Collection # M 0804 BV 3496–3502 OMB 0096

CONGREGATION BETH-EL ZEDECK RECORDS, 1899–2002

Collection Information

Historical Sketch

Scope and Content Note

Series Contents

Cataloging Information

Processed by

Paul Brockman 18 May 2004

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department William Henry Smith Memorial Library Indiana Historical Society 450 West Ohio Street Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	18 document cases; 7 bound volumes; 1 oversize box; 2 boxes of photographs; 2 bins of slides; 3 video cassettes; 1 reel film; 4 artifacts
COLLECTION DATES:	1899–2002
PROVENANCE:	Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Indianapolis, Indiana, 12 March

	2003
RESTRICTIONS:	None
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ALTERNATE FORMATS:	
RELATED HOLDINGS:	Indiana Jewish Historical Society Collection (M 0743); Jewish Community Center (M 0349); Jewish Welfare Federation of Indianapolis (M 0463)
ACCESSION NUMBER:	2003.0279
NOTES:	

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Congregation Beth-El Zedeck was formed in March 1927 from the merger of two conservative congregations: Beth-El, formed in 1915 in the area of 16th and Illinois streets in Indianapolis, and Congregation Ohev Zedeck, a community from the center of the city made up of Hungarian immigrants. In 1925 Beth-El built a new synagogue designed by the firm of Vonnegut and Bohn which was located at 34th and Ruckle Streets. The merged congregations used this new facility until 1958.

Rabbi Milton Steinberg (1903–50) served as the congregation's first spiritual leader and was instrumental in defining left-wing Conservative Judaism in Indianapolis. Jack A. Goodman was the congregation's first president, a position he had held with Beth-El. Cantor Myro Glass joined the congregation at the same time as Rabbi Steinberg and remained in that position for twenty-eight years. Mrs. Jack Goodman was the first Sisterhood president in 1928 and a Men's Club was formed in 1933 with Max Plesser as president.

Rabbi Steinberg left Beth-El Zedeck for the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City in 1933 and he was succeeded by Rabbi Elias Charry. During the 1930s the congregation grew to over 300 families and 200 religious school attendees. Rabbi Charry remained in his position as spiritual director until 1942 when he left to become head of the Germantown, Pennsylvania, Jewish Center and was succeeded by Rabbi Israel Chodos. Four years later Rabbi Chodos was replaced by Rabbi William P. Greenfeld. Under Rabbi Greenfeld's direction the congregation more than doubled in size, the religious school outgrew its structure, and a number of liberal changes were made such as the introduction of an organ for services.

On 31 August 1958 the congregation moved to its new \$1.25 million building on the city's then far north side at 65th Street and Spring Mill Road. Rabbi Greenfeld died in 1960 and the congregation selected Rabbi Sidney Steinman as its leader. Since 1977 Rabbis Dennis C. and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (husband and wife) have directed the congregation's spiritual matters. Both Sassos were graduates of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and continued the congregation's liberal direction, which is associated with both the Conservative and Reconstructionist movements.

Sources:

Endelman, Judith. *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. (General Collection F534.I55 E5 1984)

50th Anniversary Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, 1978. Information in collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The records comprise the operations and activities of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, its members, and related organizations, 1899–2002. The collection is divided into ten series.

Series 1 contains minutes, papers, and programs. Among the items are by-laws and name-change petition from 1927; by-law changes and amendments, 1932–43; meeting minutes, 1936–71; and historical correspondence and papers, 1899–1902. Also included are programs and activities held by the congregation such as the new temple dedication, 1958; the congregation's 50th and 65th anniversaries, 1977 and 1992; the installation and anniversaries of the Rabbis Sasso, 1977–2002; the Kesher Program, 1980s; and the Roots and Wings fundraising program, 1996–99.

Series 2 deals with the newsletters and other publications produced by Beth-El Zedeck. There is one copy of *The Scroll* from 1928 and a nearly complete set of *Beth-El Speaks* and its successor title, *Besamim*, from August 1949 through October 1991.

Series 3 contains newspaper articles and printed items, including a scrapbook of Jewish Community History, 1941–1942, and the 29 August 1958 Temple Dedication Issue of the *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*. Most of the information in this series involves events and people in the Jewish community.

Series 4 includes financial and building records mostly involving the property and mortgage records from the current facility on Spring Mill Road from 1962 and 1975. There is also some general financial correspondence from 1929–1960.

Series 5 deals with the congregation's membership records and lists, 1920s–2001. Among the items in this series is a brochure from the 1920s and lists/directories from 1932 and 1965–2001.

Series 6 contains records pertaining to Beth-El Cemetery, 1940s–1980s. These records include burial permits, ledgers, and accounts listing the location of individual burial sites.

Series 7 comprises the correspondence and papers of Cantor Robert Zalkin who assumed the congregation's musical direction in 1961. His correspondence dates from 1961–1972 and primarily involves his role as the congregation's musical director.

Series 8 through 10 contain the records of the Beth-El Zedeck Sisterhood, 1950–2002. Series 8 is made up of operational records such as board minutes, 1973–2001; membership records, 1961–1998; and the secretary's records, 1986–1992. Series 9 involves the programs and conference activities, 1962–2002. These include fund-raising activities, public service programs, and their connection with Women's League for Conservative Judaism. Series 10 comprises the organization's financial records. These records include budgets from 1967–1998 and audit reports from 1986–1997.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Minutes, Papers, and Programs, 1899–2002

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Henry Freeman Correspondence and Papers, 1899– 1915	Box 1, Folder 1
By-Laws, 1927 (?)	Box 1, Folder 2
Petition to Change Name, 23 June 1927	Box 1, Folder 3
Amended By-Laws, 1932	Box 1, Folder 4
Indiana State Senate Bill No. 90, Religious Organization Incorporation, Feb. 1943	Box 1, Folder 5
By-Laws and Amendments, 24 March 1943	Box 1, Folder 6
Correspondence, 1929–34	Box 1, Folder 7
Gov. McNutt Proclamation, Palestine Day, 29 Dec. 1934	Box 1, Folder 8
Lazure Goodman Correspondence, 1943	Box 1, Folder 9
Minutes, JanOct. 1936	Box 1, Folder 10
Minutes, Dec. 1936–Dec. 1938	Box 1, Folder 11
Minutes, 1939	Box 1, Folder 12
Exec. Comm. Minutes, Aug. 1964–May 1971	Box 1, Folder 13
Annual Report, Oct. 1942	Box 1, Folder 14
History of Jews in Indiana, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 15
New Temple Construction, 1957–58	Box 1, Folder 16
Building Construction and Dedication Photographs, Torah Presidents, 1957–58	Visual Collections: Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
Building Construction and Dedication Photographs, 1957–58	Visual Collections: Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
Printing plate used for publication–Beth-El Zedeck, n.d.	Artifacts: 2003.0279
Printing plate used for publication– Ark and Menorah, n.d.	Artifacts: 2003.0279
History Used for Dedication Booklet, 1958	Box 1, Folder 17
Program, Temple Dedication, 31 Aug. 1958	Box 1, Folder 18
History of Indianapolis Jewish Community, 1966	Box 1, Folder 19

Office Staff, June 1973	Visual Collections: 35 mm. slides, Box 1, Bin 1
50 th Anniversary Book, 1978	Box 1, Folder 20
Kaufman-Schuchman Chapel Dedication, 13 Dec. 1985	Box 1, Folder 21
Kaufaman-Schuchman Chapel Groundbreaking Photographs, 1985	Visual Collections: Photographs, Box 1, Folder 3
Kaufman-Schuchman Chapel Photographs, 1985	Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
"Memories and Visions," 65 th Anniversary Program, 30 Oct. 1992	Box 1, Folder 22
Pen and Ink Sketch, Collage of Beth-El Zedeck by K. P. Singh, 2000	OMB 0096, Folder 1
Correspondence, 1942	Box 2, Folder 1
Correspondence, 2002	Box 2, Folder 2
Radio Addresses, 1949–57	Box 2, Folder 3
Julian Freeman Europe/Israel Travel Diary, Sept. 1951	Box 2, Folder 4
Rabbis Sasso Installation Service, 30 Nov. 1977	Box 2, Folder 5
Rabbis Sasso, 10 th Anniversary, Jan. 1988	Box 2, Folder 6
Rabbis Sasso, 18 th Anniversary, Nov. 1995	Box 2, Folder 7
Rabbis Sasso, 25 th Anniversary, 2002	Box 2, Folder 8
VHS Videocassette: Rabbis Dennis and Sandy Sasso: 25 Years with Congregation Beth-El Zedeck	Box 19
Responsive Readings and Hymns, 1932	Box 2, Folder 9
High Holy Days Sermons, 1995–2002	Box 2, Folder 10
Prayers, 1997, 2000	Box 2, Folder 11
Kesher Programs, 1980s (1 of 4)	Box 2, Folder 12
Kesher Programs, 1980s (2 of 4)	Box 2, Folder 13
Kesher Programs, 1980s (3 of 4)	Box 2, Folder 14

Kesher Programs, 1980s (4 of 4)	Box 2, Folder 15
Confirmation Services, 12 June 1932	Box 2, Folder 16
Bethelite, Confirmation Issues, 1950–51; Yearbook, 1953	Box 2, Folder 17
Confirmation Class Trip to New York City, 5–9 March 1980 (1 of 2)	Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
Confirmation Class Trip to New York City, 5–9 March 1980 (2 of 2)	Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 3
High School Trip to Washington, D. C. Photographs, Feb. 1994 (1 of 3)	Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 4
High School Trip to Washington, D. C. Photographs, Feb. 1994 (2 of 3)	Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 5
High School trip to Washington D. C., Photographs, Feb. 1994 (3 of 3)	Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 6
Chodos, Why Beth-El Needs a School of its Own," 1945	Box 2, Folder 18
Religious School Photographs, 1950s–70s (1 of 2)	Visual Collections: Photographs, Box 1, Folder 4
Religious School Photographs, 1950s–70s (2 of 2)	Visual Collections: Photographs, Box 1, Folder 5
Religious School Photographs, 1987, n.d.	Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 7
Sukkot Photographs, 1993	Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 8
ECE Preschool Photographs, 1997; 2001	Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 9
Washington Birthday Revue and Dance Program, 23 Feb. 1941	Box 2, Folder 19
Jerusalem Conference, Sept. 1950 (1 of 2)	Box 2, Folder 20

Jerusalem Conference, Sept. 1950 (2 of 2)

Music Festivals, 1957–58

Choir Photographs, 1985

Choir Photographs, n.d.

Holiday Dance Program, 4 Dec. 1960

50th Anniversary Dinner Dance, 1977

VHS Videocassette: Men's Bowling Club, 1954 (This has been transferred onto VHS from the reel film in the collection.)

Men's Club Photographs, n.d.

Men's Club Kalleh Photographs, 31 Jan-2 Feb. 1975

U. S. Army Certificate of Recognition, 30 April 1962

Adult Education, 1978–79

Adult Education Programs, 1986–2000

Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, Namings and Weddings, 1980s–1990s

Beth-El Zedeck Naming T-shirt (toddler size)

Youth-Size Yarmulkes (2)

Building Slides, June 1987

"Me and My Schul" (Musical Comedy), Dec. 1987

Programs and Publications, 1988–97

"A Night of Nachas," 13 Nov. 1993

Purim Photographs, March 1994

Box 3, Folder 1

Box 3, Folder 2

Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 10

Visual Collections: Photographs, Box 1, Folder 6

Box 3, Folder 3

Box 3, Folder 4

Box 19

Visual Collections: Photographs, Box 1, Folder 7

Visual Collections: Photographs, Box 1, Folder 8

Box 3, Folder 5

Box 3, Folder 6

Box 3, Folder 7

Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 11

Artifacts: 2003.0279

Artifacts: 2003.0279

Visual Collections: 35 mm. Slides, Box 1, Bin 2

Box 3, Folder 8

Box 3, Folder 9

Box 3, Folder 10

Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 12 Roots and Wings Program, 1996–99 (1 of 3)

Roots and Wings Program, 1996–99 (2 of 3)

Roots and Wings Program, 1996–99 (3 of 3)

Roots and Wings Groundbreaking Photographs, 1998

Roots and Wings Rededication Gala Photographs, 16 October 1999 (1 of 3)

Roots and Wings Rededication Gala Photographs, 16 October 1999 (2 of 3)

Roots and Wings Rededication Gala Photographs, 16 October 1999 (3 of 3)

Rededication Journal Photographs, 16 October 1999

Videotape of Roots and Wings Program, 2000

Programs and Publications, 1997–2002

Poster for Rabbi Bob Alper Show at Beth-El Zedeck, 10 Dec. ?

Cabaret/Silent Auction, 4 Nov. 2000

Library Book Labels, n.d.

Beth-El Zedeck Usher Badge and Ribbon

Services and Activities Photographs, 1970s-80s

General Photographs, 1987

Celebration Photographs, n.d.

General Photographs, n.d.

General Photographs, Youth Celebrations, n.d.

Box 3, Folder 11

Box 3, Folder 12

Box 3, Folder 13

Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 13

Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 14

Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 15

Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 16

Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 17

Box 19

Box 3, Folder 14

OMB 0096, Folder 2

Box 3, Folder 15

Box 3, Folder 16

Artifacts: 2003.0297

Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 18

Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 19

Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 20

Visual Collections: Photographs, Box 1, Folder 9

Visual Collections:

Photographs, Box 1, Folder 10

Pre-School Programs, n.d.

Box 3, Folder 17

Series 2: Newsletters and Related Publications, 1928–1992

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Scroll (Newsletter), 14 Sept. 1928	Box 4, Folder 1
Beth-El Speaks, Aug. 1949–Dec. 1950	Box 4, Folder 2
Beth-El Speaks, Dec. 1950–June 1951	Box 4, Folder 3
Beth-El Speaks and Clarion, 1951–52	BV 3496
Beth-El Speaks and Clarion, 1952–53	BV 3497
Beth-El Speaks, 1953–55	BV 3498
Beth-El Speaks, 1955–56	BV 3499
Beth-El Speaks, 1956–57	BV 3500
Beth-El Speaks, 1957–58	BV 3501
Beth-El Speaks, 1958–59	BV 3502
Beth-El Speaks, Mid-Summer, 1959	Box 4, Folder 4
Beth-El Speaks, 1966–69	Box 4, Folder 5
Beth-El Speaks, 1969–73	Box 4, Folder 6
Beth-El Speaks, Aug. 1974–June 1975	Box 4, Folder 7
Beth-El Speaks, Aug. 1975–June 1976	Box 4, Folder 8
Beth-El Speaks, July 1976–June 1977	Box 4, Folder 9
Beth-El Speaks, July 1977–June 1978	Box 4, Folder 10
Beth-El Speaks, July 1978–June 1979	Box 4, Folder 11
Beth-El Speaks, Aug. 1979–June 1980	Box 4, Folder 12
Beth-El Speaks, Aug. 1980–May 1981	Box 4, Folder 13
Beth-El Speaks, July 1981–June 1982	Box 4, Folder 14
Beth-El Speaks, July 1982–July 1983	Box 5, Folder 1
Beth-El Speaks, July 1983–Aug. 1984	Box 5, Folder 2
Beth-El Speaks, Sept. 1986; Bulletin, Oct. 1986-	Box 5, Folder 3

Feb. 1987; Besamim, March 1986-Aug. 1987	
Besamim, Aug. 1987-Aug. 1988	Box 5, Folder 4
Besamim, Aug. 1988-Sept. 1989	Box 5, Folder 5
Besamim, Sept. 1989-Oct. 1990	Box 5, Folder 6
Besamim, Oct. 1990-Oct. 1991; May 1992	Box 5, Folder 7

Series 3: Newspaper Articles and Printed Items, 1941–2002

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Scrapbook, Jewish Community History, 1941–42	Box 6, Folder 1
Scrapbook, 1980–83	OMB 0096, Folder 3
Jewish Post and Opinion, 18 July 1958	Box 6, Folder 2
Indiana Jewish Chronicle, 29 Aug. 1958 (Temple Dedication Issue)	Box 6, Folder 3
Newspaper Articles, 1965; 1980–83	Box 6, Folder 4
Newspaper Articles, 1980–83	OMB 0096, Folder 4
Newspaper Articles, 1973, n.d.	Box 6, Folder 5
Newspaper Articles and Programs, 1981-89 and n.d.	Box 6, Folder 6
Newspaper Articles, 1985	Box 6, Folder 7
Newspaper Articles, 1986	Box 6, Folder 8
Newspaper Articles, 1987–89	Box 6, Folder 9
Newspaper Articles, 1992–99	Box 6, Folder 10
Indianapolis Star, "New Jewish Community Campus," 19 Sept. 1997	Box 6, Folder 11
Newspaper Articles, 2000–02	Box 6, Folder 12
Newspaper Articles, n.d.	Box 6, Folder 13
Magazine Articles, 1998	Box 6, Folder 14

Series 4: Financial and Building Records, 1929–1975

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Financial Correspondence, 1929–60	Box 7, Folder 1
Non-Profit Report, 1957	Box 7, Folder 2

Financial Contributions Forms, n.d.	Box 7, Folder 3
Standard Life Insurance Promissory Note, 1962	Box 7, Folder 4
Property Records, 1962	Box 7, Folder 5
Mortgage, 1962	Box 7, Folder 6
Mortgage Release, 1975	Box 7, Folder 7
Building Facilities Use Form, n.d.	Box 7, Folder 8

Series 5: Membership Records and Lists, 1920s–2001

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Membership Brochure, ca. 1920s	Box 7, Folder 9
Member Lists, 1932, n.d.	Box 7, Folder 10
Membership Directory, 1965–66	Box 7, Folder 11
Membership Directory, 1977	Box 7, Folder 12
Membership Packet, ca. 1980s	Box 7, Folder 13
Membership, 1980, A–J	Box 7, Folder 14
Membership, 1980, K–Z	Box 7, Folder 15
Membership, 1980, Officers, Updates, New Members	Box 7, Folder 16
Membership Directory, 1992–93	Box 7, Folder 17
Guide Book and Directory, 1996–97	Box 7, Folder 18
Guide Book and Directory, 1998–99	Box 7, Folder 19
Guide Book and Directory, 2000-01	Box 7, Folder 20
Accounts, Member Dues, 1924–36 (1 of 8)	Box 8, Folder 1
Accounts, Member Dues, 1924–36 (2 of 8)	Box 8, Folder 2
Accounts, Member Dues, 1924–36 (3 of 8)	Box 8, Folder 3
Accounts, Member Dues, 1924–36 (4 of 8)	Box 8, Folder 4
Accounts, Member Dues, 1924–36 (5 of 8)	Box 8, Folder 5
Accounts, Member Dues, 1924–36 (6 of 8)	Box 8, Folder 6
Accounts, Member Dues, 1924–36 (7 of 8)	Box 8, Folder 7

Accounts, Member Dues, 1924–36 (8 of 8)	Box 8, Folder 8
Member Accounts, 1920s	Box 8, Folder 9
Member Accounts, 1930s-50s, Abels-Bassler	Box 8, Folder 10
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Becker–Bloom	Box 8, Folder 11
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Bluestein–Cohan	Box 8, Folder 12
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Cohen–Dobrow	Box 9, Folder 1
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Doborwitz–Dorman	Box 9, Folder 2
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Dorman–Falender	Box 9, Folder 3
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Farb–Garber	Box 9, Folder 4
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Garfield–Goldberg, Jack	Box 9, Folder 5
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Goldberg, Joseph– Greenberg	Box 9, Folder 6
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Greenhut–Hollander	Box 9, Folder 7
Member Accounts, 1930s-50s, Hornstein-Kaplan	Box 9, Folder 8
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Karsch–Klein	Box 9, Folder 9
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Klezmer–Kwitny	Box 9, Folder 10
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Lampel–Levy	Box 9, Folder 11
Member Accounts, 1930s-50s, Lewin-Mark	Box 9, Folder 12
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Marks–Newbauer	Box 10, Folder 1
Member Accounts, 1930s-50s, Ochs-Prince	Box 10, Folder 2
Member Accounts, 1930s-50s, Pritz-Rosenstein	Box 10, Folder 3
Member Accounts, 1930s-50s, Roskin-Sandler	Box 10, Folder 4
Member Accounts, 1930s-50s, Saperstein-Schwartz	Box 10, Folder 5
Member Accounts, 1930s-50s, Segal-Shapiro	Box 10, Folder 6
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Sharff–Solotken	Box 10, Folder 7
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Spilky–Trauting	Box 10, Folder 8
Member Accounts, 1930s-50s, Tross-Weinstein	Box 10, Folder 9
Member Accounts, 1930s-50s, Weisberger-Winston	Box 10, Folder 10
Member Accounts, 1930s–50s, Witoff–Zuckerman	Box 10, Folder 11

Series 6: Cemetery Records, 1940s–1980s

CONTENTS Guide to Traditions of Jewish Funerals, n.d.	CONTAINER Box 11, Folder 1
Burial Permits for Beth-El Cemetery, 1960s–80s (1 of 3)	Box 11, Folder 2
Burial Permits for Beth-El Cemetery, 1960s–80s (2 of 3)	Box 11, Folder 3
Burial Permits for Beth–El Cemetery, 1960s–80s (3 of 3)	Box 11, Folder 4
Beth-El Cemetery Transfer Agreements, 1971–77	Box 11, Folder 5
Beth-El Cemetery, Grave Account Ledger, 1940s– 60s	Box 11, Folder 6
Beth-El Cemetery, Grave Records, 1940s-80s	Box 11, Folder 7
Kelly Street (Cemetery) Fund Correspondence, 1985–88	Box 11, Folder 8
Memoriam Book, n.d.	Box 11, Folder 9

Series 7: Cantor Zalkin Papers, 1961–1972

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Biographical Information Regarding Cantor Zalkin	Box 12, Folder 1
USY Services, 1961	Box 12, Folder 2
Music Committee, 1962	Box 12, Folder 3
Cantor Robert Zalkin Correspondence, 1961–62	Box 12, Folder 4
Music Committee and Letters, 1962–63	Box 12, Folder 5
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "A" 1961–65	Box 12, Folder 6
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "B" 1961–65	Box 12, Folder 7
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "C" 1961–65	Box 12, Folder 8
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "D" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 9
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "E" 1961–65	Box 12, Folder 10
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "F" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 11
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "G" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 12

Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "H" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 13
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "I-J" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 14
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "K" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 15
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "L" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 16
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "M" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 17
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "N" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 18
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "O-P" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 19
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "R" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 20
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "S" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 21
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "T" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 22
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "U-W" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 23
Cantor Zalkin Correspondence, "Y-Z" 1961-65	Box 12, Folder 24
Cantor's Correspondence and Files, 1962–72	Box 12, Folder 25
Cantor Zalkin Open House Thank-You Letters, 1966	Box 12, Folder 26

Series 8: Beth-El Zedeck Sisterhood, Operational Records, 1950–2002

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Board Minutes, 1973–74	Box 13, Folder 1
Board Minutes, 1974–75	Box 13, Folder 2
Board Minutes, 1975–76	Box 13, Folder 3
Board Minutes, 1976–77	Box 13, Folder 4
Board Minutes, 1977–78	Box 13, Folder 5
Board Minutes, 1978–79	Box 13, Folder 6
Board Minutes, 1979–80	Box 13, Folder 7
Board Minutes, 1980–81	Box 13, Folder 8
Board Minutes, 1982–83	Box 13, Folder 9
Board Minutes, Agendas and Correspondence, 1985	Box 13, Folder 10
Board Minutes, Agendas and Correspondence, 1986	Box 13, Folder 11
Board Minutes, 1986–88	Box 13, Folder 12

Board Minutes, June 1986–Nov. 1988	Box 13, Folder 13
Board Minutes, Jan. 1989-Nov. 1991	Box 13, Folder 14
Board Minutes, 1990–91	Box 13, Folder 15
Board Minutes, 1991–92	Box 13, Folder 16
Activities, Correspondence, Minutes, 1991-92	Box 13, Folder 17
Board Minutes, Jan. 1992–Oct. 1994	Box 13, Folder 18
Board Directories, 1992–95	Box 13, Folder 19
Board Minutes, 1993	Box 13, Folder 20
Board Minutes, 1993–94	Box 13, Folder 21
Board Minutes, 1994	Box 14, Folder 1
Board Minutes, JanApril 1995	Box 14, Folder 2
Board Minutes, Feb. 1995–March 1997	Box 14, Folder 3
Board Minutes, 1997–98	Box 14, Folder 4
Board Minutes, 1997	Box 14, Folder 5
Board Minutes/Treasurer's Reports, 1999–2001	Box 14, Folder 6
Board Lists, 1983–86	Box 14, Folder 7
Meetings, Closings and Officer Installation, 1991–97	Box 14, Folder 8
Sisterhood Records, 1950–61	Box 14, Folder 9
Sisterhood Records, 1962–63	Box 14, Folder 10
By-Laws and Related Items, 1982–96	Box 14, Folder 11
By-Laws Revision, 1987	Box 14, Folder 12
By-Laws, History, Membership, 2002	Box 14, Folder 13
Membership Book, 1961–62	Box 14, Folder 14
Directory, 1963-64	Box 14, Folder 15
Membership Book, 1964–65	Box 14, Folder 16
Membership Book, 1966	Box 14, Folder 17
Membership Book, 1969–70	Box 14, Folder 18
Membership Book, 1972–73	Box 14, Folder 19

Membership List, 5 May 1998	OMB 0096, Folder 5
Secretary's Records, 1986–87	Box 15, Folder 1
Secretary's Records, 1989–92	Box 15, Folder 2
Secretary's Records, 1992 (1 of 3)	Box 15, Folder 3
Secretary's Records, 1992 (2 of 3)	Box 15, Folder 4
Secretary's Records, 1992 (3 of 3)	Box 15, Folder 5
Kol Isha (newsletter), 1993–95	Box 15, Folder 6
Kol Isha (newsletter), 1995–98	Box 15, Folder 7
Welcoming Letters, 1982–86	Box 15, Folder 8
Logo, 1980	Box 15, Folder 9
Awards, 1980	Box 15, Folder 10
Awards, 1996, 1999, 2001	Box 15, Folder 11

Series 9: Beth-El Zedeck Sisterhood, Programs and Conferences, 1962–2002

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Braille Class, June 1964	Box 15, Folder 12
Recipe Blanks, 20 Dec. 1970	Box 15, Folder 13
Fundraisers, 1982–83	Box 15, Folder 14
Programs and Meetings, 1986–90	Box 15, Folder 15
Flower Sale, 1987	Box 15, Folder 16
Opening Program, 7 Sept. 1990	Box 15, Folder 17
Programs, 1990–91	Box 15, Folder 18
Gallery of Judaica Sales, 1990–91	Box 15, Folder 19
Programs, 1990–92	Box 15, Folder 20
Programs, 1991	Box 15, Folder 21
Programs, 1991–94	Box 15, Folder 22
"Aids" Program, 14 Oct. 1991	Box 15, Folder 23
Education Reform Program, 11 Nov. 1991	Box 15, Folder 24
Programs, 1992–99	Box 16, Folder 1

Box 16, Folder 2
Box 16, Folder 3
Box 16, Folder 4
Box 16, Folder 5
Box 16, Folder 6
Box 16, Folder 7
Box 16, Folder 8
Box 16, Folder 9
Box 16, Folder 10
Box 16, Folder 11
Box 16, Folder 12
Box 16, Folder 13
Box 16, Folder 14
Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 21
Box 17, Folder 1
Box 17, Folder 2
Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 22
Box 17, Folder 3
Box 17, Folder 4
Box 17, Folder 5
Box 17, Folder 6
Box 17, Folder 7
Box 17, Folder 8
Box 17, Folder 9
Box 17, Folder 10
Visual Collections: Color Photographs,

	Box 1, Folder 23
Community Auction, 2002	Box 17, Folder 11
Cook Book Committee, n.d.	Box 17, Folder 12
Bazaar, n.d.	Box 17, Folder 13
Area Workshop, 1962	Box 17, Folder 14
Women's League for Conservative Judaism, ca. 1990s	Box 17, Folder 15
Conferences and Activities, 1991–93 (1 of 2)	Box 17, Folder 16
Conferences and Activities, 1991–93 (2 of 2)	Box 17, Folder 17

Series 10: Beth-El Zedeck Sisterhood, Financial Records, 1967–1999

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Budgets, 1967–68	Box 18, Folder 1
Budgets, 1968–72	Box 18, Folder 2
Budgets, 1972–77	Box 18, Folder 3
Budgets, 1978–84	Box 18, Folder 4
Budgets, 1980–98	Box 18, Folder 5
Audit Reports, 1986–87	Box 18, Folder 6
Audit Reports, 1989–90	Box 18, Folder 7
Audit Reports, 1991–92	Box 18, Folder 8
Audit Reports, 1993	Box 18, Folder 9
Audit Reports, 1995	Box 18, Folder 10
Audit Reports, 1996–97	Box 18, Folder 11
Financial Records, 1986–94	Box 18, Folder 12
Reports and Finances, 1996–99	Box 18, Folder 13
Financial Records, 1995–97	Box 18, Folder 14
Programs and Finances, 1997	Box 18, Folder 15
Financial Ledgers, 1994–96 (1 of 2)	Box 18, Folder 16
Financial Ledgers, 1994–96 (2 of 2)	Box 18, Folder 17
Ledger, July 1994–June 1995	OMB 0096, Folder 6

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- 2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
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