

PROFILE OF RABBI HARRY WILLIAM ETTELSON, PhD
SPIRITUAL LEADER
CONGREGATION CHILDREN OF ISRAEL 1925-1954

Harry William Ettelson was born October 2, 1883, in Mobile, Alabama. He entered the University of Cincinnati in 1900. He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa during his junior year of studies and graduated from Hebrew Union College in 1904.

Rabbi Ettelson served in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and in 1910 went to serve as rabbi in Hartford, Connecticut. While in Hartford he attended Yale University and graduated with a PhD. He then assumed the title of Rabbi, Dr. Ettelson. He also served as rabbi in Philadelphia. In December, 1924, he came to Memphis and lectured as a candidate to serve Congregation Children of Israel, known today as Temple Israel. He was installed as rabbi on April 3, 1925, and served in that capacity until February 26, 1954, when he retired as Rabbi Emeritus. He and his wife settled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He died there November 18, 1975. He is interred at Temple Israel Cemetery in Memphis along with his wife, Nell Schwab Ettelson who died February 25, 1988.

In 1941 Rabbi Ettelson was recognized by Southwestern College (now Rhodes College) in Memphis with an honorary degree as Doctor of Literature. In 1954 Hebrew Union College awarded him an Honorary Doctor of Divinity.

His survivors included his son Harry William (Bill) Ettelson, Jr., Bill's wife and their children.

Included in this profile are two documents that together give a comprehensive overview of Dr. Ettelson's tenure while rabbi of Temple Israel in Memphis. The first is a list of Dr. Ettelson's achievements and activities while in the Rabbinate. This list was compiled by Margery Kerstine, Volunteer Archive Administrator, at Temple Israel. Second is a copy of an interview conducted by Dr. Berkley Kalin with Dr. Ettelson on November 30, 1967 in Philadelphia. This interview was made for the Oral History of Memphis State University.