



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**A Finding Aid to the
Solomon Bennett Freehof Papers**

Manuscript Collection No. 435



Collection Summary

Title	Solomon Bennett Freehof Papers
Dates	1927-1983
Collection Number	MS-435
Repository	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator	Freehof, Solomon Bennett, 1892-1990
Extent	1.2 linear feet (3 Hollinger boxes)
Language of the Material	English

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch

Solomon Bennett Freehof was born to Isaac and Golda Blonstein Freehof in London, England on August 8, 1892. Freehof descended from the "Alter Rebbe", Rabbi Shneur of Lyday (1745-1813) who was the founder of the Lubavitch-Habad Hasidism. He immigrated to the United States in 1903 with his family. Following a period of study with William Rosenau of Baltimore, Maryland, Freehof entered studies at the University of Cincinnati (graduated 1914) and the Hebrew Union College (graduated 1915).

After graduation, Freehof joined the Hebrew Union College (HUC) faculty, where he remained until 1924. In 1922, he earned his Doctor of Divinity degree at HUC. Freehof took a brief absence from his HUC teaching duties to serve as a World War I military chaplain in the American Expeditionary Forces. His experience as a chaplain would carry over into administrative duties overseeing chaplains during World War II. That, in turn, led to his strong interest in the interpretation of Jewish law for other rabbis.

Freehof first served at Kehillath Anshe Mariv (K.A.M.) Temple in Chicago, Illinois from 1924-1934. In 1934, Freehof accepted the pulpit at Rodef Shalom in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where he was to remain until his retirement in 1966. After retirement, Freehof became rabbi emeritus. As a pulpit rabbi, Freehof urged a return of the rabbi to the role as teacher, rather than as a pastoral psychiatrist for individual congregants.

Jewish organizations played a major role in Freehof's life. Freehof was active in the Central Conference of the American Rabbis, serving as president from 1943-1945 and as the chair for the Committee on Liturgy (1939-1941) during the major revisions of the Union Prayerbook and later the chair of Responsa Committee in 1955. Additionally, he was the president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (1959-1964) and the first American to hold this office.

As an acknowledged expert on halakhic issues, Freehof wrote responsa for the Reform movement and its rabbis for numerous years. Several of his publications related to this topic including: Reform Jewish Practice and its Rabbinic Background, The Responsa Literature, A Treasury of Responsa and Recent Reform Responsa. His volumes answering the questions of Reform rabbis ranged from the first edition of Reform Responsa (1960) to the seventh edition, New Reform Responsa (1980). Freehof also wrote commentaries on the Scriptures, including the biblical books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Psalms and Job and hundreds of publications on Jewish life and practices.

Solomon Freehof married Lillian Simon, his secretary at K.A.M. Temple in Chicago in 1934.

Scope and Content

The Solomon B. Freehof Papers consist of addresses, correspondence, oral histories and responsa of Rabbi Freehof, who was the rabbi at Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from 1934-1964. There is one folder of sermons from Freehof's tenure at his first pulpit in Chicago, Illinois and no material relating to his pulpit in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Freehof was active in Jewish affairs as both the first American president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism and president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR). Materials in this collection center on his CCAR presidential years during World War II. There are two folders of correspondence detailing with the Committee on the Chaplaincy during World War II. Another folder deals with issues relating to Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas and their refusal to admit Zionists as congregational members. Material relating to his presidency of the World Union of Progressive Judaism can be located in the World Union for Progressive Judaism records (Manuscript Collection No. 16.)

Freehof's responsa, while only a minor sampling of his total output during his life, comprise the majority of the collection. The responsa are indexed in one folder. A typical responsa includes a letter from a rabbi and the response by Freehof. Topics include intermarriage, burial traditions, congregational dues and good Jewish literature.

Arrangement	The papers are organized into two (2) series: A. Correspondence and Writings; B. Personal Materials.
Terms of Access	The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.
Preferred Citation	Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Solomon Bennett Freehof Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows: [Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-435. Solomon Bennett Freehof Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.
Provenance	Received from Solomon Freehof, Pittsburgh, Pa., and Susan Stone, Euclid, Ohio.
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Index Terms

Subjects	Jews -- Pennsylvania -- Pittsburgh / Rabbis / Responsa -- History and criticism
Personal Names	Freehof, Solomon Bennett, 1892-1990
Corporate Names	Rodef Shalom Congregation (Pittsburgh, Pa.)
Media	Oral histories / Sermons

Series A. Writings and Correspondence, 1929-1983

Extent 1 linear foot (2.5 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Consists of correspondence with the CCAR and rabbis who have who wrote to Freehof with responsa questions. Subjects in this series include the World War II chaplaincy board and responsa. There is also a folder of sermons dating from Freehof's tenure in Chicago at K.A.M.

Arrangement The series is arranged with correspondence followed by writings. Correspondence is arranged alphabetically by subject, and chronologically within subjects.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Central Conference of American Rabbis. Anti-Zionism, 1942-1943

Box 1. Folder 2. Central Conference of American Rabbis. Chaplaincy, 1943-1944 March

Box 1. Folder 3. Central Conference of American Rabbis. Chaplaincy, 1944 April -1945

Box 1. Folder 4. Central Conference of American Rabbis. Congregation Beth Israel (Houston, Tex.), 1944

Box 1. Folder 5. Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1974

Box 1. Folder 6. Responsa correspondence. Index.

Box 1. Folder 7. Responsa correspondence. (AJA files), 1961-1979

Box 2. Folder 1. Responsa correspondence, 1961-1965

Box 2. Folder 2. Responsa correspondence, 1966-1970

Box 2. Folder 3. Responsa correspondence, 1971-1973

Box 2. Folder 4. Responsa correspondence, 1974-1977

Box 2. Folder 5. Responsa correspondence.

Box 2. Folder 6. Responsa correspondence, 1978-1983

Box 3. Folder 1. Sermons and writings, 1929-1930

Box 3. Folder 2. The Menorah, undated

Series B. Personal Material, 1916-1987

Extent 0.2 linear feet (0.5 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Consists of material that cannot be classified as correspondence or writings. It includes biographical family materials, lists of services performed and oral history.

Arrangement The series is arranged alphabetically by subject.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 3. Folder 3. Biographical material. Personal and family, 1982-1983, 1987

Box 3. Folder 4. Funerals officiated. List, 1934-1977

Box 3. Folder 5. Funerals officiated. List, 1916-1971

Box 3. Folder 6. Oral history, 1963