A Finding Aid to the

Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester
(Chappaqua, N.Y.) Records

Manuscript Collection No. 728
Collection Summary

Title
Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester (Chappaqua, N.Y.) Records

Dates
1925-2000

Collection Number
MS-728

Repository
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

Creator
Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester (Chappaqua, N.Y.)

Extent
4.4 linear feet (11 Hollinger boxes)

Language of the Material
English

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch
The 45 founding families of Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester came from 28 different communities. How they found each other went unrecorded. What we do know is that they began meeting formally in 1949 after deciding that north Westchester County needed a Reform congregation. They initially held services in Chappaqua’s Congregational Church. Rapid growth prompted a move to the Presbyterian Church in Mt. Kisco. Their growth in membership continued, and in 1954 they returned to Chappaqua, this time as the new owners of the Congregational Church. The church was converted into a synagogue that provided a home to the fledgling congregation until 1972.

The now-mature congregation had, in the interim, purchased nine acres of wooded property which at one time belonged to Horace Greeley. They contracted with renowned architect Louis I. Kahn, of Philadelphia, to design a synagogue. Dedicated in May of ’72, the congregation continues to use this facility today. The 23,000 square foot building, completed at a cost of $1.1 million, was intended to house 450 families. Though the congregation exceeded this number long ago, the current structure meets their needs admirably. As well, the rabbi lives on the property, in a house sheltered by trees on its own acre of land.

The researcher will frequently encounter the name Chaim Stern in the pages of this collection. Stern became Beth El’s rabbi in 1968. Known for his love of Jewish liturgy, he wrote services for any and all occasions during his tenure at Temple Beth El. Chaim Stern was the editor of the original Reform Prayer Book, Gates of Prayer. He served as Beth El’s senior rabbi for 33 years, from 1968 through 2001, at which time he passed away. Temple Beth El’s other religious leaders have included Rabbi’s Solomon Kahn Kaplan, Murray Saltzman, Alan Katz and Dennis Ross.

Scope and Content
The collection offers a comprehensive picture of how a well-to-do congregation in upstate New York got its start, then went on to thrive. Through the pages of its monthly news bulletin, the researcher gets a broad, accurate sense of this congregation’s keen desire to express itself Jewishly, in all facets of life, while at the same time partnering with its non-Jewish neighbors at every given opportunity. The congregation’s fullest expression of Jewish living can be found in the copious amounts of continuing education materials in the collection. Their senior rabbi, on the other hand, found his greatest satisfaction in writing liturgy. The student of Jewish liturgy will find much that is interesting in the collection’s liturgy series.

Arrangement
The collection is divided into four (4) series: A. Continuing Education; B. Congregation History; C. Congregation Newsletter; D. Liturgy.

Terms of Access
The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

Preferred Citation
Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester (Chappaqua, N.Y.) Records and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-728. Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester (Chappaqua, N.Y.) Records. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance
Received from Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester, Chappaqua, N.Y., 2005.

Processing Information
Processed by Vicki Lipski, June 2006.

Index Terms
**Series A. Continuing Education, 1966-1980**

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

**Scope and Content Note** Consists of materials written during the 1960s and 1970s. The exception would be the three books and one pamphlet, all written in Hebrew, that were most likely part of Rabbi Stern's personal library. The rest of the series is made up of books and papers intended for the use of congregation members and a newspaper series called "Chronicle Classroom," excised from the pages of the Yonkers Jewish Chronicle.

**Box and Folder Listing**

Box 1. Folder 1. B'nai mitzvah/confirmation, 1970-1971
Box 1. Folder 2. Confirmation plaques, miniature, 1966-1967
Box 1. Folder 3. Continuing Education: Questionnaire No. 1., undated
Box 1. Folder 4. Continuing Education: The Common Sense of Religious Faith, undated
Box 1. Folder 5. Continuing Education: Critical Issues Facing Reform Judaism, 1972
Box 1. Folder 6. Continuing Education: How About This, 1973
Box 1. Folder 7. Continuing Education: The Jewish Home, 1980
Box 1. Folder 8. Continuing Education: Martin Buber - Selected writings, undated
Box 1. Folder 9. Continuing Education: A Portion of Paradise, undated
Box 1. Folder 10. Continuing Education: Questions about Judaism, undated
Box 1. Folder 11. Continuing Education: Questions and Answers about Judaism, undated
Box 1. Folder 12. The Jewish Processional: A Drawing by Zevi Blum, undated
Box 1. Folder 13. The Jewish Response to Christian Evangelism, undated
Box 1. Folder 14. Jewish Studies in American Colleges and Universities, undated
Box 1. Folder 15. JFTY Spring Conclave, undated
Box 1. Folder 17. Miscellaneous Continuing Education.

Box 2. Folder 3. Jewish Sources: The Concept of God in Rabbinic Literature [Hebrew].
Box 2. Folder 4. Prayer on Har Ha-Tzofim [Hebrew].

**Series B. Congregation History, 1951-2000**

**Extent** 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)
**Series C. Congregation Newsletter, 1955-1994**

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

**Scope and Content Note** Though Board of Directors’ minutes are not a consistent feature, the researcher can nevertheless gain detailed knowledge about congregational life at Temple Beth El from its pages. There is, unfortunately, a nine-year gap between 1983 and 1993. The 1961-1964 issues are also missing. With these exceptions, every year’s issues, from 1955-1994, are included in the collection.

**Arrangement** The series is arranged chronologically.

**Box and Folder Listing**

- Box 5. Folder 2. Beth El Review, 1958 September - 1959 December
Series D. Liturgy, 1925-2000

Extent 1.6 linear feet (4 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Composed of Rabbi Chaim Stern’s writings, liturgy provided to him by other rabbi’s who knew of his interest, and writings and correspondence having to do with the revision of Gates of Repentance and the writing of Gates of Prayer, Part II.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 8. Folder 2. Cornerstone consecration service, 1970
Box 8. Folder 3. Dedication service, 1972
Box 8. Folder 4. Hanukkah service, undated
Box 8. Folder 5. Havdalah service, undated
Box 8. Folder 6. High Holy Days prayers, poems and meditations, 1971
Box 8. Folder 8. High Holy Days. Yom Kippur, undated
Box 8. Folder 10. Shabbat morning service, undated
Box 8. Folder 11. Shabbat (Friday night) service, undated
Box 8. Folder 12. Shabbat (Friday night) service, 1989
Box 8. Folder 13. Simchat Torah service, 1972
Box 8. Folder 15. Special service, 1970
Box 8. Folder 16. Special Shabbat service for Israel, undated
Box 8. Folder 17. Sukkot service, undated
Box 8. Folder 19. Tu Bishvat Service, undated
Box 8. Folder 20. Women’s guild Sabbath, 1971
Box 9. Folder 3. Dedication service, undated
Box 9. Folder 4. Installation service - Senior Rabbi Herbert Bronstein (North Shore Congregation Israel, Glencoe, Ill.).
(Temple Ahavath Sholom, Brooklyn, N.Y.).

Box 9. Folder 6. Meditation services, undated


Box 9. Folder 9. Peace services, undated

Box 9. Folder 10. Readings, undated


Box 9. Folder 14. Service for affixing mezuzah (Temple Beth Israel, Fresno, Calif.), undated


Box 9. Folder 27. Special service on the theme of the Messiah.


Box 9. Folder 30. Yom HaShoah service, undated


Box 10. Folder 2. Gates of Repentance. Questionnaire, undated


Box 11. Folder 5. Gates of Prayer, Part II. Correspondence, A-Z, 1973
