



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**A Finding Aid to the
Solomon S. Simonson Papers
Manuscript Collection No. 697**

Collection Summary

Title	Solomon S. Simonson Papers
Dates	1934-1991
Collection Number	MS-697
Repository	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator	Simonson, Solomon S., 1914-1991
Extent	0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)
Language of the Material	English

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch

Solomon S. Simonson was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. on April 19, 1914. Raised in a Yiddish speaking home, Simonson's early education was both religious and secular. At age five he began studying at a yeshiva, studies which he continued into his high school years even after entering public schools. Simonson then entered Brooklyn College and received his B.A. in 1935. From there he earned an LL.B (J.D.) from Northwestern University in 1938, an M.A. from Brooklyn College in 1939, and in 1943 a Ph.D. in philosophy from Northwestern. In 1939 he received rabbinic ordination at the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago.

As the New York Times reported in his obituary, the main themes of Simonson's life were education, mass communication, and Jewish religion and culture. Yet, Simonson lived a diverse and active life, utilizing his talents and education in many and varied ways. As a young man he performed with the Civic Repertory Theater in New York, producing and directing plays on radio while studying at Brooklyn College. As an educator he held many posts. He worked as a speech clinician and instructor in speech at Brooklyn College from 1935-1941 and was a professor in many fields (speech, law, communications, media and semantics, among others) at Iowa State Teacher's College, the University of Denver, the State University of New York at Fredonia, Yeshiva University (where he chaired the Speech and Communication Department), Hebrew Theological College, Borough of Manhattan Community College, and Hunter College. In the latter stages of his career Simonson was Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Touro College.

In addition to his other duties, Simonson served as a pulpit rabbi throughout the bulk of his career. He founded the United Hebrew Center in Pueblo, Colorado and served as its rabbi from 1946-1949. From 1949-1960 he was rabbi at Temple Beth El in Dunkirk, N.Y., and from 1960-1965 led Temple Beth Shalom in Park Ridge, N.J. Simonson was also a prolific author with numerous publications in the areas of logic, mass communication, the impact and cultural changes of television, and violence in the media. He authored two books: *Crisis in Television: A Study of the Private Judgment and the Public Interest* (New York: Living Books, 1966), a study of television's contributions to American civilization and its effects on American culture; and *To the Earthmen: Reflections at Sunset* (New York: Sheingold Publishers, 1989), a collection of his poetry. Simonson was also a noted orator and taught many classes on public speaking. In another example of his many talents, Simonson served as president of the American Jewish Museum of Art and Culture.

Simonson married Hana Gutwillig on January 27, 1957. Hana was born April 10, 1929 in the Lower East Side of New York City. She was raised in a poor religious home, and her father died when she was 11. Hana graduated from Brooklyn College in 1953 and taught English at Ramaz High School in Manhattan. After a short courtship and engagement Hana and Solomon were married. They quickly had three children: Shai (1958), Rayze (1959) and Alex (1962). After many years of part-time study and full-time child rearing, Hana completed her Ph.D. in special education and psychology at York College, CUNY. Hana was a popular teacher, full of empathy for her students. She also published many scholarly works in her field. Hana Gutwillig Simonson died in April 2001, ten years after her husband, for whom she grieved deeply and whose loss she felt was irreplaceable.

Solomon S. Simonson died on October 15, 1991 at the age of 76.

Note: For a more detailed account of Solomon S. Simonson and his life, see William Chazanof, *A Legacy of Faith: The Jews of the Dunkirk-Fredonia Area* (North Liberty, Iowa: Ice Cube Press, c2000), pp. 199-222.

Scope and Content

The collection documents the life of a rabbi, educator, scholar, and author. It consists of writings, speeches, tributes, newsclippings and miscellaneous. Also included is a plaque and a recording featuring Simonson and Jacob Javits speaking at a dedication service for Temple Beth El in Dunkirk, N.Y.

The collection is arranged alphabetically by topic. The topics reveal the diversity of Simonson's

learning and interests, from his student years to his post as Provost at Touro College. The writings, which are interspersed throughout the collection, reveal the depth and scope of Simonson's interests and research. The writings range from his personal poetry to studies in logic and mass communication, together with an essay on the artist Raban. Included also is a copy of Simonson's book, *Crisis in Television: A Study of the Private Judgment and the Public Interest*. This book was called by one reviewer "the most thought-provoking book on the television industry." Another critic said *Crisis in Television* "reveals a far deeper understanding of the functions of the mass media than any book in our time, including those of McLuhan."

The biographical material - including the obituaries and tributes - gives a full overview of Rabbi Simonson's life. Of particular interest in the biographical material file is the excerpt from William Chazanof's book, *A Legacy of Faith: The Jews of the Dunkirk-Fredonia Area* (North Liberty, Iowa: Ice Cube Press, c2000), pp. 199-222, which gives a thorough examination of Simonson's life from childhood.

This is a rich collection, full of information about Solomon S. Simonson and his work. Though spanning the years 1934-1991, the bulk of the collection falls within the years 1945-1970.

Arrangement The collection is arranged in one (1) series: A. General.

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

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

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-697. Solomon S. Simonson Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

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Index Terms

Subjects Jewish educators / Rabbis
Personal Names Simonson, Solomon S., 1914-1991
Media Sound recordings

Series A. General, 1934-1991

Arrangement The series is arranged alphabetically by title or subject.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Announcements, speeches, editorials, and letters, 1945-1991

Box 1. Folder 2. Biographical material.

Box 1. Folder 3. Chicago, Illinois - related materials (brochures, programs, clippings, etc.), 1940-1950

Box 1. Folder 4. *Crisis in Television: A Study of the Private Judgment and the Public Interest*, 1966

Box 1. Folder 5. Journal articles, 1944-1968

Box 1. Folder 6. Obituaries and tributes (assorted), 1991

Box 1. Folder 7. Remembrances of Raban, in *Raban Remembered: Jerusalem's Forgotten Master*, essays and catalogue of an exhibition at the Yeshiva University Museum, 1982 December-1983 June

Box 2. Folder 1. *A Restatement of Fallacies*, in *Summaries of Doctoral Dissertations* submitted to Northwestern University, 1943 June-August

Box 2. Folder 2. *To the Earthmen: Reflections at Sunset* (Poetry by Simonson), 1989

Box 2. Folder 3. Young Israel of Brownsville (Brooklyn, N.Y.), 1934-1939

Box 2. Folder 4. Plaque from Temple Beth El (Dunkirk, N.Y.) received "in recognition of continued spiritual leadership and guidance in Jewish culture.", 1955

Box 2. Folder Phonograph recording of dedication service for Temple Beth El (Dunkirk, N.Y.) featuring Simonson and Jacob Javits [10 discs], undated