



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**A Finding Aid to the
Morris N. Kertzer Papers**

Manuscript Collection No. 709



Collection Summary

Title	Morris N. Kertzer Papers
Dates	1936-1983
Collection Number	MS-709
Repository	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator	Kertzer, Morris Norman, 1910-
Extent	5.6 linear feet (14 Hollinger boxes)
Language of the Material	English and Hebrew

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch Morris Kertzer was born on October 18, 1910 in Cochrane, Ontario. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Toronto and his master's degree from the University of Illinois. He then studied under Mordecai Kaplan at the Jewish Theological Seminary where he earned a doctorate in Hebrew literature and he was ordained in 1934. Kertzer would eventually separate from the Jewish Conservative movement to join the Reform Rabbinate.

Kertzer served congregations in Illinois, Alabama, and Iowa before joining the army to serve as a Jewish Chaplain in World War II. During World War II, Kertzer was the only Jewish chaplain at the Anzio beachhead, earning a bronze star for his services there. He entered Rome shortly after the liberation and spoke at the liberation ceremonies. He also served in Africa as well as Southern and Central France before returning home in 1945.

Kertzer was active in Jewish-Christian relations, earning the International University of Rome's Pro Deo Medal for promoting understanding between Catholics and Jews. He traveled internationally lecturing in Italy, Rumania, Japan, Turkey, India, Thailand and Israel. Kertzer authored several books including *With an "H" on my Dog Tag*; his memoirs as military chaplain in World War II, *What is a Jew?*; (which went into more than 30 printings), *Today's American Jew*, *Tell me Rabbi*, and *The Art of Being a Jew*. He also published numerous articles.

Kertzer led the first Jewish delegation to the Soviet Union in 1956 and subsequently won the George Washington Medal for his analysis of the Soviet Union's anti-Semitism. He served as the national president of the Jewish Military Chaplains Association, he was the national chaplain of Amvets and was the chairman of the social action commission of the Synagogue Council of America (1950's), secretary of the New York Board of Rabbis (1957-1959), member of the executive board of the CCAR (1964-1966), and trustee of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (1962-1967). He served as rabbi in Larchmont, then in Riverdale, New York, in the 1960s and 1970s. He retired in Scottsdale, Arizona, where he taught at Mesa Community College and was a member of the Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix. He passed away on December 29, 1983.

Scope and Content The collection traces Morris N. Kertzer's career as a military chaplain, rabbi, and author. The papers include sermons and lectures, publications, correspondence, chaplain material, travel information, and miscellaneous files. The bulk of the collection consists of his sermons and lectures as well as his publications.

Arrangement The collection is arranged into six (6) series: A. Sermons and Lectures; B. Publications; C. Personal/Correspondence Files; D. Chaplain Files; E. Travel Materials; F. Miscellaneous Files.

Terms of Access The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

Preferred Citation Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Morris N. Kertzer Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-709. Morris N. Kertzer Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

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Index Terms

Subjects Jews, Soviet / Judaism -- Relations -- Christianity / Military chaplains / Rabbis / World War, 1939-1945

Media Sermons

Series A. Sermons and Lectures, 1945-1983

Extent 3.2 linear feet (8 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Includes notes and articles that relate to the sermons and lectures. Rabbi Kertzer wrote on a number of topics including Civil Rights, current events, intermarriage, The Bible, Jewish-Christian relations, and his experiences in World War II.

Arrangement The series is arranged chronologically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Sermons and lectures, 1945, 1947-1949

Box 1. Folder 2. Sermons and lectures, 1950

Box 1. Folder 3. Sermons and lectures, 1951

Box 1. Folder 4. Sermons and lectures, 1952

Box 1. Folder 5. Sermons and lectures, 1953

Box 1. Folder 6. Sermons and lectures, 1954

Box 1. Folder 7. Sermons and lectures, 1955

Box 1. Folder 8. Sermons and lectures, 1956

Box 1. Folder 9. Sermons and lectures, 1957

Box 1. Folder 10. Sermons and lectures, 1959

Box 1. Folder 11. Sermons and lectures, 1960

Box 1. Folder 12. Sermons and lectures, 1961

Box 1. Folder 13. Sermons and lectures, 1962

Box 1. Folder 14. Sermons and lectures, 1963

Box 2. Folder 1. Sermons and lectures, 1964 January-June

Box 2. Folder 2. Sermons and lectures, 1964 September-December

Box 2. Folder 3. Sermons and lectures, 1965 January-March

Box 2. Folder 4. Sermons and lectures, 1965 April-June

Box 2. Folder 5. Sermons and lectures, 1965 September-December

Box 3. Folder 1. Sermons and lectures, 1966

Box 3. Folder 2. Sermons and lectures, 1967

Box 3. Folder 3. Sermons and lectures, 1968-1969

Box 4. Folder 1. Sermons and lectures, 1970

Box 4. Folder 2. Sermons and lectures, 1971 January-June

Box 4. Folder 3. Sermons and lectures, 1971 September-December

Box 4. Folder 4. Sermons and lectures, 1972

Box 4. Folder 5. Sermons and lectures, 1973

Box 5. Folder 1. Sermons and lectures, 1974

Box 5. Folder 2. Sermons and lectures, 1975

Box 5. Folder 3. Sermons and lectures, 1976

Box 5. Folder 4. Sermons and lectures, 1977

Box 5. Folder 5. Sermons and lectures, 1978

Box 5. Folder 6. Sermons and lectures, 1979

Box 6. Folder 1. Sermons and lectures, 1980

Box 6. Folder 2. Sermons and lectures, 1981

Box 6. Folder 3. Sermons and lectures, 1982

Box 6. Folder 4. Sermons and lectures, 1983

Box 6. Folder 5. Sermons and lectures, undated

Box 6. Folder 6. Sermons and lectures, undated

Box 7. Folder 1. Academy of Conservative Synagogues of Riverdale, 1970 January 19

Box 7. Folder 2. Adult education at Temple B'nai Sholom, 1966

Box 7. Folder 3. Attitudes toward Jews, undated

Box 7. Folder 4. Bible Series. Riverdale Temple, 1970-1971

Box 7. Folder 5. B'nai B'rith. The Lighter Side of Jewish Life, 1969 November 10

Box 7. Folder 6. Cementing Jewish-Christian Relations, 1954

Box 7. Folder 7. Church and State Conference. The Bible and the Public School, 1961

Box 7. Folder 8. Confirmation. Riverside Temple, 1972 May 19

Box 7. Folder 9. Conversion, 1960s

Box 7. Folder 10. Eulogies, 1960s-1970s

Box 7. Folder 11. Grandparents, 1978 November 6

Box 7. Folder 12. Installation, 1946 September 20

Box 7. Folder 13. Invocations, 1950s, 1970s

Box 7. Folder 14. Jewish Communal Service Conference, undated

Box 7. Folder 15. Jews in the Gentile World. The Jews in Politics, undated

Box 7. Folder 16. Lecture tour, 1976 November

Box 7. Folder 17. Miscellaneous, 1970s

Box 7. Folder 18. Mordecai M. Kaplan, 1966 June 11

Box 7. Folder 19. New Day Dawning. Westchester AJC, undated

Box 8. Folder 1. Problems of Jewish Youth, 1940s

Box 8. Folder 2. Prophets. Central Methodist Arizona, 1983

Box 8. Folder 3. Rambam material, undated

Box 8. Folder 4. Religious Factor in Bigotry. National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, 1960 May 23

Box 8. Folder 5. Reverence for Life, 1965 September 24

Box 8. Folder 6. Rotary Club speech, 1972 April 18, 1976 September 9

Box 8. Folder 7. What does a Rabbi do?, undated

Box 8. Folder 8. Wisdom Literature. United Methodist Church, 1982

Box 8. Folder 9. Yom Kippur, 1948-1954

Box 8. Folder 10. Yom Kippur, 1973

Series B. Publications, 1953-1978

Extent 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Included with each publication are research notes and correspondence. Also included are copies and notes from articles written for newspapers and magazines.

Arrangement The series is arranged alphabetically by title.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 9. Folder 1. Article, "Four Jewries", undated

Box 9. Folder 2. Face to Face with Gabriel, 1953

Box 9. Folder 3. Healer from Iowa. Reader's Digest, 1956

Box 9. Folder 4. Jewish Mission, 1958

Box 9. Folder 5. Look Magazine article notes, 1963

Box 9. Folder 6. Miscellaneous publications/writings, 1956-1977

Box 9. Folder 7. Miscellaneous publications/writings, 1954-1959

Box 9. Folder 8. Miscellaneous publications/writings.

Box 9. Folder 9. Ohio Story, "Lesson in Brotherhood", undated

Box 9. Folder 10. Rambam/Maimonides. Research notes, undated

Box 9. Folder 11. Round the World Tour. Reader's Digest article, 1958

Box 10. Folder 1. Tell Me Rabbi, 1976

Box 10. Folder 2. Today's American Jew book reviews, 1967

Box 10. Folder 3. Today's American Jew book reviews, 1967

Box 10. Folder 4. What is a Jew? correspondence, 1950-1952

Box 10. Folder 5. What is a Jew? correspondence, 1953-1955

Box 10. Folder 6. What is a Jew? lecture series, 1959, 1978, 1983

Box 10. Folder 7. What is a Jew? MacMillian Publishing. Royalty information, 1977-1979

Box 10. Folder 8. What is a Jew? miscellaneous, 1970s

Box 10. Folder 9. What is a Jew? news articles, 1954-1955

Box 10. Folder 10. What is a Jew? revisions, undated

Box 10. Folder 11. What is a Jew? royalty statements. World Publishing Company, 1954-1968

Box 10. Folder 12. What is a Jew? student reactions. New Orleans, 1974

Series C. Personal/Correspondence Files, 1948-1978

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Includes an article on Italy written by his son David Kertzer, some financial information, and biographical sketches that he used on the lecture circuit. There is also correspondence

pertaining to his lectures at various synagogues.

Arrangement

The series is arranged alphabetically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 11. Folder 1. Biographical sketches, 1971, 1977

Box 11. Folder 2. Temple B'nai Yehuda (Homewood, Ill.), 1978

Box 11. Folder 3. Lecture series, 1977-1978

Box 11. Folder 4. Secretary General of the UN to President of the Rotary International, undated

Box 11. Folder 5. Temple Beth Shalom, 1975-1977

Box 11. Folder 6. Tulsa, Okla., 1972 February 6

Box 11. Folder 7. Insurance information from accident, 1952 March 14

Box 11. Folder 8. Italy article. David Kertzer, undated

Box 11. Folder 9. Ives, Irving M. U.S. Senate Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, undated

Box 11. Folder 10. Mesa Community College. Teacher's agreement, 1973-1976

Box 11. Folder 11. News articles. Biographical, 1948-1954

Box 11. Folder 12. Pension fund. Larchmont Temple, 1969

Box 11. Folder 13. Personal/family, 1964-1972

Box 11. Folder 14. Social security, 1974-1978

Series D. Chaplain Files, 1943-1945

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Includes a scrapbook containing letters to his daughter Ruth and his wife Julia, and copies of newspaper clippings that mention Rabbi Kertzer. Also included in the series are marriage certificates, official correspondence, burial information, as well as published and unpublished articles and sermons that Kertzer delivered while serving as chaplain.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 12. Folder 1. Scrapbook, 1943-1945

Box 12. Folder 2. Official correspondence, 1944-1945

Box 12. Folder 3. Chaplains Association, 19,471,960

Box 12. Folder 4. Army welfare, 1944-1945

Box 12. Folder 5. Burial information, 1945

Box 12. Folder 6. Marriages, 1943

Box 12. Folder 7. Writings. Published and unpublished, 1944-1945

Box 12. Folder 8. Jews Cross the Atlantic, 1940

Series E. Travel Materials, 1936-1960

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Contains correspondence, diaries, writings, sermons, lectures, and newspaper articles regarding Rabbi Kertzer's trips to various countries.

Arrangement The series is arranged chronologically.

Box and Folder Listing

- Box 13. Folder 1. Travel diary, 1936
- Box 13. Folder 2. Russian trip, 1956
- Box 13. Folder 3. Russian trip news articles, 1956
- Box 13. Folder 4. Round the world tour, 1958
- Box 13. Folder 5. South American trip, 1962
- Box 13. Folder 6. Israel, 1973
- Box 13. Folder 7. Florida, 1973
- Box 13. Folder 8. Spain, 1979

Series F. Miscellaneous Files, 1939-1977

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Contains articles that Rabbi Kertzer kept pertaining to issues such as Catholic-Jewish relations, and intermarriage. There are notes from a class that he took in 1939 as well as information about Watergate, the Jewish Defense League, and a drug abuse meeting in Washington D.C. in 1971. Also included is an audiotape of his memorial service at Larchmont Temple in 1984 as well as two interviews.

Arrangement The series is arranged alphabetically.

Box and Folder Listing

- Box 14. Folder 1. Bar mitzvah notes, 1970s
- Box 14. Folder 2. Catholic-Jewish relations, 1973
- Box 14. Folder 3. High school graduation. Riverdale Temple, 1972 June 16
- Box 14. Folder 4. Intermarriage, 1960s-1970s
- Box 14. Folder 5. Jewish Defense League, 1970s
- Box 14. Folder 6. Leadership. Rabbinic installation, 1976 June 6
- Box 14. Folder 7. Lebanon, undated
- Box 14. Folder 8. Miscellaneous notes, 1960s-1970s
- Box 14. Folder 9. Private Philosophy of Art. Isaac Bashevis Singer, 1964 January 31
- Box 14. Folder 10. Professor Sellars. Michigan, 1939
- Box 14. Folder 11. Usher recognition, 1971 June 18
- Box 14. Folder 12. Washington drug abuse meeting, 1971 March 31
- Box 14. Folder 13. Watergate, 1973 July 2
- Box 14. Folder 14. World Convention on Christian Education [Tokyo, Japan], 1958 August 6-13

Box 14. Folder 15. Yiddish, 1972 February 11

Box 14. Folder 16. Yuma, Ariz., 1977

Box 14. Folder 17. Memorial service for Rabbi Morris Kertzer. Larchmont Temple [audio tape], 1984 January 29

Box 14. Folder 18. Montreal interview [audio tape], undated

Box 14. Folder 19. Interview of the rabbi [audio tape], 1977 October 23

Box 14. Folder 20. Scrapbook, 1952-1967