



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**A Finding Aid to the
Jewish Institute of Religion Records**

Manuscript Collection No. 19



Collection Summary

Title	Jewish Institute of Religion Records
Dates	1920-1961
Collection Number	MS-19
Repository	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator	Jewish Institute of Religion
Extent	20.8 linear feet (52 Hollinger boxes)
Language of the Material	English

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch

The Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) was founded in 1922 by Stephen Samuel Wise (1874-1949) to provide an alternative rabbinical training school to the already established rabbinical seminaries and to remedy the shortage of United States rabbis. The JIR introduced several significant innovations into the field of rabbinical training such as practical field experience, courses in sociological studies and an academic freedom, which enabled students to experiment with all denominations of Judaism before committing themselves to just one. In 1950, the JIR formally merged with Hebrew Union College (HUC) of Cincinnati, Ohio, thereby becoming the New York branch of HUC-JIR. A chronology of the major events of JIR history follows.

1917 Free Synagogue (New York City), under the direction of Rabbi Wise, established "training fellowships", to provide rabbinical students and beginning rabbis with practical experience.

1918 Louis I. Newman personally ordained by Wise and two rabbinical colleagues, even though he had had no formal rabbinical training.

1921 Abraham I. Elkus, President of the Free Synagogue, presented to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) the plan of the Free Synagogue to establish a rabbinical school in New York City. Co-operation between the UAHC and the Institute, was unanimously rejected by representatives of both UAHC and HUC.

1922 Jewish Institute of Religion chartered by a special act of the Legislature of the State of New York, with Stephen S. Wise as "Acting President." Lee K. Frankel elected Chairman of the JIR Board of Trustees.

1923 Completion of the new Free Synagogue building with facilities to house JIR.

1924 First Issue of Jewish Institute Quarterly, the student publication.

JIR Press established through a grant presented to the Institute by George Alexander Kohut.

Placement service began for JIR students and graduates.

Hannah Heyman bequest to JIR of approximately \$163,000.

1926 First JIR commencement: 10 men received the degree of Rabbi and Master of Hebrew literature.

Guggenheimer (Bertha) Fellowship established, annually granting a JIR graduate or faculty member a year's study in Palestine (Israel).

1927 Stephen Wise assumed the title of President of JIR.

Hilda Stich Stroock Lectureship, to bring noted European Christian scholars to JIR, established by Joseph Stroock.

Julian W. Mack elected Chairman of the JIR Board of Trustees.

1929 Resolution to bring about cooperation among UAHC, HUC, and JIR passed at the Biennial UAHC Convention.

Department of advanced studies created.

1937 Summer Institute for Rabbis established under the auspices of the JIR Alumni Association.

1939 Negotiations for the merger of the JIR and HUC began.

1941 Compromise agreement for HUC-JIR merger reached.

1942 Creation of American Council for Judaism, which split the American reform rabbinate and delayed any attempts at a final merger agreement.

1943 Joseph W. Levine assumed the chairmanship of the JIR Board of Trustees.

1945 JIR \$1,000,000 Maintenance and Expansion Fund Campaign launched.

1946 Greater cooperation between JIR and HUC unanimously called for by Biennial Council of UAHC.

1947 Nelson Glueck designated President of HUC.

1948 End of JIR \$1,000,000 Campaign, which had netted only \$60,000.

UAHC, HUC, and JIR formally announced the HUC-JIR merger. Stephen Wise resigned as President of JIR and duly elected President Emeritus.

Nelson Glueck inaugurated President of JIR.

19 April 1949 Stephen S. Wise died.

January 1950 HUC-JIR merger formalized.

Scope and Content

Traces the creation and administration of the Jewish Institute of Religion and its eventual merger with the Hebrew Union College. The records consist of correspondence, minutes, reports, addresses, and newsclippings.

It should be noted that any of Stephen Wise's activities independent of the JIR, i.e. his involvement with the United Palestine Appeal, the World Jewish Congress, or with New York City politics, are not contained in these records.

Arrangement

Organized into three (3) series: A. Office of the President, 1921-1950; B. Printed Materials, 1921-1948; C. Abraham Binder, 1920-1961.

Terms of Access

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Preferred Citation

Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Jewish Institute of Religion Records and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-19. Jewish Institute of Religion Records. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance

Received from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, N.Y. The Office of the President series was acquired in 1953 and the Printed Materials series in 1962.

Processing Information

Processed by M. Carolyn Dellenbach, September 1976.

Index Terms

- Subjects** Jewish learning and scholarship / Rabbinical seminaries / Rabbis
- Personal Names** Binder, Abraham Wolf, 1895-1966 / Wise, Stephen S. (Stephen Samuel), 1874-1949
- Corporate Names** Hebrew Union College / Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion / Jewish Institute of Religion (New York, N.Y.)

Series A. Office of the President, 1921-1950

Extent 16 linear feet (40 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Contains the correspondence and subject files of President Wise. The material in this Series reflects all aspects of the administration and activities of JIR, including such things as the minutes of the Board of Trustees and other JIR committees; financial and statistical reports; and Dr. Wise's or the Office of the President's Correspondence with students, faculty, Board members, lecturers and contributors concerning the JIR curriculum, financial and student activities, and special events. Rabbi Wise's correspondence with trustees and faculty, notably George Alexander Kohut, Julian W. Mack and Henry Slonimsky is especially helpful in understanding the personalities and affairs affecting the Institute. Information regarding the HUC-JIR merger is found in the "Union of American Hebrew Congregations" and the "HUC-JIR Cooperation/Merger" files.

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Series B. Printed Materials, 1921-1948

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Consists of several scrapbooks comprised of clippings, press releases, and excerpts relating to JIR. The scrapbooks are left intact and follow a rough chronological arrangement. A collection of JIR printed material, such as programs, brochures, and broadsides, spanning years 1945 through 1948, is located in the "Printed Archives" record group of the HUC-JIR Collection.

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Extent 4.4 linear feet (11 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Consists of Abraham Binder's correspondence, course and other materials.

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Note: The following list represents a selective guide to the significant subjects and correspondents within series A of the Jewish Institute of Religion Records. References are to boxes and folders, e.g. 2/7 = Box 2, Folder 7. See also entries must be used in conjunction with the corresponding folder titles in the Box and File List.

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