A Finding Aid to the
Joseph L. Fink Papers

Manuscript Collection No. 105
Collection Summary

Title
Joseph L. Fink Papers

Dates
1915-1967

Collection Number
MS-105

Repository
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

Creator
Fink, Joseph Lionel, 1897-1964

Extent
2 linear feet (5 Hollinger boxes)

Language of the Material
English

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch
Joseph Lionel Fink, the only son and fifth child of Rabbi Mendel and Tillie Kagen Finkelstein, was born in Springfield, Ohio, on 12 May 1895. He was raised in Dayton, Ohio. Fink received a B. A. from the University of Cincinnati in 1915, an M.A. from the University of Chicago in 1918 and a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Niagara University in 1919. That same year, he was awarded the rabbinical degree from Hebrew Union College.

Fink’s first pulpit was at the United Hebrew Congregation in Terre Haute, Indiana where he served from 1919 to 1924. While chairman of the Community Chest, he agitated the local Ku Klux Klan chapter who kidnapped him and brought him to their rally. Fink then addressed the rally, calling the masked Klan members cowards. He was released and the Klan wrote a check the following week to the Community Chest for $1800.

In 1924, Fink stopped in Buffalo, New York while on his way to Germany to begin graduate studies. He became the rabbi at Temple Beth Zion and remained there until his retirement in 1958. Fink was the leading Reform Jewish spokesperson for the Buffalo community. From 1930-1956 he had a weekly radio program entitled “The Humanitarian Hour.”

Fink was also a president of the B’nai B’rith lodge and a founder of the local Board of Jewish Education. Fink was also involved in other community affairs. He served as a chaplain to the police and fire departments and as a mediator of civic disputes. Fink was on the board of the University of Buffalo and served on several New York state commissions.

Fink was elected president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1952. Joseph Fink was also one of the founders of the CCAR Journal and edited CCAR position papers while working on the Committee on Church and State.


Scope and Content
The Joseph L. Fink Papers consist of the papers of Joseph L. Fink, a rabbi and activist, who served in Terre Haute, Indiana and Buffalo, New York. Fink was a leading spokesman of Reform Jewry.

The papers include correspondence relating to Fink's tenure as the president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, together with sermons and scrapbooks about his Buffalo civic activities. Fink was elected president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1952, following the completion of the convention held in Buffalo. Much of the correspondence relates to this convention and his years as president. A series of scrapbooks contain newsclopping about various events and individuals concentrating on but not limited to Fink’s CCAR involvement. The Buffalo scrapbook contains newsclopping about various activities, including those of fellow Rabbi Israel Aaron and Temple B’nai Zion. Other scrapbooks focus on the activities of Fink himself.

The sermons included in this collection are primarily transcripts from his Buffalo radio program, "The Humanitarian Hour." Some sermons from the 1930s discuss the evils of Nazism.

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Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Joseph L. Fink Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-105. Joseph L. Fink Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

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Jews -- New York (State) -- Buffalo / Rabbis
Fink, Joseph Lionel, 1897-1964
Central Conference of American Rabbis / Temple Beth Zion (Buffalo, N.Y.)
Minutes / Photographs / Scrapbooks

Series A. General, 1915-1967

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. General correspondence. A-M.
Box 1. Folder 2. American Jewish Tercentenary, 1953-1954
Box 1. Folder 13. Central Conference of American Rabbis. Election as president, 1952
Box 1. Folder 15. Central Conference of American Rabbis. Executive Board, 1952
Box 2. Folder 1. Central Conference of American Rabbis. Finances, 1953
Box 3. Folder 3. Chaplaincy, 1950-1951
Box 3. Folder 5. Eisendrath, Maurice N., 1952-1953
Box 3. Folder 6. Eisenstein, Ira, 1953
Box 3. Folder 12. Liner, Paul, 1950-1951
Box 3. Folder 13. Marriage certificates, undated
Box 3. Folder 17. Pilchik, Ely, 1953-1954
Box 3. Folder 19. Polish, David, 1953
Box 3. Folder 20. Polish, Jacob, 1953
Box 3. Folder 23. Scouting, 1951-1952
Box 3. Folder 25. Silver, Samuel, 1953
Box 3. Folder 26. Snyder, Herman E., 1953-1954
Box 3. Folder 27. Taxay, Joseph, 1952
Box 3. Folder 32. World Union for Progressive Judaism.
Box 4. Folder 1. Photographs, undated
Box 4. Folder 2. Scrapbook. Aaron, Israel, undated
Box 5. Folder 1. Oversize scrapbook, 1915-1946
Box 5. Folder 2. Scrapbook, 1949-1967
Box 5. Folder 3. Sermons, addresses. A-L.
Box 5. Folder 4. Sermons, addresses. M-Z.