

REFORM CONGREGATION  
KENESETH ISRAEL

*Its*  
*First 100*  
*Years*

1847-1947

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REFORM CONGREGATION KENESETH ISRAEL

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THE ARK

## FOREWORD

ONE HUNDRED YEARS in the life of any institution constitute an event of the greatest significance. One hundred years in the life of a synagogue devoted to Reform Judaism is a record attained by only a few congregations in this country. Our own Keneseth Israel is among those revered synagogues. In honor of such an occasion, and in order to make the highlights of its long and distinguished career available to the members of the congregation, the Board of Trustees of Keneseth Israel ordained that a history of the congregation should be written. The Committee in charge was indeed fortunate in prevailing upon one of our own members, Howard W. Fineshriber, to write this history. He devoted himself to the task with real zeal, thoroughness and devotion, and we are truly indebted to him for this fine record of the life of our congregation. Since Mr. Fineshriber was limited to a comparatively small number of pages he was not able to chronicle all the interesting events and developments which occurred in this congregation during the century spanning from 1847 to 1947, nor could he develop the story of the lives of our founders, their families and descendants, and tell of Keneseth Israel's influence not only in Philadelphia but throughout the United States in the field of Reform Judaism. It is our hope that some day such a complete, definitive history may be written.

The Committee is indeed grateful to the historian for the excellent work he has produced, and to the following members of our congregation for their part in this task: to Kurt Blum, for translating the early German records and minutes of our congregation; Dr. Maurice Jacobs for invaluable assistance in connection with the publication of the history; to Dr. William H. Fineshriber, Louis Goldsmith, the president of our congregation since 1948, Dr. Bertram W. Korn, who became our senior rabbi in the fall of 1949, for editorial suggestions; to Joseph Isaacson, assistant librarian, for preparation of the material concerning our library; Mathilde Belfield, for assistance in making available the old records of the congregation and in other respects. As chairman, I wish to express my great appreciation to every member of the History Committee for their constant cooperation in this task.

It is our hope that every member of Keneseth Israel will read this History with real enjoyment and that it may always remain a cherished part of their library.

*Lester S. Hecht*

*Chairman of the History Committee*

COMMITTEE  
ON  
100TH ANNIVERSARY HISTORY



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## INTRODUCTION

THIS short History of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel was prepared as part of the observance attending the Hundredth Anniversary of the Congregation. It makes no pretense to be a definitive History of the Congregation; it does, however, attempt to touch upon the highlights of the congregational life. It is concerned with the growth of the Congregation both in size and influence and in spiritual values. The impact of Keneseth Israel on the Reform Movement in the United States and, particularly in the East has been important in the unfolding story of that movement. It is significant that a congregation such as Keneseth Israel sprang up as early as 1847 in Philadelphia, a community known for its conservatism generally and a Jewish community which was the very stronghold of Orthodoxy under the guiding hand of Isaac Leeser, the Rabbi of Mikveh Israel Congregation and the Editor of "The Occident and American Jewish Advocate," the most influential Jewish magazine of the period.

History in its truest sense includes the story of the daily life of the people, themselves. There has not been time in which to make the study necessary to delve into the lives of the numerous individuals who have composed the Congregation and this History is, therefore, what might be termed the History of the official life of the Congregation. Many persons, who rendered fine service to their fellows in Keneseth Israel, must perforce receive no recognition here, for to include all the names worthy of mention would make this History overlong and retard the progress of the story and the readability of the text.

It is the hope of the committee which compiled this booklet that it will be read by every member of the Congregation and that a knowledge of how the Congregation grew will add to the interest of the members in perpetuating the ideals for which Keneseth Israel has stood throughout these hundred years.

# I

## THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

1847-1861

ONE HUNDRED YEARS is but a short time in the long and varied History of Judaism. It is, however, a long time in the story of Reform Judaism in the United States and it encompasses the whole History of Reform in Philadelphia. Keneseth Israel was officially ushered into being on the evening of March 2, 1847. At that time, there were only three congregations in Philadelphia—Mikveh Israel, founded by Spanish-Portuguese Jews before the middle of the eighteenth century; Rodeph Shalom, established about 1802 by Jews from Germany; and Beth Israel, formed about 1840 by settlers largely from Poland. All these congregations were Orthodox, as Rodeph Shalom did not become Reform until many years later. The Conservative movement which was to have a large influence on Philadelphia Jewry had not yet been born. Polk was President of the United States, the slavery question had not yet come to a boil and it was a time of comparative peace and quiet in the land. The Jewish population of the United States was estimated as 50,000.

Philadelphia in 1847 was not a large city by modern standards. It was one of the larger cities of the country but, nevertheless, retained many of the aspects of a small town. The site of the present Temple was then considered in the country, as the Jewish population was centered in the area east of Broad Street and south of Spring Garden Street. It was possible to cover the area in a comparatively short time on foot and most of the Jews were known to each other. Aside from the synagogues, there were few organizations, and life was not so complex as it has become in our time. Immigration of Jews from Europe had not yet assumed the proportions it was to take in the latter half of the century, although the disturbances on that continent in 1848 were to start the influx. The Jewish population was fairly homogeneous as to place of origin. There were still many descendants of the early Spanish-Portuguese settlers and many had come from Germany and Central Europe, although immigration from that sector had by no means reached its climax. The vast number which were to come from Eastern Europe had not yet dreamed of seeking haven on our shores, yet there were some Jews from that area who had come as early as the American Revolution.

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The exact reasons for the founding of a new congregation are lost in the memories of the founders. The annals of the Congregation do not record the impelling motives which led the founders to establish their own synagogue rather than join one of those already existing. In the light of subsequent events, however, it is safe to say that there was a desire to break away from the rigid Orthodoxy of the existing congregations, in short the burgeonings of Reform.

The organization meeting took place at the home of Julius Stern on Second Street on March 2, 1847. It was attended by forty-eight men, all of whom signed the formal contract which brought the Congregation into being. S. Dreyfoos was elected temporary President and Julius Stern, Secretary. These officers were to call a later meeting to perfect the organization. Before the meeting adjourned, the members present pledged money to establish the new congregation. The meeting was conducted in German as all of the members spoke German well, while English was not yet easy for many of them. German was to remain the official language of the Congregation both for its records and for use at Religious Services until 1887.

The name Keneseth Israel was adopted at a second meeting held on March 21, 1847, a date which has some times been given as the date of the founding of the Congregation. One week later, on March 29th, a meeting was held at which action was taken to implement suggestions made at previous meetings and to start the young synagogue on its way. A full slate of officers was elected: Julius Stern, President, S. Dryfoos, Vice President, S. Pragheimer, Treasurer, and as Directors—J. Hecht, M. Hertz, A. Aronheimer and L. Bernheimer

The decision was made to buy a cemetery. It is to be noted that the first Jewish institution in the United States was a cemetery established by the Jews of New Amsterdam (now New York) in 1654. Keneseth Israel was following the pattern of caring for the dead even before adequate provision had been made for worship by the living. The first Rabbi was engaged at this meeting. He was Rev. B. H. Gotthelf, a German by birth, then residing in the United States. He was not a Rabbi in the modern sense of that word but is more correctly described as Reader, which was one of his official positions. The minutes record that he was elected, Reader, Shamous and Secretary of the Congregation at a salary of \$125 a year. In addition, he was to receive 5% of his collections and was to marry for \$3, bury for \$2 and train children for Bar Mitzvah for \$1. The final action of this historic meeting was to raffle off seats in the Synagogue. This method was



## THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

thought to be most democratic as each member could decide on his contribution and seat.

The first services were held in a hall at 528 North Second Street. What evidence there is as to the nature of the service suggests that it was an Orthodox ritual used by other Askenazic congregations. Reforms were soon to come, but the Congregation was not ready to rush into drastic changes. It had first to complete the details of organization.

The cemetery was purchased for \$60. Members were obtained and by Fall of that first year, the Congregation rented a larger hall near Fifth and Wood Streets. Dues were set at \$2.50 per member and a group of women headed by Mrs. Stern and Mrs. Dryfoos arranged for the curtains for the arks, the altar cloths and Torah cover. A constitution was drawn up and a charter applied for through a lawyer named Dickerson, a non-Jew.

The seriousness with which the founders viewed their duties to the Congregation was evidenced in the power of the Chairman to fine members for non-attendance at meetings. It is recorded that Julius Stern himself was fined 50c for his absence on May 24, 1848. Members were asked to assist with the reading on the high holydays and anyone refusing to read from the Torah could be fined \$5.

Rev. Gotthelf remained as Reader until 1850 when N. Davidson was elected to that position. It was stipulated in his contract that he should not act as Schochet or ritual slaughterer and that he should teach in the religious school three times a week.

The religious school had been started in 1849 and, as was common in those days, met on weekdays, German and Hebrew being the principal subjects of instruction. This pattern in the school was to continue with slight modification until a complete change of policy took place after Dr. Krauskopf became Rabbi.

Mr. Davidson was Reader for a very short period as he became engaged in a controversy with the Congregation over his right to leave town without permission of the Board of Directors and was removed as Reader.

In 1850 Rev. L. Naumburg was elected Reader; the title of Rabbi does not appear to have been accorded to him although he performed the functions of the Rabbi. Shortly before his election Julius Stern had broached the subject of erecting a Temple and had donated \$50 towards this goal.

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All does not appear to have been serene within the Congregation at this time for several members were expelled for conduct unbecoming a member of the Congregation. The exact cause of the conflict is obscure but they apparently sought to split the Congregation by organizing a new synagogue and purchasing a separate burial ground and posted notices to this effect on the very doors of the synagogue.

The Congregation also became concerned about decorum at services. It was not merely that members came late to services, but that, after arrival, they "milled around, made noise and caused disturbances." By-laws were passed providing that members must be decently dressed at services, that persons causing disturbances could be fined and that children under six would not be admitted to the synagogue. The custom of having members read was abandoned and all reading was to be done by the elected Reader or in his absence by a person designated by the President.

Services at this time did not include a sermon. The first sermon appears to have been delivered by a Mr. Ettinger in October of 1852 between services and not as a part of the regular ritual. A new constitution was enacted in 1853 and a new synagogue, an old church building, was purchased on New Market Street above Noble. It was dedicated on April 10, 1854 and the Rabbis of the other Philadelphia synagogues participated in the dedicatory services.

The first important step towards reform in the services was taken in September of 1855 when it was decided to install an organ. A Mr. Fischer was hired as first organist and shortly thereafter a mixed choir was organized. The initial step towards Reform had been taken and others followed in rapid succession.

In 1856, Rev. Naumburg was requested to rewrite the liturgy and to include prayers in German. This was in keeping with the course of Reform in Germany which introduced prayers in the vernacular as early as 1810. Until such time as this book was completed the congregation used the prayer-books compiled by the Reform Congregation in Hamburg, Germany. At the same time, the wearing of Talith was abandoned.

It was also decided to engage a preacher at a salary of \$1,000 a year. In the search for a preacher, Dr. David Einhorn preached at Keneseth Israel but did not accept a call to the pulpit. He was presented with a loving cup for his services.

## THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

Again on April 23, 1856 a new constitution was adopted. The significance of this constitution lies in the fact that it was the constitution of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel.

A new organization had grown up in the Community calling itself the Reform Society for the purpose of promoting Reform in Philadelphia. It does not appear to have ever become an established congregation but to have continued as a Society until its merger with the Keneseth Israel upon the adoption of the new constitution. It was ordered that this constitution be printed in German and English. Keneseth Israel, always Reform in spirit, had at last arrived as a Reform Congregation in name.

The search for a preacher ended in 1857 when the Congregation elected Dr. Solomon Deutsch as Rabbi. Dr. Deutsch was Rabbi of Posen in Germany and was known as a Reformer. The Congregation defrayed his expenses to the United States. Rev. Naumburg remained as Reader. Dr. Deutsch soon suggested and the Congregation eagerly accepted further reforms. In 1858, separate seating of men and women came to an end and observance of the second day of holydays, except Rosh Hashonah, was abolished.

It is unfortunate that more adequate records of Dr. Deutsch's tenure as Rabbi were not maintained as his inspiration seems to have been very largely responsible for preparing the Congregation for the period of growth in Reform that followed his incumbency. It is also unfortunate that the last year of his Rabbinate in Keneseth Israel was accompanied by differences of opinion with Naumburg over ritual matters which led the Board to dispense with the services of both. Naumburg left the temple in the middle of a Saturday morning service and was summarily dismissed. Dr. Deutsch was paid \$1,200 in lieu of his unexpired contract.

The controversy left the Congregation without a spiritual leader and the concern felt by the members is evidenced by a petition to the President to hire a Reader or face the possible ruin of the Congregation. It was stated that half of the members had not paid their dues because of this situation. In answer to this petition, Mr. Levinsohn, a teacher in the religious school, was engaged as temporary Reader in March, 1860, and in April of that year it was decided to use Dr. Einhorn's prayerbook written in German. In spite of internal difficulties, the Congregation was still true to the spirit of Reform.

The search for a Rabbi continued and Rabbi B. Felsenthal was invited to preach but was not called to the pulpit, being given a loving cup instead. A Rabbi Mayer appears to have declined a call to the pulpit and sentiment

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appeared for recalling Dr. Deutsch. Meanwhile, Rev. Julius Salinger was engaged as Reader for two years.

In May of 1861, the search for a Rabbi ended when Dr. David Einhorn accepted a call to Keneseth Israel. He agreed to preach three times a month and to teach in and superintend the school. With the arrival of Dr. Einhorn in 1861, it can be said that Keneseth Israel had come of age as a leader in the Reform movement, in the United States.

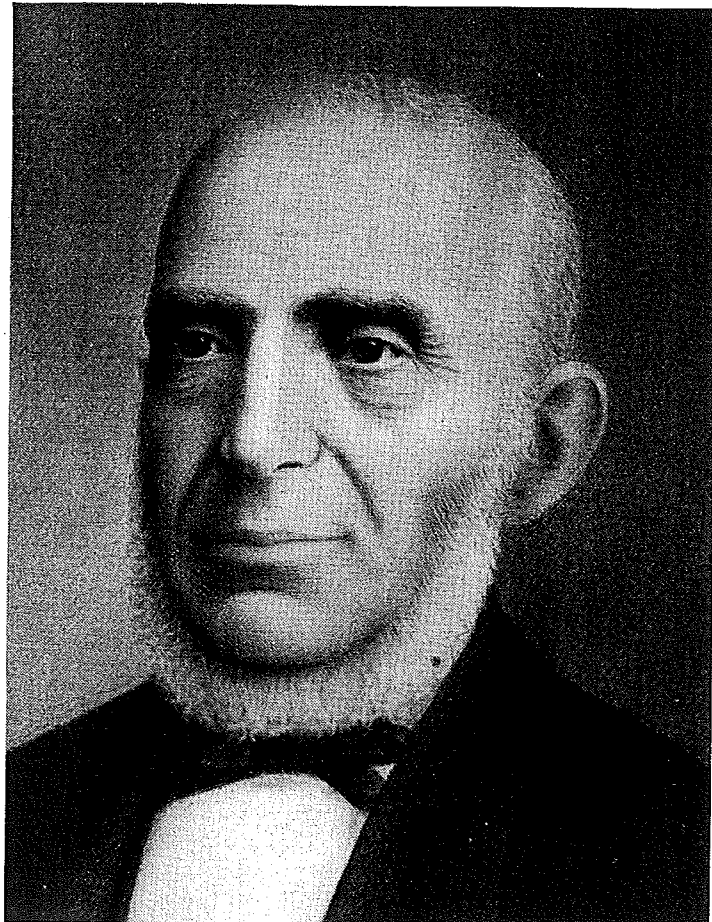
The affairs of the Congregation during this period had been administered by five men as President. Following Julius Stern were A. Aronheimer and L. Bernheimer, both members of the little band of devout Jews who formed the Congregation and members of the first Board of Directors. After them came Adolph Klopfer and Abraham Kaufman who continued in office until 1863.

For the purposes of comparison, it should be noted that in the religious school report of 1857 it was recorded that there were 35 boys and 40 girls in the school and that sessions were held on Sunday morning from nine to eleven; Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, from five to seven; and on Saturday afternoon, from two to four. The average attendance was 50 on weekdays and 70 on Sunday.



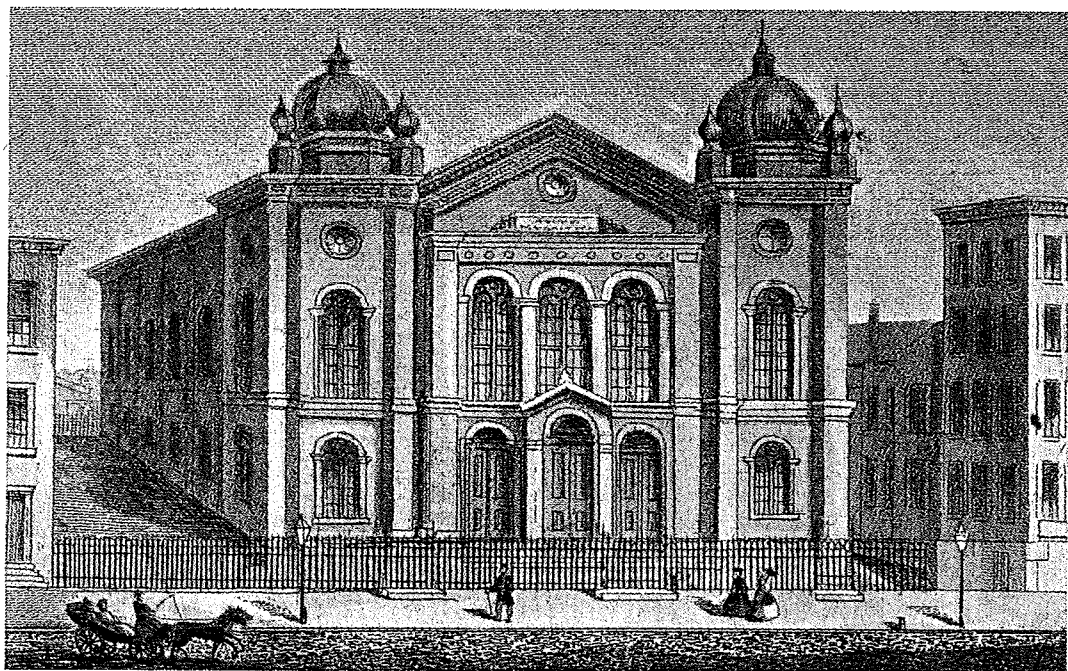
REVEREND DR. DAVID EINHORN

1861 - 1865



REVEREND DR. SAMUEL HIRSCH

1866 - 1886



TEMPLE—SIXTH AND BROWN STREETS

## II

# THE STRENGTHENING OF REFORM

1861-1887

IN BRINGING Dr. Einhorn to the pulpit of Keneseth Israel, the Congregation was securing as Rabbi one of the leading Reform Rabbis of the period. He had written a prayerbook in German, which as we have seen was already in use by the Congregation when he came to Philadelphia. He had held the position of Chief Rabbi of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and in 1852 had been called to lead the Reform congregation in Pesth, Hungary. This congregation was dissolved by order of the Hungarian government at the instance of Orthodox zealots who convinced the authorities that the congregation was revolutionary in character and, therefore, a menace to the state.

After the closing of the Pesth congregation, Einhorn came to the United States where he became Rabbi of Har Sinai Congregation in Baltimore. His coming to Philadelphia was dictated by necessity as well as the desire to serve in other fields. The year 1861 was that in which the Civil War broke out and the subject of slavery was on the lips of all men. Dr. Einhorn was opposed to slavery and made his views known in thundering tones from his pulpit. He refused to heed the pleas of members of his congregation that he refrain from talking on this subject in Baltimore which was inclined towards the Southern position on this question. It became necessary for Einhorn to leave Baltimore in order to protect his life, so high was feeling on this subject.

In Dr. Einhorn's first sermon in the United States he had set forth his concept of Reform. It was these doctrines which he was to preach to Keneseth Israel. The following passage contains the heart of his theories:

"Long ago those prophetic voices had been silenced which, with unwearied enthusiasm, had extolled the spirit of the Divine Law as the true banner of Israel, about which all people would some day rally and compared with which, all sacrifice and fasting would appear worthless. Those prophets would have proclaimed at the destruction of the Second Temple:

Comfort ye! The old forms are and will remain dead, but out of their grave the freed spirit rises to

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spread its pinions over all the earth; out of the ashes of the destroyed Temple of isolated Israel will gradually emerge that gigantic Temple, whereof the Lord hath said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples"; from the ruins of Judah a Messianic world will rise!"

Thus, I claim, our old prophets would have spoken; and truly at the present time we are called upon most urgently to work earnestly and effectively in the spirit of the prophets, to proceed to make the proper modifications of our outer and our inner religious life. Judaism has reached a turning point when all such customs and usages as are lifeless must be abolished, partly with the object of retaining its own followers, partly to protect from moral degeneracy. In consequence of the insuperable conditions of life there has set in violent antagonism between practice and religious conviction which will eventually cease to distress the conscience. The continuance of such a state of affairs would be the greatest misfortune that could befall Israel. On the one hand, the most important ceremonial laws are violated daily, laws which are still considered incumbent upon the Israelite; on the other hand, religious wishes and hopes are expressed in prayers which do not awaken the least response in the heart, and stand in absolute contradiction to the true spirit of the Sinaitic doctrine. This must necessarily lead to one of two things, either that the religious sentiment will become completely dulled or take refuge in the bosom of some other faith. Experience has shown the futility of all attempts to breathe life into the absolute and dead. Even those praiseworthy attempts to win back for the public service some of the old attractiveness by establishing an outward harmony must and will remain fruitless, as long as at bottom they serve merely to hide the inner decay. There is at present a rent in Judaism which threatens its very life and which no covering, however glittering, can repair. The evil which threatens to corrode gradually all the healthy bone and marrow must be completely eradicated and this can be done only if, in the name and in the interest of religion, we remove from the sphere of religious life all that is corrupt and untenable and solemnly absolve ourselves from all obligations toward it in the future; thus we may achieve the liberation of Judaism for ourselves and for our children, so as to prevent the estrangement from Judaism."

The Congregation had gradually progressed to the state where it could accept and implement the ideas of a "radical reformer," such as Einhorn. In 1862, it underwrote the writing of a hymnal by Dr. Einhorn to be used



## THE STRENGTHENING OF REFORM

in Reform services throughout the country. The spiritual growth of the Congregation was paralleled by a physical growth. It was at first proposed to buy a church at Eighth and Noble Streets but this plan fell through and, instead, it was decided to buy ground at Sixth and Brown Streets and build a new Temple. In order to raise money for the project, a Purim Ball was held at the Academy of Music which was not only the social highlight of the season but brought \$2,000 into the coffers of the Congregation. In addition to this money, four hundred bonds, were sold to members of the Congregation bearing six percent interest and having a face value of \$25, and a mortgage of \$30,000 was placed with the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society. The contract for the temple called for the expenditure of \$44,500. The cornerstone was laid on Monday, March 24, 1863 at four o'clock in the afternoon. The old temple was sold to Adath Jeshurun Congregation which had been founded in 1859. The new temple was dedicated on September 23, 1864.

The story, probably apocryphal, is told that shortly before the dedication of the temple Dr. Einhorn met Dr. Jastrow, the Rabbi of Rodeph Shalom which was much more conservative, and Jastrow expressed himself as opposed to many of Einhorn's reforms. It is related that he said, "Ja, Einhorn, ich hore du hast ein orgle! Mit diesen orgle schneiden sie sich in dengorgle!" (Now, Einhorn, I hear you have an organ! With this organ you will cut your throat!) Fortunately, Dr. Jastrow's predictions did not come true. The organ was installed and the Congregation thrilled to the music which flowed from it.

In 1865, William Armhold, whose name was to become a household word to generation after generation of Keneseth Israelites, was elected Reader. For fifty-nine years he was to be connected with the Congregation as Reader and for many years as a teacher in the Sunday School. The Religious School also acquired the services of Aaron Darmstadter, who was to influence many generations of Keneseth Israelites.

The Congregation continued to prosper and grow under Einhorn until in 1866 he resigned to go to New York where he died in 1879.

In order to find a successor to Dr. Einhorn the Congregation, for the second time, sought a Rabbi in Europe. Dr. Samuel Hirsch had been Rabbi of Dessau, Germany, and then had become Grand Rabbi of the Duchy of Luxembourg. While holding this position he was approached by Keneseth Israel to come to the United States. He was offered a contract for life at

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\$4,000 per year and \$2,000 per year in case of retirement. He accepted and began his ministry in Keneseth Israel in August of 1866.

The Congregation, or at least its leaders, was familiar with the writings of Dr. Hirsch. He had published several volumes of Philosophic works on Judaism and, as early as 1844, had written *DIE REFORM IM JUDENTHUM*, setting forth his conclusions on reform. In this work he set forth the principles which he was to exemplify in his Rabbinate at Keneseth Israel.

"The need of the time," he wrote, "is the highest law in Judaism; all ceremonies are but means for the fulfillment of this highest law; the means must, however, everywhere be subservient to the end, therefore, also in Judaism. The demand that everything which hinders us from working for the maintenance and prosperity of civil society, with our spiritual and material powers, be removed from our ceremonial practice is, therefore, religiously justified . . . It is a serious misdemeanor against, and not an indifferent action towards, the spirit of Judaism if anything be retained which in anyway prevents us from the fulfillment of duties incumbent on the citizen as such."

It was in this spirit that he conducted his services at Keneseth Israel and in that spirit the Congregation loyally supported him. In the year 1866, the wearing of hats in synagogue was abolished by edict of the Board of Directors and so strict was the enforcement of this rule that it is recorded that a Mr. Hohenstadter had to obtain the permission of the Board to wear a black "yarmilka" in temple, the permission being granted for reasons of health.

In the years 1860 and 1870 Dr. Hirsch's son, Emil G. Hirsch, later one of the leading Rabbis of the country, taught in the Keneseth Israel Religious School. He was a young man of much determination and it appears that he resigned as teacher in a dispute over methods of discipline, his methods being too harsh for the Congregation.

Dr. Hirsch carried his philosophy into work for the general Jewish community and in 1868 founded the Familien Waisen-Erziehungs Verein, later known as the Orphans Guardians which has now been merged into the Jewish Family Service of Philadelphia. This organization, largely made up of members of Keneseth Israel in its early years, took the responsibility for looking after and befriending underprivileged children. The first president of the society was Simon Silberman who had been president of Keneseth

## THE STRENGTHENING OF REFORM

Israel. Many other persons active in the Congregation were among the officers and directors of the society.

The year 1869 saw the first conference of Reform Rabbis in Philadelphia from November 3rd to November 6th, under the chairmanship of Dr. Hirsch. This conference stated some of the principles which became the beacon light of Reform in the United States. Among them were:

1. The Messianic aim of Israel is not the restoration of the old Jewish state under a descendant of David, involving a second separation from the nations of the earth, but the union of all children of God in the confession of the unity of God . . .
2. We look upon the destruction of the second Jewish commonwealth not as a punishment . . . but as a result of the Divine purpose . . . which consists in the dispersion of the Jews to all parts of the earth, for the realization of their high priestly mission, to lead the nations to the true knowledge and worship of God.
3. Urgently, as the cultivation of the Hebrew language . . . must be always desired by us in fulfillment of a sacred duty, yet has it become unintelligible to the vast majority of our co-religionists; therefore, it must make way, as is advisable under existing circumstances, to intelligible language in prayer, which if not understood, is a soulless form.

These are but some of the highlights of the resolutions adopted but they exemplify the spirit which governed Dr. Hirsch and his congregation.

Isaac Mayer Wise, the great organizer of the Reform movement in the United States, had formed the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1873. In 1878, Keneseth Israel joined the Union in which it was to become a leading force particularly in the East.

Another organization, which still survives today, found its inspiration in Samuel Hirsch. That was the Alliance Israelite Universelle, a society formed "to defend the honor of the Jewish name." It, too, met ready acceptance from the members of the Congregation, who actively furthered its labors.

The intense interest of Keneseth Israel in charitable endeavors during this period is evidenced by the fact that collections taken in the Synagogue on the holydays, particularly on Yom Kippur, were donated to the United Hebrew Charities, the prerunner of the Jewish Family Service of Philadelphia. The records of this organization indicate that one of the principal sources

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of income of the Society was the collection made at Keneseth Israel. Throughout the period, the addresses of the Presidents of Keneseth Israel at Annual Meetings were filled with pleas for the support of the various charitable organizations which then served the Jewish community. At this time, each organization conducted its own appeal for funds as there was no Federation of Jewish Charities and the idea of a general community drive for funds such as we now have in the Community Chest had not yet been advanced.

In the President's annual address of 1880, Mr. B. H. Feustman suggested that it was important to consider the feasibility of preaching in English to attract the younger element to membership. Dr. Hirsch was asked if they should engage an English speaking Rabbi. He advised against having a second Rabbi in the Congregation. However, he suggested the holding of Sunday services to that end. This suggestion was finally passed in 1883 and it was arranged to have the services conducted in English by Rabbi Stern of Wilkes-Barre. They did not last long, probably because they were conducted by outside Rabbis. The idea was later to be resurrected and continue for over fifty years.

Among the other changes in ritual during this period were the introduction of the seven-year cycle of Torah Reading, and the discontinuance of Friday evening services.

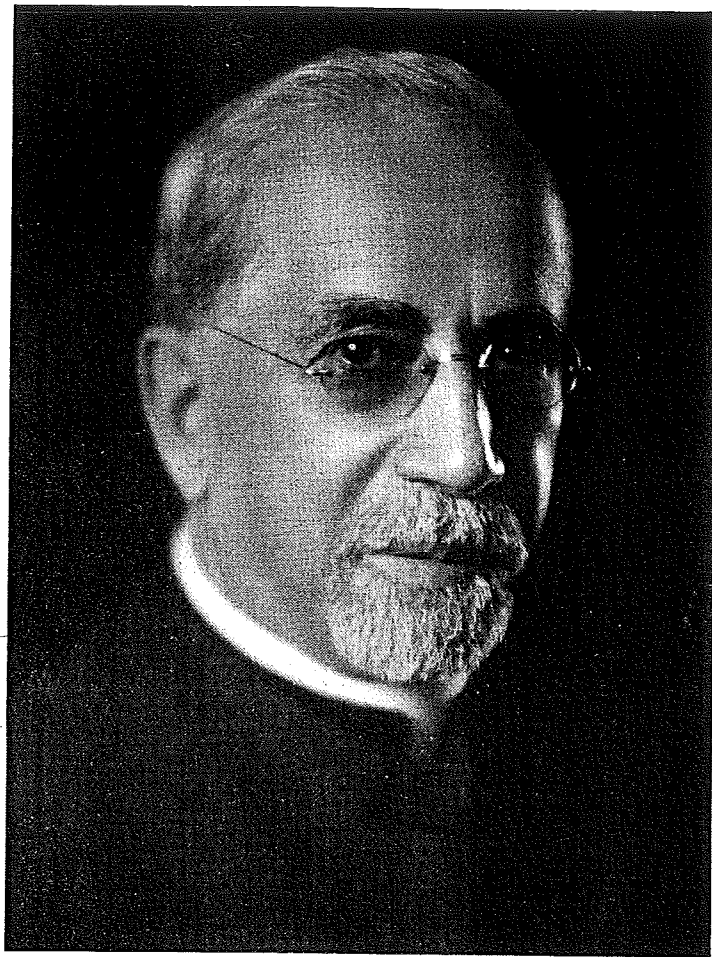
In 1886, Dr. Hirsch expressed his desire to retire if a suitable man could be found to succeed him. The Congregation determined to obtain an English speaking Rabbi and it was resolved to keep the records of the Congregation in English although German might be spoken at meetings.

The care with which the members of the Board of Directors discharged their duties is shown in the multifarious questions discussed at Board meetings. For example, in May of 1887 the question of whether Dr. Hirsch should perform a marriage between a Miss Meyer and a Mr. McIlvaine, a Christian, was presented. Permission was given on condition that Mr. McIlvaine renounce Christianity and accept Judaism in the presence of Dr. Hirsch, David Klein, the President of the Congregation, and Arnold Kohn, the Vice-President. There were twelve meetings of the Board of Directors between May 6, 1887, and the semi-annual meeting of the Congregation on September 25, 1887.

It is of interest to note that seat holders were not at this time automatically members of the Congregation entitled to vote and serve on the Board, but that it was necessary to be elected to membership by the Board of Directors before enjoying these privileges.

REVEREND DR. JOSEPH KRAUSKOPF

1887 - 1923



REVEREND DR. J. LEONARD LEVY

1893 - 1901





EXTERIOR OF TEMPLE AND ALUMNI BUILDING

### III

## THE PERIOD OF GROWTH

1887-1924

WITH the retirement of Dr. Hirsch, the Congregation entered upon a new era. The language of services was changed from German to English, the need for this having been felt for some time. David Klein, who had become President in 1883, had advocated such a change in his annual reports on the ground that it was necessary to gain and hold the attention and loyalty of the younger generation. The Board finally adopted his suggestions and sought an English-speaking Rabbi. In May of 1887, a committee was sent to Chicago to hear Dr. Samuel Sale. They made a favorable report but were unable to obtain a commitment from him as to whether he would accept a call to Keneseth Israel. The Board decided to drop the matter and to appoint another committee. Two names were suggested; Joseph Krauskopf of Kansas City, and Rabbi Adolph Moses of Louisville. Mr. Arnold Kohn was designated a committee of one to go to Kansas City, hear Dr. Krauskopf and, if satisfied, offer him a five year contract. If not convinced that he was the man for the position, Mr. Kohn was to go to Louisville to hear Rabbi Moses.

Mr. Kohn journeyed to Kansas City, heard Dr. Krauskopf and offered him the position. Krauskopf accepted subject to his receiving a release from his congregation. The release was granted and it was arranged that Krauskopf would assume his new duties in the Fall. Matters were not to be so easily concluded, however. Having released Dr. Krauskopf, the Kansas City congregation repented of its decision and entreated him to stay. When he stated that he was committed to Philadelphia, they sought to induce Keneseth Israel to permit him to remain. Letters were exchanged in which President Klein insisted that Dr. Krauskopf come to Philadelphia and finally a delegation from the Kansas City congregation came to Philadelphia to plead with Keneseth Israel not to take Rabbi Krauskopf away from them. They were told that matters had gone too far and the election could not be rescinded.

Keneseth Israel, at this time, had a membership of about three hundred and fifty. The Temple could only seat three hundred and ninety-eight persons and three hundred and fifty-five seats were sold. Congregational budgets

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were kept on a semi-annual basis as congregational meetings were held twice a year. The financial report for the period, March 1 to September 1, 1887, showed receipts of \$7,937.89 and expenses of \$7,271.57, leaving a balance of \$666.30. For the next half year, the budget was increased. Expected revenues were \$9,540.00 with expenditures of \$9,120.00. It was anticipated that the holding of services in English would increase membership. It should be noted that \$385 of the estimated income was from rental of holyday seats.

Joseph Krauskopf was born in Ostrowo, Prussia, on January 21, 1858. At the age of fourteen he came to the United States, where he settled in Fall River, Massachusetts. For a time, he clerked in a tea store and in 1875 entered the Hebrew Union College at Cincinnati. He was graduated in the first class of Rabbis to be ordained at the College in 1883. The other members of the class were Dr. Henry Berkowitz, for many years Rabbi of Rodeph Shalom Congregation, Dr. David Philipson of Cincinnati, and Rabbi Israel Aaron of Buffalo, New York. In 1885, the College conferred upon Joseph Krauskopf the degree of Doctor of Divinity. In the same year, he had served as Vice-President of the Pittsburgh Conference which chartered the course of Reform in the United States for many years to come. Dr. Krauskopf served only two congregations from his graduation in 1883 until his death in 1923—B'nai Jehudah in Kansas City and Keneseth Israel.

Dr. Krauskopf arrived in Philadelphia in October of 1887, was met at the train by a committee of the Board and was escorted to the Lafayette Hotel. Members of the Board and teachers in the Religious School came to meet the new Rabbi that evening.

Among the first steps taken by Dr. Krauskopf was to reorganize the Religious School. He instituted a departmental system whereby teachers taught more than one class; he introduced classes in Bible Ethics and instruction in English on Saturday and Sunday while Monday and Thursday classes were held in German.

The music at services had concerned the Board of Directors for some time. The minutes are replete with discussion of how to improve that part of the service. In an effort to enhance the beauty of the musical services a choral society was organized to assist the regular choir at services.

Dr. Krauskopf reinstated Sunday Services, which had been abandoned some years before. The ritual was short and the lecture was the principal attraction. Dr. Hirsch did not approve of the way the Services were being



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conducted and wrote letters first to the Board and then to the public press setting forth his objections. The Board, however, solidly backed Dr. Krauskopf and refused to interfere with the manner in which the Sunday Services were conducted. The sermons delivered by Dr. Krauskopf on Sunday morning have been preserved for posterity, as very soon after they began, the Board ordered that they be printed and distributed to the Congregation.

Dr. Hirsch moved to Chicago in March of 1888 and, as he had been furnished with a home by the Congregation, it was voted to increase his pension \$500 in lieu thereof. The house which was owned by the Congregation was placed on the market for sale.

Under the guidance of Dr. Krauskopf there had been formed a group of young people known as the "Knowledge Seekers," whose aim was to advance the "knowledge of Judaism among themselves and within the Congregation." As early as February of 1888, this organization requested the Board of Keneseth Israel to assist in the formation of a Publication Society. This had been advocated by Dr. Krauskopf in a sermon delivered on December 11, 1887, entitled "The Need of the Hour." The idea met with ready acceptance. People all over the country were interested and the Society was formed under the name of Jewish Publication Society in June of 1888. The first president was Morris Newburger, a member of the Board of Keneseth Israel, and Dr. Krauskopf was the secretary. This was not the first society of its kind in the United States but it was the only one to survive the test of the years. In 1845, Rev. Isaac Leeser had organized a Publication Society in Philadelphia, which published several books but most of its assets were lost in a fire in 1851 and the society was disbanded.

A second publication society was formed in New York in 1871, but issued only a few volumes before being forced out of business by lack of financial support. The present society has added greatly to the store of Jewish subjects. Keneseth Israel can be proud of its part in the founding of the Society.

The progress of Keneseth Israel is set forth in the President's Report of April 1888. David Klein reported that attendance at Sunday Services was excellent and recommended that Dr. Krauskopf be requested to compile a prayerbook for use on Sunday, the books to be sold to the members; he also advocated the abolition of Bar Mitzvah on that ground that it had no religious significance for a boy thirteen years old and was unnecessary in view of the ceremony of Confirmation; he pleaded for the establishment of a school library to assist the school in bringing a knowledge of religion to

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the pupils; he pointed out that the Temple building was inadequate both for Services and for the school and proposed that steps be taken to build a new Temple. A committee was appointed to develop plans for enlarging the seating capacity of the Temple. This committee made a report the next year as a result of which a new committee was appointed to make plans for a new Temple.

The first woman teacher in the Religious School was appointed in the Fall of 1888, Miss Rosa Goldsmith having been engaged to teach in the lower grades. The trend toward women teachers was to continue for many years. Today they constitute the majority of the teaching staff, most of them being graduates of the Keneseth Israel Religious School. Discipline in the school seems to have been a difficult problem at that time. Children defaced the walls and caused other damage to the building. The Board spent two meetings discussing the problem and passed a resolution that parents would be held responsible for any damage done. This caused such a furor that at the next meeting the resolution was rescinded and a new resolution regarding the punishment of the "culprits," themselves, was substituted.

In September of 1889, the Congregation abolished the blowing of the Shofar. It was characteristic of this period in the congregational life that services were gradually stripped to what was considered the essentials of a Reform service. Later years were to see some of the discarded ceremonies restored in order to lend beauty to the devotional rites. In December of that year was begun, through the generosity of Jacob May, a collection of Rabbinical portraits which was completed during the celebration of the 100th Anniversary. Mr. May presented portraits of Doctors Einhorn and Hirsch.

Rev. Armhold was elected Reader Emeritus at the annual meeting in 1890 and pensioned. He was, however, to be associated with congregational life for many years. Plans for the new Temple were rapidly progressing. A special meeting in May, 1890, authorized the purchase of a lot between Columbia and Montgomery Avenues on Broad Street for \$50,000 and \$37,000 of this sum was subscribed at the meeting. The lot was that on which the present Temple stands; the Alumni Building was not yet even a dream. Sad to relate, David Klein, who with Dr. Krauskopf was the principal inspirer of the movement for a new Temple, did not live to see the Temple a reality. He died on February 24, 1891, and was buried from the old Temple. M. C. Hirsch became President of the Congregation, until the next annual meeting when he was succeeded by Philip Lewin.

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The cornerstone of the new Temple was laid on October 19, 1891, the principal speech being made by Simon Wolf, the International President of B'nai Brith. The new building was dedicated in a series of ceremonies beginning on September 9, 1892. The ceremonies were impressive and speeches were delivered by Dr. Isaac M. Wise, the founder of the Reform Movement in this country; Dr. Gottheil of New York, Dr. Berkowitz, then of Kansas City, Rabbi Calisch of Richmond, Rabbi A. H. Geisman of Brooklyn, New York, Rabbi A. Guttmacher of Baltimore, Rabbi M. H. Harris of New York, Rabbi Israel Joseph of Wilkes-Barre, Rabbi C. H. Levy of Lancaster, Rabbi L. Mayer of Pittsburgh and Rabbi Tobias Schanfarber of Baltimore.

It is interesting to note that it is said that it was at the dedication of the new Keneseth Israel Temple that Dr. Henry Berkowitz was approached by Rodeph Shalom of Philadelphia to accept a call to that congregation.

While basically the building remains the same today, there have been numerous changes in the interior and the dome has been removed. A contemporary description of the Temple at the time of the dedication describes it as follows:

"The new edifice, which is of the Italian Renaissance style of architecture, is built of Indiana limestone. It is 120 feet front on Broad Street and 150 feet in depth. A stone tower, almost the height of a steeple, stands 150 feet above the level and near the centre, and another tower at the southern end is 70 feet high. The vestibule is paved with mosaic tile. The shape of the auditorium is rectangular and the seats on the main floor are upholstered chairs. The galleries extend around the sides. The seating capacity is about seventeen hundred in all. The Ark is at the eastern end and ornamented. This contains the Scrolls of the Divine Law. The Perpetual Lamp is in front of the Ark. A cut glass dome in the centre of the building is 112 feet high. The windows are of stained glass. The woodwork is of quartered oak and mahogany. On the main floor is a large parlor. In the basement, a diningroom and kitchen are provided. The school rooms are large and well furnished, being so arranged that, by means of an opening, the services in the Temple may be heard. There are, also, an assembly room, a library, a study for the Rabbi and other apartments, all designed after modern styles."

The library mentioned in the foregoing description had been established on October 19, 1892, and was named the Keneseth Israel Free Library. It was born in the brain of Joseph Krauskopf and brought into being through

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the "Knowledge Seekers," which organization had been largely responsible for the founding of the Jewish Publication Society. The library occupied the space in the south lobby of the Temple in which is now found the Memorial Chapel. The first librarian was Mrs. Sidney Stern. She presided over a collection of 680 volumes of fiction and 473 non-fiction books.

The library has not only meant much to Keneseth Israel but has been a source of inspiration and entertainment to all who live in the neighborhood of the Temple. Mr. Joseph R. Teller was Chairman of the Library Committee from 1893 to 1897 when he was succeeded by Herman S. Friedman who served until 1904. The next Chairman was to see the library grow to its greatest size and most useful years. The modern generation thinks of the library as an extension of the work and personality of Hart Blumenthal, who guided it until 1941. These fine men were ably assisted by a succession of efficient and devoted librarians. Following Mrs. Stern was Miss Jennie Gerson from 1896-1922, Miss Ethel Cahane 1922-1924 and Mrs. Flora Frankel 1924-1943.

In 1916, the library outgrew its quarters in the Temple and moved to the basement of the Alumni Building. At that time, it had grown to 7,500 volumes. Today it contains 20,000 volumes in addition to several special collections. Among these special collections are the vocational guidance collection donated in memory of H. Leon Bennett, Esq., and the Judaica collection dedicated in honor of Dr. Fineshriber. The Library Committee is now headed by Lester S. Hecht and Dr. Morton A. Lansfeld. Since Mrs. Frankel's death, the library has been served by Mrs. Dorothy E. Shaftman and Mrs. Jarmila Vokral.

Another organization which still continues to serve the congregation and its members first saw the light of day in 1892 with the founding of the Keneseth Israel Sewing Circle. Week after week, this group of devoted women has met at the Temple and produced garments for charity, for war use and for a multitude of other worthy and useful causes. The first leader of the Sewing Circle was Mrs. Regina Ullman, who led it for many years. In more modern times, it has been conducted by Mrs. Mayme Aarons who has guided it through many changes both in personnel and methods of work and who has been ably assisted by Mrs. Ruth Vogel.

The year 1892 found the duties of the Rabbi so multifarious that Dr. Krauskopf requested the Congregation to elect an Associate Rabbi to assist him in his duties. In December, the Congregation chose J. Leonard Levy,

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who was formally installed on Saturday, April 24, 1893. Rabbi Levy was born in London and educated at the University of London and Jews' Theological College. He also studied under the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Herman Adler, and under Dr. Samson Raphael Hirsch. His first charge was in Bristol, England. In 1889, he came to the United States as Rabbi in Sacramento, California. It was from that city that he was called to Keneseth Israel. He and Dr. Krauskopf spoke on alternate Sundays during the years of his ministry.

About the same time Dr. Krauskopf suffered a bereavement in the death of his wife, Mrs. Rose Krauskopf, in January of 1893. She was buried from the Temple on a Sunday morning with Dr. Harris of New York and Rabbi Levi of Lancaster officiating.

In the latter half of the 19th Century, the synagogue was the center of Jewish life. This was particularly true of the field of Social Service which had not yet become a profession recognized by the community. The work that is now done by trained professionals was, in those days, performed by interested and devoted laymen under the auspices of the synagogue. Keneseth Israel was in the forefront of this work. The founding of the Orphans Guardians in Dr. Hirsch's time has been mentioned. In later years, Dr. Krauskopf was to suggest and inspire the work of many other organizations of this type. Of particular interest because of its approach to the problem of what was then known as the "underprivileged" was the Personal Interest Society. Its aim was to "help the poor to help themselves, by taking a personal interest in their lot, by seeking and finding employment for them and by encouraging cleanliness, thrift and economy." It asked for no funds and in the words of Philip Lewin, "appeals to the heart not to the pocket."

The spirit of the 1890's is exemplified in another organization founded within Keneseth Israel, the Model Dwelling Association. It was created to solve the problem of slums in Philadelphia. It proposed to replace tenements with model dwellings, much as the Federal Housing Authorities have done in our own day. That it did not succeed is no discredit to the spirit and zeal of the founders.

These organizations were joined in 1893 by the Sterilized Milk and Ice Society inspired by Dr. Levy. Such a society had been established in New York by Nathan Strauss and was largely instrumental in the passage of laws making the pasteurization of milk compulsory.

Activity in Keneseth Israel was not confined to charity. The educational needs of the community were also recognized. The Knowledge Seekers had

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become the Lyceum which conducted lectures for adults on Jewish subjects and printed a weekly journal. Dr. Krauskopf's Service Manual was printed by the Congregation and had been adopted by other Reform congregations. In the Religious School, the teaching of German was discontinued, it being no longer considered necessary for American Jews.

There had been started an interfaith movement at the instance of Dr. Krauskopf to bring together all the liberal ministers of Philadelphia for fortnightly exchange of ideas. It included ministers of the Unitarian, Universalist and Ethical Culture sects in addition to Liberal Rabbis.

In the Summer of 1894, Dr. Krauskopf took an extended trip to Europe and Russia to study conditions on the other side of the ocean. On this trip, he visited Agricultural Settlements in Russia and it was from his observations there that there evolved the idea of the National Farm School which was to be established in 1896. The idea of the school was to train Jewish boys in agricultural pursuits with the long range objectives of removing many of them from the overcrowded cities to productive work on the farm. The school originally took boys of high school age, gave them a basic education, as well as specific training in farm work, and placed them in farm jobs. It has today evolved into an agricultural college. It was never a sectarian institution in the sense that it trained only Jewish boys but accepted gladly boys of all faiths. Its beautiful grounds near Doylestown stand today as a fitting memorial to Dr. Krauskopf's foresight and energy.

Keneseth Israel had always considered itself to be an integral part of the community life of Philadelphia, not only of the life of the Jewish community but also of the larger community. It was in this spirit that a memorial service was held in 1894 in memory of George W. Childs, the publisher of the Ledger, a leader in the community and a friend of the Jews. In later years, this same spirit was to be seen in the dedication of memorial windows to John Hay and Theodore Roosevelt and a memorial plaque to Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The Alumni of Keneseth Israel was established in 1895 to maintain the interest and enthusiasm of the graduates of the Religious School. Its first Chairman was Mr. Jacob F. Loeb and the principal organizers were Ernest Heller and Jacob Rubel. Its early years were devoted to work for the School and the library and it was to play an important part, in later years, in the erection of the building which bears its name. At this time, it was the only affiliate organization devoted solely to the upbuilding of congregational life and interest.

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With the congregational meeting of 1897, the custom of semi-annual meetings was abandoned and, thereafter, meetings were held once a year. Philip Lewin died in March of 1898 and was succeeded as president by Daniel Merz.

The multitude of organizations which blossomed within Keneseth Israel had a new recruit in 1895. At the instance of the Rabbis, there was established at Sixth and Spruce Streets a "model kitchen" to teach persons in the poorer neighborhoods how to prepare good food at small cost and to supply such food for those not in position to prepare their own food. For 5c one could obtain 2 quarts of soup, 1 lb. of meat and 1 lb. of bread. In addition, mothers' meetings were organized to provide guidance in the training of children. Although conducted by a Reform Congregation, the kitchen was run in strict accordance with the dietary laws.

Shortly thereafter, Rabbi Levy sponsored the organization of "The Home of Delight," at 426 Pine Street. It was an early Community Center, having a library, game rooms, and organized clubs. Its main support both in money and service came from members of Keneseth Israel.

This year also saw the first post-Confirmation class. This was a joint undertaking of Keneseth Israel and Rodeph Shalom and took the form of a reading union with the classes led by Drs. Krauskopf and Berkowitz. In later years, the post-Confirmation classes were to become an integral part of the Religious School and to have their own graduation exercises. While the number of persons continuing their religious education in this manner was never large, the idea was to pay dividends in the interest in congregational life which was built up and the fact that for those who took advantage of the opportunity it bridged the gap from Confirmation to active participation in the affairs of the congregation.

The year 1897 found the United States embroiled with Spain in the Spanish-American War and Dr. Levy was given a leave of absence to serve as chaplain with Col. Kagan's brigade. In every war which has occurred since that time, one of Keneseth Israel's Rabbis has served as a chaplain.

The religious school again changed the time of its sessions to meet the desires of the parents and children. Sessions formerly held on Saturday and Sunday mornings were changed to Sunday afternoon to allow more concentrated time for study. Another action taken by the congregation at this time was the abandonment of the cemetery in Nicetown. It had been purchased at a time when it was a custom for each congregation to maintain

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its own cemetery. As the years passed and the Jewish community grew there sprang up cemetery companies not associated with individual congregations. They proved adequate to meet the needs of the community especially since members of the same family sometimes belonged to different congregations and yet desired to be buried together. With these considerations in mind, the Board of Keneseth Israel decided to abandon the cemetery and provide suitable graves elsewhere for those buried in the cemetery. A formal resolution of abandonment was passed on March 28, 1889.

Rabbi Levy had returned from war and had been offered the position of Rabbi at Rodeph Shalom in Pittsburgh. At a special congregational meeting held on March 12, 1901, it was proposed that Rabbi Levy be elected Associate Rabbi for five years at an increased salary. This decision was communicated to him but he decided to accept the call to Pittsburgh and tendered his resignation, effective April 1, 1901. The resignation was reluctantly accepted and a reception held to honor Rabbi Levy on his taking up his new duties.

The membership of Keneseth Israel was increased in 1899 by absorbing the membership of a Reform Congregation which ceased to exist. There had been founded a congregation known as the North Western Reform Congregation. Its history is largely unknown but it is clear that it did not prosper, existed for only a short time and eventually disbanded under an arrangement whereby its members should affiliate themselves with Keneseth Israel.

On May 19, 1901, the congregation lost the services of its President, Daniel Merz, who died on that day. He was buried from the Temple and services were conducted by Dr. Krauskopf, assisted by Rev. Armhold. Arnold Kohn was elected President pro-tem to serve until the next annual meeting. The Confirmation Services of 1901 were noteworthy in that they were held in two parts, due to the size of the class. Half of the service was conducted in the evening and the balance on the following morning. Dr. Krauskopf had always maintained that confirmation was not a fixed and immovable holyday, that it was a useful ceremony but that the time of its observance could be arranged to meet the needs of the class and the congregation. While his views were never fully adopted, the ceremony was held at other times than Shovuoth to meet special contingencies.

The departure of Levy left Dr. Krauskopf without assistance and, in order to carry on over the high holydays, he was authorized to engage Rabbi Henry Fisher for that period. Changes were made in the Choir and Russell King Miller was elected organist and Choir leader. He was to serve for



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many years and to add lustre to the music at the services as well as contribute many compositions of his own.

The annual meeting of 1903 saw the election of Alfred M. Klein, the son of David Klein who had been President from 1887 to 1891, as President of the Congregation. He was to serve as President until 1922, a period of nineteen years during which years great changes were to take place in Jewish life in America.

Dr. Krauskopf was appointed Chairman of the Isaac M. Wise Memorial Fund Committee. The congregation relieved him of certain of his duties in order to give him time to carry on his duties as Chairman of the committee. Sunday services were terminated for the year on April 5, 1903, with this end in view.

The Rev. J. H. Goldenson was engaged to assist at the holyday services in 1903. That Fall saw the death of Dr. Marcus Jastrow, Rabbi Emeritus of Rodeph Shalom Congregation. Appropriate resolutions were adopted by the Board of Keneseth Israel on this occasion.

In the Summer of 1904 Rabbi Eli Mayer was elected assistant to Dr. Krauskopf. Rev. Armhold, because of his advanced age, was relieved of his duties as Reader and given the privilege of officiating at weddings and funerals of members of the congregation when requested by the family to do so. Prior to Rabbi Mayer's coming, services for the Summer were conducted by Rabbi Philo of Akron, Ohio.

Keneseth Israel took its first step towards the promotion of new Reform Congregations in Philadelphia in October of 1904. Rabbi George Zepin of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations appeared before the Board and asked that Keneseth Israel and Rodeph Shalom support the establishment of a new congregation in South Philadelphia. The Board responded upon the urging of Dr. Krauskopf by appointing a committee to meet with a similar committee from Rodeph Shalom and the Council of Jewish Women regarding this project. The committee recommended that the sum of \$250 be donated to assist the new congregation, which had taken the name of Congregation Israel, to obtain a location and begin its work. Unfortunately, the congregation did not prosper and, after a short time, disappeared. As will be seen in later years, Keneseth Israel helped to place several small congregations on their feet and the movement reached its climax in the establishment of the Hundredth Anniversary Fund for the furtherance of Reform Judaism.

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The year 1905 was marked by the dedication of the first of a series of Memorial Windows in the Temple. This window was dedicated to the memory of John Hay, who had been Secretary to President Lincoln during the Civil War and had proved himself a devoted friend of the Jews.

Rabbi Mayer resigned, effective January 1, 1906, to take another position. In order that Dr. Krauskopf might have some help in his work, arrangements were made with Rabbi Henry Fisher of Atlantic City to serve Keneseth Israel on Thursdays and Sundays. Among his duties were to help in the religious school and edit the weekly bulletin. This arrangement continued until June of 1906 when Rabbi Isaac Landman was elected Assistant Rabbi. He was to serve Keneseth Israel for ten years. Many years later he was to edit the Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia which brought up to date the Jewish Encyclopaedia which had been published in 1905.

Rabbi Landman and Dr. Krauskopf prepared a syllabus in order that the Bible might be used as a textbook in the religious school. Prior to this time, it had not been used directly in the instruction of school children. This move was in keeping with the spirit of Reform which, in doctrinal matters, had always gone back to the Bible as the original source of Jewish inspiration, rejecting most of the ritualistic devices that had been engrafted on Judaism by the compilers of the Talmud.

The annual meeting of 1908 saw the first trend in the direction of increasing the facilities of the religious school. The congregation at this time had a membership of nine hundred and sixty-five and an annual budget of about \$40,000. The religious school was housed in the present Temple in rooms behind the pulpit and back of the balcony. The Chairman of the Committee on Religious School in his annual report stated that the school was overcrowded and pointed out the advantages in having the school housed in its own building. This dream was to be realized in later years with the erection of the Alumni Building.

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations held its convention in Philadelphia in 1908 with Keneseth Israel and Rodeph Shalom as hosts. Dr. Krauskopf acted as Chairman of the Committee on Arrangements. One of the highlights of the convention was the dedication of the Isaac M. Wise Memorial Window at Keneseth Israel. Among the speakers on this occasion were Jacob H. Schiff, Bernard Bettman, President of the Hebrew Union College Board of Directors, Kaufman Kohler, President of the College, Oscar S. Strauss, Under-Secretary of Commerce and Labor, and

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Dr. Louis Grossman, Rabbi Wise's successor as Rabbi in Cincinnati. The window was designed by Sir Moses Ezekiel.

Important ritual changes were made in 1909 at the request of Dr. Krauskopf. A Yom Kippur Children's Service was introduced at 2:00 P. M. and it was decided to hold the services for the last day of Succoth and Pesach on the Sunday preceding the holyday. The reason for the latter changes was the small attendance, interference with school work and the difficulty of getting male members of the congregation to attend. Dr. Krauskopf also recommended that Confirmation be held in the Fall. He argued that Shovuoth usually came in a hot season when children were tired, that school examinations came at the same period and that, as Confirmation was less than a century old, there is no Jewish law which sets Shovuoth as the day for Confirmation. The Board, however, was not prepared to make this change and it was not adopted.

The project for a new Religious School Building again became active with Dr. Krauskopf's proposal to purchase the ground to the south of the Temple in order to erect a new building. The Board did not approve of the purchase at that time but appointed a committee of the Board to confer with the Alumni Society regarding the project. Meetings were held and the Alumni Society began to raise money to carry out the project. President Klein, in his annual report for 1910, suggested that a fund of \$100,000 be raised. The initial plans were presented to the Board at a special meeting on May 29, 1911. In the meantime, the Alumni had raised \$55,000 and purchased the land south of the Temple.

The Alumni proposed that they deed the rear portion of the land over to the congregation and that the Religious School Building be erected thereon. A committee was appointed to consider the proposal. A special congregational meeting was called on June 29, 1911, to consider the committee's recommendations, which were as follows:

1. A plot of land forty-five feet deep to be deeded to the congregation, on which the school should be erected.
2. Maintenance of the Alumni Building for five years to be guaranteed by the Alumni.
3. That cost of Alumni Building should not exceed \$110,000 and debt be not more than sixty percent of the cost.

These three recommendations were adopted. They were not, however, to be put into operation as the project proved to be more expensive than at

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first anticipated. It was finally agreed that the whole project should be taken over by the congregation with the Alumni donating the land and funds on hand and that a fund of \$50,000, to be known as the Rev. Dr. Joseph Krauskopf Fund, be raised. The actual contract for the erection of the building was finally signed on February 23, 1913, and the cornerstone was laid on April 27, 1913.

The congregation had been growing and Rabbi Landman had recommended the creation of a branch Sunday School. This suggestion did not meet with the approval of the Religious School Committee and was rejected. It was stated at the Annual Meeting of 1911 that the school was the largest Jewish Congregational School in the United States. It was, at this time, that the study of Hebrew was made elective.

There now was established the second constituent organization of the congregation with the founding of the Sisterhood. The original officers were Mrs. Felix N. Gerson, President; Mrs. Leon Merz, First Vice-President; Mrs. Mayme Isaacs, Second Vice-President; Mrs. Max Berg, Treasurer; Mrs. Samuel Jacobs, Recording Secretary and Mrs. Ferdinand Dilsheimer, Corresponding Secretary.

It was immediately to play an important part in congregational life. One of its first acts was to arrange a meeting of teachers and parents for a discussion of problems of the religious school. Shortly after its organization, it was instrumental in having appointed an advisory committee to report to the Board of Directors, consisting of three members from the Sisterhood, three from the Alumni and three from the Board of Directors of the Congregation. The Sisterhood members were Mrs. Joseph Krauskopf, Mrs. Ferdinand Dilsheimer and Mrs. Max Greenebaum; those of the Alumni, Samuel G. Friedman, Sidney L. Olsho and Leon Merz; while the Board appointed Hart Blumenthal, Leon Merz and Frank Newburger.

Dr. Krauskopf completed twenty-five years of service to Keneseth Israel in 1912 and a testimonial dinner was arranged to commemorate the event. The dinner could not be held on the original date in 1912 due to Dr. Krauskopf's illness but was set for January 11, 1913. Many prominent men, both Jews and non-Jews, were invited to attend. In connection with the celebration, a testimonial fund of \$50,000 was raised and presented at the dinner, the presentation speech being made by Leon Merz. A check for \$5,000 was given to Dr. Krauskopf, Mr. Joseph H. Hagedorn making the presentation.

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In the Fall of 1913, Dr. Krauskopf took a trip to the Far East. Sunday services for the year were arranged so that Rabbi Landman preached the first Sunday of every month; the pulpit was occupied by a guest speaker on the second and fourth Sundays and on the third, Rabbi Landman read a letter from Dr. Krauskopf telling of his experiences on his trip. Dr. Krauskopf's trip was interrupted by the outbreak of war in Europe and he was forced to spend the Summer in Holland awaiting transportation home.

The Religious School held its first session in the new Alumni Building on March 24, 1914, the building having been formally dedicated on February 26, 1914. Because of Dr. Krauskopf's absence from the city, confirmation exercises for that year were held in the Fall. With the completion of the new building, services for the high holydays were instituted in the Assembly Hall in addition to the regular Temple Services. A new category of membership was created to attract persons to this service, the rates being lower than those for regular membership.

A Boy Scout Troop was organized under the auspices of the congregation in November of 1914 and space in the Alumni Building made available for its use. Mr. Samuel G. Friedman was the principal organizer of this troop which was to be affiliated with the congregation for many years.

The occasion of Rev. Armhold's 50th Anniversary was celebrated in March, 1915, by the holding of a special service on Saturday morning conducted by him and a dinner that evening at which he was presented with a loving cup.

Although war in Europe had broken out in 1914, the impact of that war seems to have made little change in congregational life during the years before the entry of the United States into the conflict. The year 1916 saw the resignation of Rabbi Landman as Assistant Rabbi and the election of James Heller to succeed him. Rabbi Heller had the distinction of being installed as Rabbi of Keneseth Israel by his father, Rabbi Max Heller of New Orleans.

The war began to be felt in congregational life in May of 1917, the United States having declared war on Germany on April 7th of that year. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations requested that each congregation appoint a committee on religious Welfare work. Such a committee was duly appointed under the Chairmanship of Dr. Krauskopf and with Rabbi Heller as a member of the committee. At the same time, a committee was named to sell Liberty Bonds and Mr. Joseph H. Rubin was made Chairman.

## HISTORY OF KENESETH ISRAEL

Rabbi Heller requested and received permission to serve as a chaplain in the Army. The congregation continued his full salary during his service in the armed forces. A program of War Service was adopted which included placing the names of members in the armed forces in a conspicuous place, keeping in touch with such members, sending them tokens of remembrance, keeping the Chapel open from 5:30 P. M. to 6:00 P. M. for private devotion, offering the Alumni Building and Library for use in recreational programs for members of the services in this area and recruiting volunteers to assist persons interned because of the war. The list of persons serving in the war would include a very large number of the present members of the congregation and is too long for inclusion in this history. Dr. Krauskopf was appointed Director of the Food Conservation Program among Jews and spent the Summer of 1917 in Washington working on this project.

Dr. Krauskopf's thirty years of service to Keneseth Israel was commemorated in this year by the publication by the congregation of a volume of his sermons entitled "Egypt and Palestine, Old and New." During 1918, because of the pressure of duties on the Rabbis caused by the war, Sunday Services were temporarily discontinued.

The Fall of 1919 saw the addition of another memorial window to the collection of the Temple. This window was dedicated to the memory of Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States, and friend of Jews in all lands. The dedication took place in the Temple on November 2, 1919, with members of the President's family among those present. In addition to Dr. Krauskopf's address, addresses were delivered by Oscar S. Strauss, member of Roosevelt's cabinet, George Wharton Pepper and Kermit Roosevelt, son of the President. The art work on the window was done by Violet Oakley, whose work on the State Capitol at Harrisburg is well known.

The beginning of the year 1920 saw the resignation of Rabbi Heller as Assistant and the election of Rabbi Abraham J. Feldman, then Rabbi in Athens, Georgia, to succeed him. The religious school had grown to an enrollment of seven hundred pupils and the congregation to over thirteen hundred members. Dr. Krauskopf advised the congregation that the size of the congregation and the school made it imperative that a Superintendent be obtained for the school. The religious school committee was given the power to engage a Superintendent. The search for a suitable Superintendent was to continue until the Fall of 1921 when Dr. Louis Nussbaum, Assistant Superintendent of the Philadelphia Public Schools, was appointed to that position.

## THE PERIOD OF GROWTH

During the Winter of 1921, Dr. Krauskopf was taken ill and Sunday Services were carried on by inviting prominent Rabbis to occupy the pulpit. During this year, Dr. Krauskopf celebrated his twenty-fifth wedding anniversary and a check was presented to him by the congregation.

At a special meeting of the congregation, held on November 15, 1922, the charter, constitution and by-laws were amended. Among the changes made was one to make all seat holders members of the congregation. Prior to this time, it was necessary for seat holders to be elected to membership by the Board of Directors. This had become a mere formality, which only consumed the time of the Board members, and served no useful purpose. Other changes adopted were designed to bring the by-laws into consonance with actual practice in handling the affairs of the congregation. It should be noted that provision was made for women—two—to serve on the Board of Directors.

The annual meeting of 1922 was held on December 6th. The new constitution, by-laws and charter had been approved by the court. The Committee on Nominations presented the name of Joseph H. Hagedorn for President. Mr. Hart Blumenthal thereupon moved that Mr. Alfred Klein be reelected President so that he might serve as President under the new charter. Mr. Hagedorn's nomination was then withdrawn and Mr. Klein elected President. Before the close of the meeting, Mr. Klein resigned as President and Mr. Hagedorn was elected President. This was done in order to pay tribute to Mr. Klein, who had served as President for many years during which years the congregation had grown in stature and membership. The other officers selected to serve under the new constitution were Hart Blumenthal, Vice-President; Joseph H. Rubin, Treasurer; and Jerome J. Rothschild, Secretary.

Rabbi Feldman suggested the formation of a men's club to interest men in the work of the congregation and enable more men to take an active part in congregational life. Under his guidance, there was founded on May 10, 1923, the Men's Temple Club. Its first officers were Joseph L. Kun, now Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, President; Dr. Morton Langsfeld, Vice-President; William Hyman, Treasurer; and Philip Arnold Secretary. From its founding, it took an active interest in promoting the welfare of the congregation and has secured the active participation of many who would have, otherwise, remained passive worshippers.

Dr. Krauskopf was granted a leave of absence to enable him to devote his energies to raising a Jubilee Fund for the National Farm School. He fell

## HISTORY OF KENESETH ISRAEL

ill shortly thereafter and, as it was doubted whether he would be able to assume his duties for the remainder of the year, arrangements were made to have guest speakers on Sunday mornings. Dr. Krauskopf was never to resume active duties in Keneseth Israel. On May 7, 1923, he was elected Rabbi of Keneseth Israel for life at full salary. He died shortly thereafter on June 12, 1923.

Thirty-six years, 1887 to 1923, mark the period of service to Keneseth Israel of Joseph Krauskopf. The congregation was small when he assumed its spiritual leadership. It ranked as one of the largest in the country at the time of his death. This period was one of great organizational growth. It was Dr. Krauskopf's unusual ability as an organizer, his vast energy and his ability to inspire others to work in the cause of Reform Judaism, which were largely responsible for the tremendous expansion in the membership, influence and spiritual work of the congregation. His contributions to Jewish life in Philadelphia extended far beyond the confines of Keneseth Israel. The Jewish Publication Society and The National Farm School stand as living testimonials of his leadership in the larger community. Keneseth Israel can be proud, not only that their Rabbi inspired these organizations but that he was supported and encouraged in his work by members of the congregation who were the first lay leaders in these organizations. With Dr. Krauskopf's death, there ended an era in congregational life. Just as the period following the first World War brought changes in the life of America, so life in Keneseth Israel underwent changes in the years following Dr. Krauskopf's passing. They were, however, changes based on a firm foundation and in keeping with the fundamental basis of Reform Judaism for which Keneseth Israel has always stood.

Following the death of Dr. Krauskopf, Rabbi Feldman assumed the duties of acting Rabbi. Activities continued as usual, guest speakers being invited to occupy the pulpit on Sunday mornings. In September, 1923, another veteran of congregation life passed away. Oscar Klonower had been sexton for forty years, his tenure antedating that of Dr. Krauskopf. During this time, he had handled many of the affairs of the congregation and was known by all of Keneseth Israel's members as a faithful and conscientious worker for the good of the congregation. After his death, the position of sexton was not filled, his duties being divided between the building superintendent and the assistant secretary.

Memorial Services were held for Dr. Krauskopf on Sunday, November 4, 1923, with Dr. David Philipson, who was a classmate of Krauskopf's



## THE PERIOD OF GROWTH

and who, with Krauskopf's death, became the only survivor of the first class to graduate from the Hebrew Union College, as the principal speaker. Rabbi Feldman conducted the services and among the specially invited guests were the members of the Board of the National Farm School and their wives and the members of the Philadelphia Board of Jewish Ministers and their wives.

The annual meeting of 1923 was the first to be held under the new constitution and, of course, the first since Dr. Krauskopf's death. It was held on November 20, 1923, in the Alumni Building. Because of his long and valuable service to the congregation, Mr. Hart Blumenthal was elected President. This was done to honor Mr. Blumenthal as he had indicated that, because of his health, he could not undertake the duties of that office. He thanked the congregation for the honor and submitted his resignation for the reason above given and Joseph H. Hagedorn was then elected President with Mr. Blumenthal as Vice-President. At this meeting, Mr. Samuel Stern, Chairman of the Alumni Building Committee, reported that the Alumni Building was inadequate and suggested the erection of a new building. The religious school had grown to the unprecedented enrollment of eight hundred and overflowed the building. It was also reported that the congregation's mortgage debt had been reduced to \$85,000.

## IV

### CONSOLIDATION AND PROGRESS

WHILE historical classification of periods in the growth of a civilization or organization are never wholly accurate, they do serve as convenient guides to memory and as broad outlines to the movements which produced change in the organism. It is for this reason that the chapters of this history have been given names and so divided as to cover specific eras in congregational life. The years prior to 1887 were those in which the character of the congregation was formed; from 1887 to 1924 was the period of greatest growth; and the years that have followed have been years of consolidation of that growth and continued progress toward the goal of Reform. It is of course to be kept in mind that the formation of character did not abruptly cease in 1887 and that growth did not end in 1924. The congregation is several hundred members larger than ever before, at the present time, but this type of growth is not the outstanding characteristic of the period. It is no coincidence that the periods are coextensive with the Rabbinate of one man since 1887 for the last two Chief Rabbis have served the congregation for sixty-one years between them and have been men of dynamic personality whose influence has been felt in every phase of congregational life.

Early in 1924 the congregation began its search for a successor to Dr. Krauskopf. President Hagedorn and Jerome J. Rothschild, Secretary, were designated as a committee to investigate this matter. It is interesting to note that Mr. Rothschild's father-in-law, Arnold Kohn, had been a committee of one to select a new Rabbi in 1887 and had brought Dr. Krauskopf to Philadelphia.

They journeyed to Memphis, Tennessee, to hear and talk with Rabbi William H. Fineshriber, Rabbi of the Reform Congregation in that city. On their return they recommended that Rabbi Fineshriber be called to the pulpit of Keneseth Israel and that Rabbi Feldman remain as Associate Rabbi. Rabbi Feldman agreed and at a meeting held April 8, 1924, the election of Rabbi Fineshriber as Rabbi was ratified by the congregation. It was arranged that Rabbi Fineshriber should assume his new duties in September of 1924.

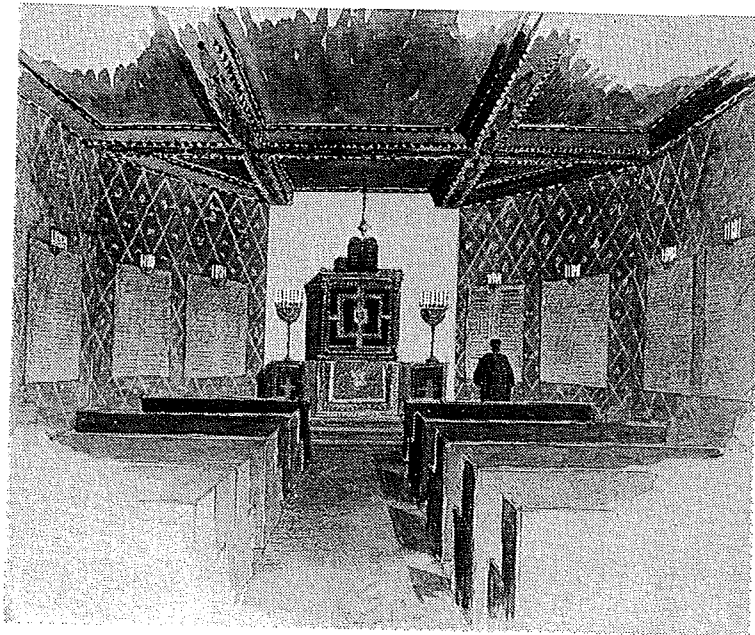
In the Summer of 1924, Rabbi Feldman was assisted by Mr. Armand Spitz, then a student at the Hebrew Union College and a member of Kene-



DR. WILLIAM H. FINESHRIBER

Rabbi 1924 - 1949

Rabbi Emeritus 1949 -



NEUMANN MEMORIAL CHAPEL

## CONSOLIDATION AND PROGRESS

seth Israel. The Men's Club and Sisterhood had requested that their Presidents be made members of the Board of the Congregation. The Board turned down this request but agreed that the two Presidents could attend Board meetings as representatives of their respective organizations. Also, during that Summer, Gimbel Brothers' Radio Station offered to broadcast the New Year's services that Fall but the Board declined the offer, feeling that it was not compatible with the solemnity of the occasion.

Rabbi Fineshriber arrived in Philadelphia in September, 1924, having spent the month of August in Atlantic City in order that he might be able to visit Philadelphia and become familiar with the city and the congregation before assuming the office of Rabbi. With his coming, Keneseth Israel, for the first time, had an American born Chief Rabbi in its pulpit. Rabbi Fineshriber was born in St. Louis, Missouri, and at an early age was taken to Evansville, Indiana, where his father was Rabbi. He entered the Hebrew Union College and the University of Cincinnati and upon graduation was called to Davenport, Iowa. While a student, he had conducted services for the high holydays at Paducah, Kentucky, where he met Mae Wallerstein, whom he married two years after graduation. From Davenport, Rabbi Fineshriber was called to Memphis, Tennessee, first as Associate to Rabbi Samfield and then as Rabbi of the congregation. It was from Memphis that he was called to Keneseth Israel.

The Fall of 1924 saw the first changes in ritual in many years. During the preceding years, there had been no Torah reading and no covering had been used on the Torah. It was Rabbi Fineshriber's belief that there was value in reading the Torah, and that services should appeal to the aesthetic sense as well as the sense of reason. While as radically reform as his predecessor in fundamentals, he felt that those ceremonies which helped to beautify the services and still had meaning for modern Jews should be used. He, therefore, urged three changes during the Fall of 1924 and Winter of 1925. The first was the reading of the Torah on Saturdays and the high holydays and its covering with attractive robes; the second the addition of a violin or cello to the Choir and a short musical service before the Sunday Service; and the third was the adoption of the Union Prayer Book for services other than Sunday. It will be recalled that the congregation had, at various times, changed its prayerbook, the one in use at this time being compiled by Dr. Krauskopf because there had been no adequate prayerbook in English. The Union Prayer Book had been compiled by a committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and had been adopted by practically all of the Reform Congregations of the country. Among the arguments for its use by

## HISTORY OF KENESETH ISRAEL

Keneseth Israel was the fact that the members of the congregation would feel at home in the service when visiting other congregations and would have a greater sense of belonging to the family of Reform Jews. These changes appealed to the Board of Directors and were, therefore, put into practice. The Krauskopf Hymnal was still used and the Sunday Service continued to be that written by Dr. Krauskopf. In the Sunday School the first change made was the inauguration of a kindergarten for younger children.

Rabbi Feldman received a call to the pulpit of Congregation Beth Israel of Hartford, Connecticut, in May of 1925 and resigned to accept this new position. In the absence of an assistant, Rabbi S. Ferdinand Becker, a retired Rabbi living in Philadelphia, assisted with funerals and Friday night services, which were then held at 5:30 P. M.

Rabbi Fineshriber desired to improve the quality of the teaching in the Religious School and to assure that it be in conformity with Reform ideals. He had observed that many teachers came from Orthodox backgrounds and had not been thoroughly grounded in Reform, while others with Reform backgrounds had not been adequately trained in teaching methods. He, therefore, in conjunction with Rabbi Louis Wolsey of Rodeph Shalom, organized a Normal School for teachers in Reform schools. Classes were held at the Young Men's Hebrew Association and conducted by the Rabbis.

The crowded conditions in the Religious School and in the Temple, itself, were again brought to the fore when Rabbi Fineshriber recommended that the congregation consider the erection of a new synagogue on the site of the present Temple. A plan for a new synagogue was drawn up and tentatively approved, action to be taken to raise the money after the close of the drive then being conducted by the Federation of Jewish Charities for new buildings for its agencies. Later, it developed that the cost of a new synagogue would be quite high and that the center of population for the congregation membership was shifting so that it would be inadvisable to rebuild on the same site. The matter was, therefore, tabled.

May, 1925, saw a new assistant at Keneseth Israel. Rabbi Julian B. Feibelman, a graduate of the Hebrew Union College, was elected to that position. Rabbi Feibelman was to serve in this capacity for ten years, equaling in length of service the record of Isaac Landman.

The Fall of 1925 saw Congregation Rodeph Shalom start on the erection of a new synagogue on the site of the old synagogue at Broad and Mt. Vernon Streets. Keneseth Israel offered the use of its facilities during the construction.

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No history of Keneseth Israel would be complete without mention of the fine relationship which has existed between it and Congregation Rodeph Shalom. For many years, they were the only Reform Congregations in Philadelphia and this fact alone made for a close bond between them. In addition, there have always been families which had members in both congregations and even isolated instances of one person belonging to both of them. This family relationship has even extended to the Rabbis, as Dr. Krauskopf and Dr. Berkowitz were related.

The cooperation has been of many kinds. Joint services have been held in time of need; Joint Sunday Schools have been operated; and Joint efforts made to spread Reform in the Philadelphia community. In every effort to advance the cause of Reform, the two congregations have stood side by side.

The overcrowded conditions in the religious school still persisted and it was proposed that a branch school be opened in the northern suburbs, which would benefit those living in that part of the metropolitan area, and in some measure relieve conditions in the Alumni Building. In October of 1927, this project came to fruition with the establishment of a school at 7945 North Park Avenue. Thirty pupils attended the branch at the opening. The following year the branch moved to 2091 Sixty-fifth Avenue, where it remained until 1930 when it was discontinued. Transportation facilities had been improved with the building of the Broad Street subway and structural changes in the Temple, which had been redecorated in 1928, had made more space available so that the building was now equipped to house the full enrollment.

The congregation was honored in having its Senior Rabbi awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by Temple University for distinguished service to the University and to Philadelphia at the commencement exercises of the University in June of 1927. This University had been founded by Russell Conwell, the minister of the Baptist Temple, which was located on Broad Street a block to the north of the Keneseth Israel Synagogue, and relations between the two congregations had always been close and cordial. In the middle 1920's, the University had entered upon a program of expansion. Dr. Fineshriber was largely responsible for the success of this undertaking. He had also taught a course at the University and his influence in raising funds had contributed greatly in making Temple one of the finest universities in the Philadelphia area. The relationship between Keneseth Israel and Temple University was to be further solidified in years to come when the congregation made the Alumni Building available for University classes.

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During 1928 the congregation had assisted in organizing and financing a forum at the University of Pennsylvania for Jewish students. This continued for a short time being largely conducted by the Rabbis of Keneseth Israel, but was stopped as the Jewish Students House, later to become a Hillel Foundation, began to offer more general instruction in Jewish matters. In the Summer of 1928 Rabbi Feibelman declined a call to the pulpit of Dayton, Ohio, upon the urging of Dr. Fineshriber and members of the congregation. The annual dinner of that year was a gala occasion as it witnessed the figurative "burning of the mortgage." A committee, headed by Albert M. Greenfield, had raised money, paid off the mortgage and presented the balance as a fund for expansion of Reform Judaism in honor of Rabbi Fineshriber.

In an effort to further beautify the services, Dr. Fineshriber recommended that a cantor be engaged and the choir reorganized. Benjamin Grobani became cantor and superintended the revamping of the choir. The cantor did not read the service in a manner of the Orthodox synagogue but sat on the pulpit and sang responses.

Dr. Fineshriber also secured the moral and financial backing of the congregation for a new congregation of young people from South Philadelphia, who desired to start a Temple in that section of the city. This group organized as Sinai Temple and held services in the Alumni Chapel of Keneseth Israel. In its early days, Friday evening services were conducted by the Rabbis of Keneseth Israel and Rodeph Shalom and Mr. Hagedorn also assisted. In order to get the new congregation off to a good start, Keneseth Israel and Rodeph Shalom gave a dinner for the members of the congregation. In spite of the efforts of both Reform congregations, Temple Sinai never progressed to independent status. Services were held in the Keneseth Israel Alumni Building for a short time but no synagogue was ever acquired and the congregation slowly died out. This ended the second attempt to establish a Reform synagogue in South Philadelphia.

The stock market crash came in October, 1929, and the great depression of the thirties was ushered in. It had its effect on the religious institutions of the country as well as on business. This effect was felt in smaller budgets and greater need. Financial disaster overtook many; some were members of Keneseth Israel. Need was of two kinds: financial and spiritual. As unemployment mounted, the regular Social Service agencies were swamped. There were no governmental agencies to cope with the situation and private organizations of all kinds were called upon to help. Keneseth Israel estab-

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lished an emergency fund which was raised through voluntary donations and passing the collection box on Sunday mornings.

This fund was placed in the keeping of the Rabbis and was used primarily to help members of the congregation who were in need. The Rabbis were aware that such a fund offered opportunities for the unscrupulous to receive help from several sources and when not needed. They, therefore, prevailed upon Mr. Maurice Steppacher to undertake investigations of the applicants. Rabbi Feibelman and Dr. Fineshriber interviewed applicants at the Temple office and passed on grants of aid. They were able to offer more than mere financial assistance in the moral encouragement they gave to members. The fund continued to be used in this way until the worst of the depression was over, when the situation was stabilized and community resources were adequate to meet the need. When this time arrived, Dr. Fineshriber called in the Jewish Welfare Society and asked them to take over the remaining cases, investigate and handle them as they handled their own cases. Keneseth Israel was the first congregation to recognize that, when an emergency had passed, good community planning dictated that this type of charity work should be returned to the established professional agencies. It should also be noted that the congregation donated \$1,000 to the first community wide campaign held by the Lloyd Committee at the beginning of the crisis.

The financial crisis did not interrupt the progress of Keneseth Israel towards increasing and deepening the religious life of the community. If anything, it increased the tempo of religious activity. In 1931, the ceremony of Bar Mitzvah was reestablished in Keneseth Israel and met with such response that today hardly a Saturday passes without some young boy's taking the vows attendant on that ceremony. The religious school organized a Bar Mitzvah class to train boys for the ceremony and most of those who are Bar Mitzvah attend and read from the Torah.

Mr. Miller, the organist and choir director, resigned in 1933 and Dr. Isadore Freed, a composer of note, succeeded him. The choir was reorganized to add beauty to the services.

During the year 1933, agitation began among some members of the congregation to institute a late Friday night service. It was felt at that time that the members would not attend three full services and, as Sunday Services continued to draw large crowds, the idea was tabled. It again appears with the outbreak of the second World War. Keneseth Israel participated in,



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and with Rodeph Shalom was host to, a Regional Conference of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations during 1933.

The annual meeting of 1934 was marked by a unique event in Keneseth Israel's history. The congregation elected its first honorary member. This honor was extended to Albert Einstein, the world's foremost physicist and a fine Jewish personality. He had come to the United States as a result of Hitler's persecution and had been welcomed with open arms by this country. Dr. Einstein addressed the meeting in accepting the honorary membership bestowed upon him. Dr. Fineshriber was also honored at this meeting upon the completion of ten years of service to Keneseth Israel. He was given a sabbatical year to start January 1, 1935, and extend to the holydays of that year. It must be recorded, however, that due to the pressure of his duties during the time of depression, Dr. Fineshriber never enjoyed the leave given him but remained on the job. It was during this period that Dr. Fineshriber's services, outside of the congregation, were in great demand. Labor disputes were rampant and in numerous instances he was called upon to arbitrate strikes with great success.

Among these strikes was one at the Aberle Stocking Mill in North Philadelphia, which erupted into violence before the arbitrator was brought in to make peace. Another strike, which Dr. Fineshriber successfully settled, was one in the textile industry which involved some forty-two mills and which vitally affected the industrial life of the city. As a result of his efforts, a permanent arbitration procedure was established in this industry.

In the national field, the services of Dr. Fineshriber were also needed to handle a crisis which had arisen in the movie industry. The tone of Hollywood's output had become increasingly concerned with matters of sex, to such an extent that many religious organizations protested. The Catholic Legion of Decency advocated a boycott of moving pictures and went so far as to picket movie theatres. The Central Conference of American Rabbis, seeing great danger in the situation both to the morals of the community and the future of a great industry, appointed a committee headed by Dr. Fineshriber to look into the problem. Dr. Fineshriber went to Hollywood, where he met with the leaders of the movie industry, discussed the matter with them and convinced them that, for the good of the industry and the country as a whole, they must adopt a code of morals which would meet with the approval of the religious forces in the community. Such a code was adopted and the Legion of Decency withdrew its ban.

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The problem which threatened to develop into a prolonged fight over movie censorship was thus solved by the industry's establishing its own standards and the question of freedom of expression was never brought to the fore. The possibility of the engendering of anti-semitic feeling, because of the large number of Jews in motion pictures, was also obviated by the settlement reached.

After the advent of the Roosevelt Administration, Dr. Fineshriber was named Chairman of the Pennsylvania State Adjustment Board under the National Recovery Administration.

It is not to be thought that the financial depression did not affect the congregation. Its collections dropped off and it was forced to reduce expenditures. Even membership dropped to a low of 1,193, although Keneseth Israel remained among the largest congregations in the country.

Efforts to promote reform within and without the congregation continued. The Rabbis and a committee of the congregation gave attention to promoting reform services for students at the universities through the Jewish Students Houses.

The establishment of a branch Sunday School in the Oak Lane sector by Keneseth Israel became the nucleus for the first permanent addition to the family of Reform congregations in Philadelphia. Dr. Fineshriber had long been concerned with the growth of Reform in Philadelphia and had advocated the decentralization of synagogue life. The first step in this plan was the branch school in Oak Lane and a similar school in the Germantown area. Although these schools were continued for only a few years, because of the acute need, the Oak Lane school blossomed into a new synagogue. Encouraged by Keneseth Israel and under the guidance and advice of Dr. Fineshriber, persons whose children had attended the school formed Temple Judea. In its early years, it was given financial assistance, Rabbinical services and moral support by Keneseth Israel. Today it has its own Temple, Rabbi and school and has taken its place in the ranks of Reform in Philadelphia.

Rabbi Feibelman completed ten years in the Rabbinate of Keneseth Israel in 1936. The congregation presented him with a gift in honor of the occasion. Shortly thereafter, he was called to New Orleans as Rabbi and Keneseth Israel was again without an assistant Rabbi.

A new assistant was chosen in November. He was Samuel Cook, a Philadelphian who had been Hillel Director at the University of Alabama.

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It was because of his work with young people that he was chosen. Among his first problems was to revitalize the Alumni group.

Keneseth Israel reached its ninetieth birthday in 1937 and appropriate plans were made to celebrate this event. A committee headed by Clarence L. Meyers was appointed to raise a fund for the renovation of the Temple. The building was forty-five years old and, while repairs had been made from time to time, no major changes had taken place in the interior of the Temple. Money was raised and the work was done. The principal addition was the beautification of the east end of the Temple auditorium, including the altar and choir loft.

The climax of the celebration was the annual dinner held at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel on Wednesday, December 1st. Addresses were delivered by Dr. Cyrus Adler, President of the Jewish Theological Seminary and Dropsie College, Judge Curtis Bok, and Dr. Fineshriber. A souvenir booklet containing a short history of the congregation, prepared by Mrs. Cecelia Gerson Reinheimer was distributed to members of the congregation. The musical program was furnished by the Sisterhood Glee Club under the direction of Mrs. Horace Stern and Cantor Grobani and the choir under Mr. Freed. Mr. Hagedorn presided and presented his Presidential Report.

The charitable activities of Keneseth Israel had been noteworthy in the early days of the congregation. As time went on, the synagogue ceased to be the center of charitable activity but Keneseth Israel never lost its interest in helping those who were less fortunate. In 1938, there was established the Elinor Kohn Tot Lot at Front and Wildey Streets. The tot lot movement did not originate with Keneseth Israel although it was the first religious organization to sponsor its own lot. The lot is operated each Summer as a neighborhood playground. Milk is provided in addition to entertainment. The Religious School has charge of the tot lot and allocates funds for its running expenses. Many of the children of the school have been introduced to social service by acting as volunteers at the tot lot. The lot was named in memory of the daughter of the principal of the Religious School, Mrs. Morton Kohn. In recent years, the school has received valuable aid from the TKIYA in running the tot lot.

Mr. Hagedorn retired as President in 1938 and Louis A. Hirsch became President with Mr. Hagedorn as Chairman of the Board. The annual dinner found an alcove in the Library dedicated in honor of Dr. Fineshriber's fiftieth anniversary at Keneseth Israel. This alcove was the beginning of a collection of Judaica in the Library.

## CONSOLIDATION AND PROGRESS

In September, 1939, the Germans invaded Poland; the second World War had begun. During the years prior to 1939 and subsequent to 1932, the Rabbis of Keneseth Israel had preached against the outrages of Hitler and had sought to rally American opinion in favor of the persecuted Jews of Germany. The fear of the world that Hitler would plunge it into war had at last been turned into reality. That war was in Europe and did not directly affect Keneseth Israel in its congregational life. Whatever may have been the reaction of the individual, the organization went along quite as if no war had broken out. The impact of the war was to be felt but the time was not yet.

There had been a group of young married people between twenty and thirty years of age, who wanted to be affiliated with the congregation but felt that they could not afford to pay the minimum dues. They met with Dr. Fineshriber and asked that he arrange for a less expensive membership. Upon his recommendation, the Board created a Junior Congregation with very nominal dues but without certain privileges. For example such members had no vote and were not entitled to send their children to the Religious School. On high holydays, the members were entitled to seats in the Alumni Building. This organization grew, later changed its name to TKIYA—Temple Keneseth Israel Youth Association, the suggestion having come from Rabbi Joseph Klein, and it has become a very active arm of the synagogue.

Rabbi Cook resigned as Assistant to accept a call to Altoona, Pennsylvania. As his successor, the congregation secured Rabbi Joseph Klein, who, after graduating from the Hebrew Union College, had become Rabbi of the Northeast Jewish Community Center in Philadelphia, a semi-conservative congregation. Under his guidance, the Alumni adopted a unique project for a Reform congregation, the running of a Sunday School for an Orthodox congregation at Poplar and New Market Streets, a neighborhood which had once housed Keneseth Israel. The young people of Keneseth Israel and Rodeph Shalom also established a School of Jewish Studies under the direction of Rabbis Klein of Keneseth Israel and Sack of Rodeph Shalom.

Another educational project was suggested by Dr. Fineshriber and carried out by the Men's Club. Dr. Fineshriber suggested that it was important that children in our Religious School receive guidance as to the life work which they should pursue. The Men's Club thereupon appointed a committee which began a series of lectures on vocational guidance in the school. Finding this inadequate, the committee then engaged a psychologist who conducted a guidance course with post-confirmands and members of the

## HISTORY OF KENESETH ISRAEL

confirmation class. He was also available for consultation by individuals. The entry of the United States into the war, brought this guidance program to a close because the situation was so changed by the war that guidance became almost impossible; for before everyone there loomed the prospect of military service and the future was too uncertain.

Cantor Grobani resigned to accept a position as Cantor in Baltimore, Maryland, and it was decided that with expanding activities the congregation had greater need for a second Assistant Rabbi than for a new Cantor. In line with this decision, Rabbi Malcolm Stern was selected as Assistant Rabbi. Rabbi Stern was a graduate of the Hebrew Union College and a native of Philadelphia, being a grand-nephew of Rabbi Henry Berkowitz, who for many years was Rabbi of Rodeph Shalom, and also a grand-nephew of Dr. Krauskopf.

The Fall of 1941 saw a new branch Sunday School established in Elkins Park at Church and Cadwalader Roads, in a building used during the week by a kindergarten. This school was established in response to a growing demand that Keneseth Israel provide a more convenient place for the younger children.

A major change in the order of services took place in November of 1941. It was brought about initially because of the necessity of repairing the dome of the Temple. This made it impossible to use the Temple for services and it was, therefore, decided to abandon the Sunday Service because the Alumni Auditorium was needed for the Religious School on that day. Temporarily, the 5:30 P. M. service on Friday was discontinued and there was added an 8:30 service on Friday night. The late Friday night service had been urged for some time by members of the Men's Club and Sisterhood as being more appropriate than a Sunday morning service and lending itself better to the religious spirit than the Sunday morning service in which the lecture was the principal item. Although adopted as a temporary expedient, the late Friday night service has been continued; first, because with the entry of the United States into the Second World War and the rationing of gasoline, which followed, it was found that it was easier for members, especially men, to remain in town for services on Friday night than to reach the Temple on a Sunday morning; and secondly because many members felt that it was more appropriate than the Sunday Service. Attendance at this service was sometimes very good; sometimes only fair. As the 100th Anniversary year approached, the attendance increased making that year a banner year in attendance at Friday night services. Coupled with the service

## CONSOLIDATION AND PROGRESS

was a social hour in Krauskopf Hall after services at which refreshments were served and at which members of the congregation were enabled to meet each other and enjoy pleasant social intercourse. This feature of the service had much to do with the continuance of the service after the war.

At the annual meeting of 1941, Mr. Hirsch retired as President, being made Honorary President; and Harry I. Stern became President. Mr. Stern was inducted into office at a Friday night service on January 16, 1942, the first time such an induction service had been held in Keneseth Israel.

Cooperation between the Reform congregations of Philadelphia was greatly advanced by the formation of the Philadelphia Council of Reform Congregations, of which David L. Ullman, a member of the Keneseth Israel Board, became the President. One of its projects was the establishment of an Institute of Jewish Studies. This institute was held weekly at Keneseth Israel and offered courses in several subjects, the teachers being the Rabbis of the Reform synagogues. For several years it continued to offer courses for adults in subjects of Jewish interest. The Council also played a leading part in the formation of the fourth Reform congregation but several steps were necessary before this was to be accomplished, steps which are related hereafter.

The Summer of 1942 saw Keneseth Israel and Rodeph Shalom combining their services. This was necessary because Rabbi Sack of Rodeph Shalom had become a chaplain in the Army and there was no one available to conduct services while Rabbi Wolsey was on vacation. The next Fall saw the two congregations combine their branch Sunday Schools, with one in Oak Lane, at the Oak Lane Towers Apartments, and another in Germantown at the Sedgwick Apartments. Before the season was over, a third unit was added in Wynnefield. In order to save heat, during the fuel shortage, caused by wartime needs, the two congregations combined their regular services alternating between the two Temples.

The entry of the United States into the War posed problems for Keneseth Israel. The desire to help was great and the Board of Directors and constituent organizations sought ways in which they might be of service in the war effort. A committee on the sale of war bonds was appointed to work with the Men's Club, Sisterhood, TKIYA, Alumni and Sunday School. The annual meeting of 1942 saw the sale of \$500,000 worth of war bonds, with Dr. Fineshriber's delivering the address which resulted in an outpouring of subscriptions. Before the War ended, over a million dollars worth of

## HISTORY OF KENESETH ISRAEL

such bonds had been sold through the efforts of the various groups within Keneseth Israel.

War service was not confined to the sale of bonds. The Sisterhood had a surgical dressing unit which made dressings for the Red Cross; it also participated in the food conservation program by canning food. The Men's Club kept in touch with members of Keneseth Israel in the Armed Forces and sent them mementos from time to time; all of the organizations were active in getting blood donors for the Red Cross. The Alumni Building was offered as a U. S. O. Center but was found to be too far from the center of town to be properly utilized for that purpose. The number of members of the congregation who served in the Armed Forces was over five hundred, of which nine paid the supreme sacrifice. Their names have been enshrined in a memorial alcove in the Library donated by the Men's Club and dedicated during the ceremonies attendant upon the 100th Anniversary.

Early 1943 saw Rabbi Stern enter the Armed Forces as a chaplain. He was given leave of absence by the congregation in keeping with the custom which had started during the Spanish-American War.

Dr. Fineshriber had organized a group of German refugees into an Orthodox congregation and the congregation had given them the use of the Alumni Chapel for services. They took the name of "Tickvoh Hadosha," or "New Hope Congregation," secured a Rabbi, Helmut Frank, from among their own group and steadily grew in membership. They not only received the use of the facilities of Keneseth Israel for services but also the guidance and encouragement of the Rabbis of Keneseth Israel.

The facilities of Keneseth Israel were in constant use, for Temple University, expanding its war training program, secured the Alumni Building for both day and night classes. This was the second time the building had been used by the University, for during the 1930's the building had been rented for classes until Temple completed its new Library Building.

In the course of the physical changes in the Temple and Alumni Building, the offices had been moved to the Alumni Building, leaving two rooms empty in the front of the Temple. The room to the north side of the Lobby was fitted up as a lounge by the Sisterhood and dedicated to the men and women serving in the armed forces of our country. The south room was to be a memorial chapel. The project had been under discussion when Mr. Sidney Neumann offered to pay for the construction as a memorial to his parents. The offer was accepted, the work completed and the chapel

## CONSOLIDATION AND PROGRESS

dedicated by the Rabbis as the Neumann Memorial Chapel. The memorial tablets, which had originally been in the Temple proper were gathered in this room and lights installed to be lit on the anniversary of the death of each person whose name was inscribed on the tablets. An added feature was the installation of a victrola with a collection of appropriate records. Special services for the deceased are from time to time held in the chapel and it is open for individual worship.

The branch school in Wynnefield also became the nucleus for a new Reform congregation. This congregation was immeasurably aided by Dr. Fineshriber, Mr. Ullman and a committee of the Council of Reform Congregations. This committee worked with Rabbi Glasner, the first Rabbi and leading factor in the founding of the congregation, in getting a site, in getting members and in raising money for the new congregation. Keneseth Israel donated \$2,000 from the Emergency Fund to help put the new congregation on its feet. Originally known as the Wynnefield Reform Temple, it later changed its name to Beth David and became a useful member of the Reform family in Philadelphia. During the formative period, Keneseth Israel and Rodeph Shalom continued to support the school, turning it over to Beth David when that congregation felt capable of assuming the responsibility.

After the resignation of Dr. Nusbaum, the Religious School was headed by Mrs. Morton Kohn for many years. Upon her resignation, the services of Rabbi Ephraim Rosenzweig, who was in Philadelphia as a member of the staff of the Jewish Community Relations Council, were secured. He served for only a year as he left town for another position. He was succeeded by Harry Schneiderman, who had been a teacher in the school, and he in turn by Albert Kitey, also a teacher in the school.

The annual meeting of 1944 was in honor of Dr. Fineshriber's twenty years of service to the congregation and an etching of Dr. Fineshriber by Harry Moskowitz was presented to him.

The agitation for the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine became particularly strong in 1942. It was principally sponsored by the Zionist Organization of America. One of the by-products of this movement was the formation early in 1943 of the American Council for Judaism. Leaders in the organization of the Council, which took place in Atlantic City, were our own rabbi, Dr. Fineshriber, Dr. Louis Wolsey, the spiritual leader of Rodeph Shalom Synagogue, and Lessing J. Rosenwald, a member of our Board of Trustees. Mr. Rosenwald was the first president and still remains



## HISTORY OF KENESETH ISRAEL

at the head of the Council. Among its basic principles is that we Jews constitute a religious community, not a nationality, and accordingly it was opposed to the establishment of a Jewish State.

About the same time the American Jewish Conference was organized. Its claimed purpose was "to speak for all Jews." However, when the conference met it was immediately apparent that those with strong zionistic leanings had gained control and that they were determined to support the Zionist philosophy. Some organizations, including the American Jewish Committee, soon withdrew from the Conference, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations was promptly faced with the problem as to whether it would withdraw. The Union, through its Executive Board, referred the matter to its next biennial Council. Shortly thereafter, the Board of Trustees of our congregation seriously debated the question of the Union's participation in the Conference. At a meeting on November 18, 1943, the Board approved a Declaration of Principles, which had been promulgated by the Executive Board of the Union in June of 1943. That Declaration favored:— (1) large scale immigration to Palestine; (2) governing Palestine by a concert of nations until self-government could be established without jeopardizing the rights of any group; (3) such government to be democratic, and non-sectarian, and to embody separation of church and state. Our Board also called upon the Union to reaffirm the stand of its Executive Board on this question. The Union itself, having done nothing affirmative on this question, our Board again considered the matter, and by another large vote adopted the following resolution:—

"Resolved, that it is the consensus of this Board that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations is an association of religious institutions of the Jewish faith and as such should be exclusively devoted to the promotion of the tenets of Judaism; that any controversy involving a political question is entirely beyond the scope of its activities; and it should, therefore, disassociate itself completely from any controversy pertaining to political Zionism."

"Resolved further, that it is the sense of this Board that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations withdraw from the American Jewish Conference."

This resolution was supported by Keneseth Israel's representatives at the biennial Council of the Union but failed of passage. Subsequently, the American Jewish Conference became what was thought at the time to be

## CONSOLIDATION AND PROGRESS

a permanent organization<sup>1</sup>, and it was never decided whether the Union should withdraw from the Conference.

Building problems again beset the congregation in 1945 when it became necessary for reasons of safety to remove the dome. The work, although begun in the Summer, extended over the high holydays and for that reason services were held in Town Hall. This auditorium was large enough to hold the whole congregation and, except for children's services, only one service was held. While there had often been attempts to arrange seating so that the Alumni Service could be dispensed with, this was the only time it had been found feasible to combine the services.

Franklin D. Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, having brought the United States within sight of victory in Europe. It was only a month later when that victory was realized and the end of the war in the Pacific followed in a few months. Keneseth Israel desired to honor this great war President as it had honored John Hay and President Theodore Roosevelt. At first, it was thought that a memorial window should be dedicated but it was finally decided to erect a memorial plaque. Paul Manship was commissioned to prepare a plaque in bronze. The plaque was dedicated at the Friday evening service on April 5, 1946. The Temple was filled; Dr. Fineshriber delivered the dedicatory address and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt spoke, acknowledging the honor paid to her late husband. The plaque was subsequently erected in the lobby of the Temple.

The election to honorary membership of Earl G. Harrison featured the annual meeting of 1946. Mr. Harrison, the first non-Jew to be so honored, had been Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization during the trying period of the war and thereafter had investigated conditions in the Refugee camps in Germany, making a report which had great influence in alleviating the suffering of those unfortunate people.

The Religious School had seen certain changes in 1945. With the end of the war, the branch schools had been discontinued and bus service for the smaller children had been instituted. A new organization devoted to the interest of the school had been established. A Parent-Teachers Association was brought into being through the efforts of an organizing committee headed by Mrs. Alice Silverman and the first President of the Association was Mr. Bertram Bennett with Mrs. Silverman as Vice-President. The new organization busied itself with efforts to secure greater cooperation of the parents and in bettering physical conditions in the school.

<sup>1</sup> The American Jewish Conference has since passed out of existence.

## HISTORY OF KENESETH ISRAEL

Following the close of the war, Rabbi Stern had returned to active duty with Keneseth Israel and Rabbi Klein had resigned to accept a call to Altoona, Pennsylvania, where he succeeded Rabbi Cook.

As Keneseth Israel entered its 101st year, it had grown in strength and numbers. It had weathered depressions and booms and had always kept before it the goal of the furtherance and advancement of Reform Judaism in Philadelphia. In the later years of Dr. Fineshriber's ministry some of the dreams he had had for the congregation and for Reform Judaism in Philadelphia had been realized. Keneseth Israel was larger than ever, there being about seventeen hundred members on its books. Two new Reform organizations had been organized and were well established, the Rabbis and members of Keneseth Israel having had a considerable part in putting them on their feet.

Other projects were under way. Twenty years earlier Dr. Fineshriber had suggested that Keneseth Israel and Rodeph Shalom merge their efforts to create additional Reform centers in areas where they were needed. Now it was suggested that the two congregations merge into the largest congregation in the country and establish branches throughout the metropolitan area. This suggestion was made by President Stern and efforts are going forward to implement it as this is written <sup>1</sup>.

Pending final disposition of this question, the congregation decided to celebrate its 100th Anniversary by raising a fund of \$100,000 to further the cause of Reform in Philadelphia. Mr. Louis A. Hirsch, the Honorary President of the congregation, was appointed Chairman of the Anniversary Celebration with Mr. Frank Newburger, Jr., as Chairman of the fund raising committee. Work on this project began in the summer of 1947.

Before the activities were well underway, Rabbi Stern was called to Norfolk, Virginia, and Dr. Fineshriber was left to carry on alone. Among the suggestions for the celebration was one made by President Stern that a service be held at Town Hall, open to all unaffiliated Jews at no cost. This suggestion met with ready acceptance and Dr. Abraham Cronbach of the Hebrew Union College was engaged to alternate with Dr. Fineshriber in conducting services at Town Hall and in the Temple. These services were held with singular success. The attendance was excellent and the services beautiful. Another change in the official family of Keneseth Israel had taken

<sup>1</sup>The merger did not take place but a joint branch religious school was established in Elkins Park on property purchased by the two congregations.

## CONSOLIDATION AND PROGRESS

place shortly before the holydays. Dr. Freed had resigned as organist and choir director for reasons of health and Dr. Alexander McCurdy, Professor of Organ at the Curtis Institute, became the organist and choir director.

For many years it had been the custom, inaugurated by Dr. Fineshriber, for the Rabbis to receive members of the congregation at Dr. Fineshriber's home on Rosh Hashonah afternoon. In celebration of the Anniversary, it was decided to have a large reception at the Temple on that afternoon so that all might attend. This reception was held at the Temple on September 15th. Arrangements were in charge of a committee headed by Mrs. Kurt Blum, President of the Sisterhood.

Coincident with the 100th Anniversary of the congregation occurred the 35th Anniversary of the Sisterhood and the 25th Anniversary of the Men's Club. They were both celebrated on October 13, 1947; the Sisterhood in the afternoon with a luncheon at which Dr. Fineshriber spoke and honor was paid to those members who had been charter members of the organization thirty-five years before. The Men's Club in the evening honored the past Presidents of the Club.

October 19th saw a reunion of all the confirmation classes held at the Y. M. H. A. and attended by many confirmants from out of town and others who because of marriage were members of other congregations.

A series of Friday evening services were arranged to which prominent Rabbis were invited as speakers and all of the former Rabbis were invited. The program because of its historical value, is set forth below.

October 10, 1947, Dr. Louis Binstock of Chicago.

October 17, 1947, Rabbi Joseph Klein of Brooklyn and Rabbi Malcolm Stern of Norfolk.

October 24, 1947, Dr. Fineshriber dedicated a memorial plaque to those who died in the second World War. This was donated by the Men's Club and Carroll Binswanger, President of the Men's Club and Captain Herbert Sobel, a past President of the Club participated in the dedication.

October 31, 1947, Dr. Maurice N. Eisendrath, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

November 7, 1947, Dr. Solomon B. Freehof of Pittsburgh.

November 14, 1947, Dr. James G. Heller of Cincinnati.

## HISTORY OF KENESETH ISRAEL

November 21, 1947, Dr. Daniel Poling of the Baptist Temple of Philadelphia.

November 28, 1947, Dr. Abraham J. Feldman of Hartford, Connecticut.

December 5, 1947, Dr. Nelson Glueck, President of the Hebrew Union College.

December 12, 1947, Dr. Jonah B. Wise of New York.

December 26, 1947, Dr. Julian Feibelman of New Orleans.

January 16, 1948, Rabbi Samuel Cook, Youth Director of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

At the Friday night service held on December 5, 1947, the Sisterhood presented to the congregation a portrait of Dr. Fineshriber painted by Harry Moskowitz. The presentation speech was made by Mrs. Kurt Blum, President of the Sisterhood. This completed the collection of portraits of the Rabbis which had been begun in 1889.

During the course of the celebration on December 1, 1947, the congregation secured the services as Assistant of Rabbi Myron Silverman, formerly Rabbi in Birmingham, Alabama, and Hamilton, Ohio, and a chaplain in the Army during the war.

The success of the celebration of the 100th Anniversary was due in large measure to the devoted efforts of the committee headed by Mr. Hirsch. Particular mention should be made of the work of Edward L. Frater who acted as Executive Secretary of the committee and coordinated the efforts of the numerous sub-committees working on the celebration. Much of the spirit which infused the work of the many committee members was engendered by the leadership of President Stern and Dr. Fineshriber.

The highlight of the celebration was the annual dinner held at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel on Saturday evening, December 6, 1947. Mr. Louis A. Hirsch, as Chairman of the 100th Anniversary celebration, presided. At this dinner, Mr. Frank Newburger, Jr., as chairman of the fund raising committee, presented to the congregation a check for over \$70,000, the amount collected thus far for the 100th Anniversary fund. Hon. James H. Duff, Governor of Pennsylvania, delivered an address and the centenary address was delivered by Hon. Horace Stern, Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and a member of the Board of Directors of Keneseth Israel.

## CONSOLIDATION AND PROGRESS

President Stern read a resolution which was presented to Dr. Fineshriber:

"Whereas, Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel is now celebrating its One Hundredth Anniversary, and

Whereas, its outstanding record of service to the community has been pre-eminently due to the devotion and unusual ability of its spiritual leaders; and

Whereas, Dr. William H. Fineshriber, as Rabbi of the Congregation, has added brilliance and luster to its history and the congregation desires to recognize in some appropriate fashion its appreciation of his services of nearly twenty-five years as well as to the community at large as to the congregation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that it is the fervent hope and prayer of the congregation that Dr. Fineshriber may long continue to serve as its Rabbi,

Further Resolved, that whenever in the fullness of time Dr. Fineshriber shall cease active service as Rabbi, he shall become Rabbi Emeritus for life and shall receive in that capacity an honorarium of not less than Ten Thousand Dollars per year."

Dr. Fineshriber, in accepting the resolution, paid tribute to the part played by laymen in the advancement of Reform Judaism.

The closing words of Judge Stern in his centenary address are appropriate to sum up the spirit of the meeting, nay the spirit which animated the whole celebration of the Anniversary, not to mention the spirit which had always motivated Keneseth Israel.

"Yes, my friends, for Jews especially, religion is vital and so the need for Keneseth Israel, as indeed for all synagogues and churches, goes steadily on and will continue throughout the ages. I say synagogues and churches because, while the individual may mediate and commune with God in private, it is in collective worship and organization that religion finds its most effective expression. Members of Keneseth Israel, let us then, with pride in our history, face hopefully the future happy that we, blessed with the heritage of a free and noble faith, are able to pursue its sublime teachings in a free and glorious land. Let us prove ourselves worthy for our forefathers, who founded this congregation, meeting the problems of our day as they in theirs, while remembering always that:

## HISTORY OF KENESETH ISRAEL

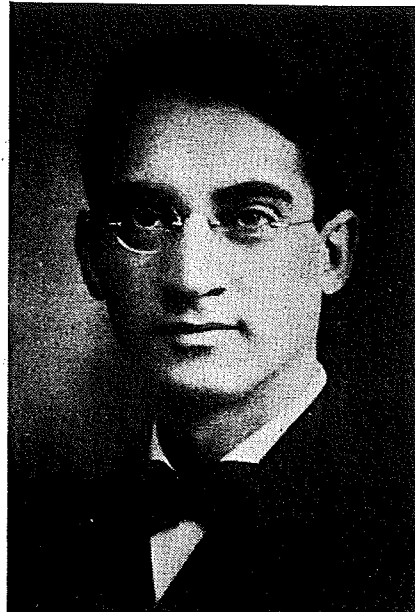
New occasions teach new duties; time makes  
ancient good uncouth;  
They must upward still and onward, who would  
keep abreast of truth.  
So before us gleam her campfires; we, ourselves,  
must Pilgrims be,  
Launch our Mayflower and steer boldly through  
the dark and wintry sea,  
Nor attempt the future's portals with the past's  
blood-rusted key.' "

ASSISTANT RABBIS



HENRY M. FISHER

1902 - 1904



ELI MAYER

1904 - 1906



ISSAAC LANDMAN

1906 - 1916



JAMES G. HELLER

1916 - 1920





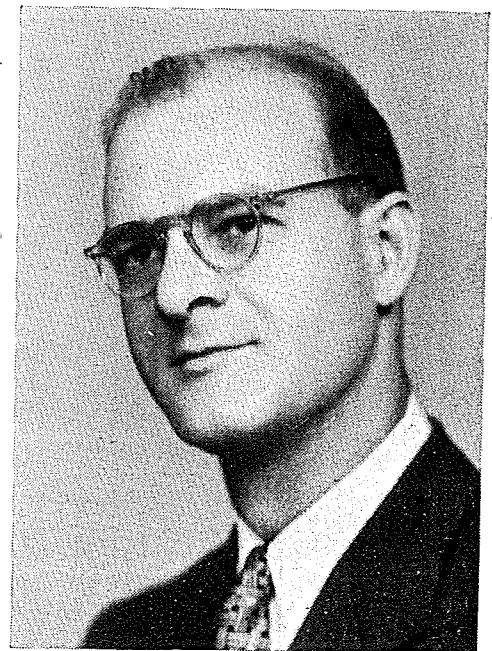
ABRAHAM J. FELDMAN  
1920 - 1925



JULIAN B. FEIBELMAN  
1926 - 1936



SAMUEL COOK  
1937 - 1940



JOSEPH KLEIN  
1940 - 1946



MALCOLM H. STERN

1941 - 1947



MYRON SILVERMAN

1947 - 1949



REVEREND WILLIAM ARMHOLD

Reader 1865 - 1924



DR. BERTRAM W. KORN

Rabbi 1949

As THIS book goes to press, our congregation has just called to its pulpit a new, young, forceful Rabbi, successor to Dr. Fineshriber. Dr. Korn is a native Philadelphian and was educated, Bar Mitzvahed and confirmed in our religious school during Dr. Fineshriber's tenure. He was graduated from the University of Cincinnati in 1939 and ordained as Rabbi at the Hebrew Union College in 1943.

Upon ordination, he was called to the Government Street Temple in Mobile, Alabama, where he served for fifteen months, until volunteering for service with the Navy in 1944. After tours of duty as a chaplain both in this country and in China with the Marine Corps, he was separated from active duty with the rank of Lieutenant (s.g.) in September 1946. Thereafter, Dr. Korn returned to Hebrew Union College for post-graduate study as the Ella H. Philipson Fellow in American Jewish History.

In 1948, he was appointed Assistant to the President of Hebrew Union College and Assistant Professor of American Jewish History. He has written a number of scholarly treatises on Jewish life and history in the United States and his first book, "American Jewry and The Civil War" will be published next year by the Jewish Publication Society. The Hebrew Union College conferred the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Letters upon Dr. Korn in June of 1949.

Keneseth Israel has already been tremendously impressed by its dynamic and eloquent new leader, and we bespeak for him a long, happy and auspicious career in its venerable and distinguished pulpit.

## A MESSAGE FROM DR. KORN

CONFRONTED by the inscrutable immensity of God's timelessness, the Psalmist pained in awe-stricken words:

"A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is passed!" When those measured phrases were sung in the beautiful Temple on Mount Zion, Israel's monotheistic faith was only a thousand years old. That thousand years of Israel's pilgrimage from Ur of the Chaldees to Palestine were, the Psalmist believed, only a brief moment in the sight of God.

I am penning these words after only eight months as Rabbi of our Congregation. These few months have only been—to use a rabbinic metaphor—the blink of an eyelash, viewed in the light of our Congregation's history, so ably presented in this anniversary volume. And yet the whole existence of Keneseth Israel itself has only been a moment in the long millennial drama of the Jewish people.

How infinitesimally minute is all of this, measured by God's limitless perspective! How humble must we feel when we compare the few decades of our institutional life even with the span of years since 1654, when Jews first came to these unknown, untried shores, or with the lifetime of the synagogues of Central Europe, so ruthlessly destroyed by the master Haman of all time—let alone with the length of Israel's odyssey in its entirety. Ours has indeed been only a raindrop in the stream of Israel's existence.

Another poet, however, spoke just as truly when he said:

*"We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;  
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.  
We should count time by heart-throbs . . ."*

If we meditate on the *nature* of Keneseth Israel's lifetime, rather than its "time passed by," we grasp more of its significance.

No book can ever really reveal the essence of a congregation's role, or the effectiveness of its mission. Day after day, for over a century, troubled hearts have come to our rabbis for solace and guidance and encouragement. Who can tell how many were saved from hopelessness because our rabbis were men of insight and vision? Or who can measure the intangible renewal which countless thousands drew from inspired sermons delivered in our sanctuary, or from the hymns they sang, or the prayers which healed their

## HISTORY OF KENESETH ISRAEL

aching spirits? Who can enumerate the tears shed in our midst; or the peals of children's laughter that echoed through our halls; or the firm hand-clasps which cemented friendship at Keneseth Israel? These must indeed be the measure of the worth and achievement of Keneseth Israel.

I have been asked to close this volume with a "glance towards the future." What can that "glance" be but a reaffirmation of the past of our congregation? And beyond our congregation's years, the centuries of Jewish life in Europe, and beyond that, back to the ancient days in Palestine, to Jerusalem and Sinai's height. . . . In order to fulfill its mission in our lives and our children's, Keneseth Israel must serve as Judaism itself has always served: as a beacon of light and a fountain of living waters, a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, a goad in time of prosperity and a fortress in days of painful adversity.

Let us make every day of every year a masterpiece long to be remembered, because it is transfigured with the consciousness of the presence of the living God. Let us infuse every moment of our second century with unforgettable searching and yearning for Him, with reverence for His ways, and with determination to accept His yoke upon our shoulders.

May God be with us and within us during the coming years. With His blessing we shall succeed in adding many heart-beats to the pulsating story of our faith.

April 20, 1950

# OFFICERS OF THE CONGREGATION

1947

DR. WILLIAM H. FINESHRIBER  
*Chief Rabbi*

MYRON SILVERMAN  
*Assistant Rabbi*

LOUIS A. HIRSCH  
*Honorary President*

HARRY I. STERN  
*President*

✓ LAURENCE L. ANCKER  
*Vice-President*

LESTER S. HECHT  
*Secretary*

HERMAN E. GREEN  
*Treasurer*

MATHILDE BELFIELD, *Recording Secretary*

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| Harry B. Berk             | Lewis Isenberg     | Myer Simon           |
| ✓ Mrs. Daniel S. Bernheim | Maurice Jacobs     | Herbert R. Sobel     |
| Richard J. Bowers         | Norman J. Kalcheim | Leon I. Stein        |
| Sylvan W. Drucker         | Abraham B. Kehr    | Harry I. Stern       |
| Edward H. Cushman         | Sidney Neumann     | Howard E. Stern      |
| Herman E. Green           | Samuel Paley       | Mrs. Lafayette Stern |
| Edwin A. Fleisher         | Kurt Peiser        | Henry B. Swaab       |
| Edward L. Frater          | Isadore Sabel      | David L. Ullman      |

# HISTORY OF KENESETH ISRAEL

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| Ellis A. Gimbel      | Albert S. Marks      |
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| Lester S. Hecht      | Clarence L. Meyers   |
| Leo H. Heimerdinger  | Leon Rosenbaum       |
| Louis A. Hirsch      | Lessing J. Rosenwald |
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| Judge Joseph L. Kun  | Jerome J. Rothschild |
| Dr. Morton Langsfeld | Edwin H. Silverman   |
| Moses Lieberman      | Justice Horace Stern |
|                      | Samuel Stern         |

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CARROLL G. BINSWANGER, *President of the Men's Club*  
BERTRAM BENNETT, *President, Parent-Teacher Association*  
JEROME ADLER, *President, TKIYA*  
CHARLES GOTTESMAN, *President, Alumni*

IN APPRECIATION OF THOSE NOBLE MEN WHO SO ABLY SERVED THIS CONGREGATION AS PRESIDENT

1847-1947

|         |                 |           |                  |
|---------|-----------------|-----------|------------------|
| 1847-48 | Julius Stern    | 1882-83   | S. Silberman     |
| 1848-50 | A. Aronheimer   | 1883-91   | David Klein      |
| 1850-52 | L. Bernheimer   | 1891-92   | M. C. Hirsch     |
| 1852-54 | Julius Stern    | 1892-98   | Philip Lewin     |
| 1854-55 | L. Bernheimer   | 1898-1903 | Daniel Merz      |
| 1855-56 | Julius Stern    | 1903-22   | Alfred M. Klein  |
| 1856-61 | Adolph Klopfer  | 1922-38   | Jos. H. Hagedorn |
| 1861-63 | Abraham Kaufman | 1938-41   | Louis A. Hirsch  |
| 1863-73 | S. Silberman    | 1941-     | Harry I. Stern   |
| 1873-82 | B. H. Feustmann |           |                  |

NOTE: Harry I. Stern served as president until December of 1948 at which time Louis Goldsmith was elected president of the Congregation. Mr. Goldsmith was re-elected at the annual meeting in December of 1949.

TRIBUTE

FROM ITS FOUNDATION, CONGREGATION KENESETH ISRAEL HAS HAD AS ITS PROUD BOAST INSPIRED, SPIRITUAL LEADERS, WHO HAVE FOSTERED ITS IDEALS, AND GUIDED IT WITH TRUE PURPOSE.

WE HERE GRATEFULLY INSCRIBE THE NAMES OF:

RABBIS

1847-1947

|                            |       |           |
|----------------------------|-------|-----------|
| B. H. Gotthelf             | ..... | 1847-1851 |
| L. Naumburg                | ..... | 1851-1858 |
| Dr. S. Deutsch             | ..... | 1858-1861 |
| Dr. David Einhorn          | ..... | 1861-1866 |
| Dr. Samuel Hirsch          | ..... | 1866-1886 |
| Dr. Joseph Krauskopf       | ..... | 1887-1923 |
| Dr. J. Leonard Levy        | ..... | 1893-1901 |
| Dr. William H. Fineshriber | ..... | 1924-     |



# HISTORY OF KENESETH ISRAEL

## ASSISTANT RABBIS

|                           |           |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Henry M. Fisher .....     | 1902-1904 |
| Eli Mayer .....           | 1904-1906 |
| Isaac Landman .....       | 1906-1916 |
| James G. Heller .....     | 1916-1920 |
| Abraham J. Feldman .....  | 1920-1925 |
| Julian B. Feibelman ..... | 1926-1936 |
| Samuel Cook .....         | 1937-1940 |
| Joseph Klein .....        | 1940-1946 |
| Malcolm H. Stern .....    | 1941-1947 |
| Myron Silverman .....     | 1947-     |

## READERS

|                       |           |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| B. H. Gotthelf .....  | 1847-1849 |
| M. Sternheimer .....  | 1849-1850 |
| A. Sulzberger .....   | 1850-1851 |
| L. Naumburg .....     | 1851-1859 |
| J. Salinger .....     | 1860-1865 |
| William Armhold ..... | 1865-1924 |