



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation records

1923-1991

Sc MG 574

Summary

Creator: Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation (Harlem, New York, N.Y.)

Title: Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation records

Date: 1923-1991

Size: .4 linear feet

Source: Gift, Rabbi Chaim White, 1996

Abstract: The Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation, one of the oldest and largest communities of black Hebrews in the United States, was founded in Harlem in 1919 by Rabbi Wentworth Arthur Matthew (1892-1973). Though this congregation traces its origin to the activities of those who came to New York during the first waves of black migration and immigration, it was in the post World War II years that the community took root. Rabbi Matthew created a number of auxiliary organizations, and today there are seven black synagogues in the downstate New York area that trace their origins directly to Rabbi Matthew and his congregation. The synagogue is located in Harlem. The Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation records consist of several ledgers including a photocopy of a record book listing members' names and addresses, births and deaths (1923-1959), and other membership ledgers providing individual financial records, worship and Hebrew school attendance (1927-1959). The collection ledger lists amounts donated from 1974 to 1991. The collection includes correspondence of Rabbi Matthew regarding dedication of the new synagogue in Harlem (1962) and discussing speaking engagements in the Northeast (1968-1970). There is also a notebook listing members of various committees along with notes about several services held at the synagogue (1948), a golden anniversary program (1966) and news clippings.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation records, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Creator History

The Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation, one of the oldest and largest communities of black Hebrews in the United States, was founded in Harlem in 1919 by Rabbi

Wentworth Arthur Matthew (1892-1973). Though this congregation traces its origin to the activities of those who came to New York during the first waves of black migration and immigration, it was in the post World War II years that the community took root. Rabbi Matthew created a number of auxiliary organizations, and today there are seven black synagogues in the downstate New York area that trace their origins directly to Rabbi Matthew and his congregation. The synagogue is located in Harlem.

Scope and Content Note

The Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation records consist of several ledgers including a photocopy of a record book listing members' names and addresses, births and deaths (1923-1959), and other membership ledgers providing individual financial records, worship and Hebrew school attendance (1927-1959). The collection ledger lists amounts donated from 1974 to 1991. The collection includes correspondence of Rabbi Matthew regarding dedication of the new synagogue in Harlem (1962) and discussing speaking engagements in the Northeast (1968-1970). There is also a notebook listing members of various committees along with notes about several services held at the synagogue (1948), a golden anniversary program (1966) and news clippings.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American Jews -- New York (State) -- New York

African Americans -- Religion

Jewish way of life

Jews -- New York (State) -- New York

Judaism -- 20th century

Judaism -- Customs and practices

Names

Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation (Harlem, New York, N.Y.)

Matthew, Wentworth A. (Wentworth Arthur), 1892-1973