiletics, theology, and Hellenistic literature. His seventieth, seventy-fifth, and eightieth birthdays were widely celebrated by American Reform Jewry. Retiring in 1921 at the age of seventy-eight, he returned to New York, where he died in his eighty-third year, on January 28, 1926.

The bibliography of Kohler's writings in *Studies in Jewish Literature*, issued in celebration of his seventieth birthday, contained at that time 801 items. He took a prominent part in the preparation of the *Union Prayer Book*, and of the *Jewish Publication Society's English translation of the Bible*. He wrote textbooks of Reform Judaism, edited the *Sabbath Visitor* (1881-1882), and the *Jewish Reformer* (1886), and was editor of the department of theology and philosophy of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

His principal single work was his well-ordered and fully documented *Grundriss einer systematischen Theologie des Judentums auf geschichtlicher Grundlage* (1910), published in English in 1918 as *Jewish Theology Systematically and Historically Considered*, a work which

mingles a Reform treatment of Judaism with conservative Jewish apologetics. Highly valuable are Kohler's numerous studies on the was born in 1875. Edgar was a lawyer. He was married in 1924 to Alice Austrian Block. He died in 1941.

Johanna (Einhorn) Kohler, the daughter of David Einhorn, was the wife of Kaufmann. She married Kaufmann in 1870. She died in 1932.

Max James Kohler, the son of Kaufmann and Johanna (Einhorn) Kohler, was born in 1871. Max held a B.S. (1890) and an M.S. (1893) from the College of the City of New York. He also received an M.A. (1891) and an L.L.B. (1892) from Columbia University. He was well known as an historian and a lawyer. He practiced law in New York City and was primarily involved with immigration and the problems of the immigrant. Max was married in 1906 to Winifred Lichtenauer. They had no children. Max Kohler died in 1934.

Rose Kohler was born in 1873. She was the daughter of Kaufmann and Johanna (Einhorn) Kohler. A noted painter and sculptor, her most noted work was the medallion, *The Spirit of the Synagogue*, a graphic answer to Sargent's painting of *The Synagogue*. She died in 1947.

Winifred Lichtenauer Kohler, a daughter of the late Joseph M. Lichtenauer and Mrs. R. D. Lichtenauer, was born in 1880. She was the wife of Max James Kohler, whom she married on November 6, 1906. She died in 1922.

Lilli Kohler was the daughter of Kaufmann and Johanna (Einhorn) Kohler.

## Scope and Content

The collection documents a number of the activities in the career of Kaufmann Kohler and members of the Kohler family. The collection includes correspondence, telegrams, sermons and addresses, condolences, notes, memorials, photographs, newspaper clippings, and miscellaneous materials. The bulk of the papers consists of Kaufmann Kohler's writings and letters of condolence concerning the deaths of Kaufmann Kohler and other family members.

## Arrangement

Organized into seven (7) series: A. General; B. Sermons and Addresses; C. Manuscripts and Notes; D. Photographs; E. Memorial Books; F. Printed Material; G. Miscellaneous.

## Terms of Access

The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

## Terms of Reproduction and Use

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## Preferred Citation

Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Kaufmann Kohler Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-29. Kaufmann Kohler Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

## Provenance

Received from members of the Kohler family, 1947-1969.

## Processing Information

Processed by James W. Clasper, February 1979.

## Index Terms

<b>Subjects</b>	Jewish college teachers / Jews -- Ohio -- Cincinnati / Rabbinical seminaries / Rabbis / Reform Judaism
<b>Personal Names</b>	Kohler, Kaufmann, 1843-1926
<b>Corporate Names</b>	Hebrew Union College -- Presidents
<b>Media</b>	Photographs / Sermons

### Series A. General, 1869-1959

**Extent** 1.6 linear feet (4 Hollinger boxes)

### Arrangement

The series is arranged in two (2) subseries: 1. Kaufmann Kohler; 2. Kohler Family.

### **Subseries 1. Kaufmann Kohler, 1869-1943**

**Extent** 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

**Scope and Content Note** Consists of correspondence either between Kaufmann Kohler and others or dealing with him. The first four folders of general correspondence deal with his writings and family matters. The rest consists of letters and telegrams of condolence and congratulations and some commentaries of these events.

**Arrangement** The correspondence is arranged alphabetically, then topically.

#### **Box and Folder Listing**

Box 1. Folder 1. A-F, General, 1869-1925, 1933

Box 1. Folder 2. Adler, Cyrus [deals primarily with the Hebrew Classical series], 1903, 1913-1918, 1920-1924

Box 1. Folder 3. G-M, General, 1876-1923

Box 1. Folder 4. N-Z, General, 1873-1925

Box 1. Folder 5-6. Assuming the presidency of Hebrew Union College, 1903

Box 1. Folder 7. Seventieth birthday congratulations, 1913

Box 1. Folder 8. Seventy-fifth birthday congratulations, 1918

Box 2. Folder 1. Golden wedding anniversary, 1920

Box 2. Folder 2. Eightieth birthday congratulations, 1923

Box 2. Folder 3. Eighty-second birthday congratulations, 1925

Box 2. Folder 4-6. Condolences on the death of Kaufmann Kohler, 1926

Box 2. Folder 7. Origins of the Synagogue and Church, 1929

Box 2. Folder 8. One hundredth anniversary of Kaufmann Kohler's birth, 1943

### **Subseries 2. Kohler Family, 1908-1959**

**Extent** 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

**Scope and Content Note** Consists of correspondence between or concerning members of the Kohler Family. The bulk of the material consists of condolences in the form of letters or telegrams.

**Arrangement** The material is arranged alphabetically by the name of the family members as addressed.

#### **Box and Folder Listing**

Box 3. Folder 1. Kohler, Edgar [many letters are between other people and deal with Edgar Kohler as a subject], 1917-1920, 1928-1941

Box 3. Folder 2. Kohler, Johanna [primarily condolences]. A-L, 1908, 1926-1932

Box 3. Folder 3. Kohler, Johanna [primarily condolences]. M-Z, 1929-1932

Box 3. Folder 4. Kohler, Lilli and Rose. A-E, 1929-1956

Box 3. Folder 5. Kohler, Lilli and Rose. F-L, 1919-1950

Box 3. Folder 6. Kohler, Lilli and Rose. M-P, 1929-1959  
Box 3. Folder 7. Kohler, Lilli and Rose. R, 1923-1938  
Box 4. Folder 1. Kohler, Lilli and Rose. S-Z, 1928-1954  
Box 4. Folder 2. Kohler, Lilli and Rose. Unidentified, 1926-1948  
Box 4. Folder 3. Kohler, Max J. A-Z, 1899-1934  
Box 4. Folder 4. Kohler, Max J. Condolences. A-K, 1934  
Box 4. Folder 5. Kohler, Max J. Condolences. L-Z, 1934  
Box 4. Folder 6. Kohler, Max J. Immigrants and aliens in the U.S, 1936-1938  
Box 4. Folder 7. Kohler, Rose. Condolences, 1947  
Box 5. Folder 1. Biographical material.

## **Series B. Sermons and Addresses**

**Extent** 2.2 linear feet (5.5 Hollinger boxes)

### **Arrangement**

The series is arranged in two (2) subseries: 1. English; 2. German.

### **Subseries 1. English**

**Extent** 1 linear foot (2.5 Hollinger boxes)

**Scope and Content Note** The list of sermons and addresses appearing in the first folder in Box 5 dates many of these sermons and addresses. The sermons span Kohler's entire career.

**Arrangement** The subseries is arranged alphabetically.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

Box 5. Folder 2. A.  
Box 5. Folder 3. B.  
Box 5. Folder 4. C.  
Box 5. Folder 5. D.  
Box 5. Folder 6. E.  
Box 5. Folder 7. F.  
Box 5. Folder 8. G.  
Box 5. Folder 9. H.  
Box 6. Folder 1. I.  
Box 6. Folder 2. J.  
Box 6. Folder 3. K.  
Box 6. Folder 4. L.  
Box 6. Folder 5. M.  
Box 6. Folder 6. N.

Box 6. Folder 7. O.  
Box 6. Folder 8. P.  
Box 6. Folder 9. R.  
Box 6. Folder 10. S.  
Box 6. Folder 11. T.  
Box 7. Folder 1. U.  
Box 7. Folder 2. V.  
Box 7. Folder 3. W.  
Box 7. Folder 4. Z.  
Box 7. Folder 5. Untitled.  
Box 7. Folder 6. Fragments.

## **Subseries 2. German**

**Extent** 1.2 linear feet (3 Hollinger boxes)

**Scope and Content Note** Consists of untranslated sermons and addresses.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

Box 7. Folder 7-10. Unidentified.  
Box 8. Folder 1-9. Unidentified.  
Box 9. Folder 1-4. Unidentified.  
Box 9. Folder 5-8. Fragments.  
Box 10. Folder 1-2. Fragments.

## **Series C. Manuscripts and Notes**

**Extent** 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

### **Box and Folder Listing**

Box 10. Folder 3-6. Manuscripts (English).  
Box 11. Folder 1. Manuscripts (German).  
Box 11. Folder 2-3. Notes (Hebrew and English).

## **Series D. Photographs**

**Extent** 0.2 linear feet (0.5 Hollinger box)

**Scope and Content Note** Consists of photographs which depict activities of Kaufmann Kohler and the Kohler family. A few are labeled and most appear to be from the late 19th and 20th century.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

Box 11. Folder 4-5. Photographs.

### **Series E. Memorial Books**

**Extent** 0.2 linear feet (0.5 Hollinger box)

**Scope and Content Note** Consists of memorial booklets and testimonials given to Kaufmann Kohler or to other family members in order to commemorate birthdays, deaths, and anniversaries.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

Box 11. Folder 6. Memorial books.

Box 12. Folder 1-3. Memorial books.

### **Series F. Printed Material**

**Extent** 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

**Scope and Content Note** Consists of original and photocopies of newsclippings and articles. Included are published copies or descriptions of sermons by Kaufmann Kohler and some publications by Max J. Kohler.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

Box 12. Folder 4. Kohler, Max. Publications.

Box 12. Folder 5-7. Newsclippings.

Box 13. Folder 1-5. Newsclippings.

### **Series G. Miscellaneous**

**Extent** 0.2 linear feet (0.5 Hollinger box)

**Scope and Content Note** Consists of one folder of programs, menus, certificates, wills, biographical material, and college records. The material concerns various Kohler family members.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

Box 13. Folder 6. Miscellaneous materials.