A Finding Aid to the

Michael Aaronsohn Papers

Manuscript Collection No. 511
Collection Summary

Title: Michael Aaronsohn Papers
Dates: 1910-1976
Collection Number: MS-511
Repository: The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator: Aaronsohn, Michael, 1896-1976
Extent: 4.4 linear feet (11 Hollinger boxes)
Language of the Material: English

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch
Michael Aaronsohn was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1896 and graduated from Baltimore City College, a local high school, in 1913. After beginning his rabbinical education at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, he chose to join the American Expeditionary Forces during World War I. Aaronsohn served in the 147th Infantry, 37th Division, and rose to the rank of sergeant-major. He was carrying a wounded soldier in the Argonne Forest during the Meuse-Argonne offensive in France in 1918 when he was hit by a shell, leaving him blind.

Eventually, Aaronsohn resumed his studies in Cincinnati and he was ordained at Hebrew Union College in 1923, becoming the first blind Reform rabbi. That same year, Aaronsohn graduated from the University of Cincinnati, and was a recipient of the prestigious McKibben medal. Following his graduation, he traveled across the country as a national field representative for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Aaronsohn was a champion of veterans' causes throughout his life. He was a leader in many veterans' organizations, including: the American Legion, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and the Blinded Veterans' Association. He was also a visiting chaplain at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Cincinnati. In addition, he was selected to be part of a group from the United States that traveled to England, France, and Belgium in August of 1937 in conjunction with the American Battle Monuments Commission to dedicate war memorials associated with World War I.

Also of importance to Aaronsohn was the support of resources and opportunities for the blind and people with disabilities. He helped found the Jewish Braille Institute and the Institute's Jewish Braille Review, a monthly braille magazine containing Jewish resources for the blind. Aaronsohn was also active in efforts to support children with disabilities. He lectured on the subject and served as the president of the Hamilton County Council for Retarded Children and was involved in the National Association for Retarded Children.

Political activity was another facet of Aaronsohn's civic engagement. He was part of the Republican Club of Hamilton County, and in 1949 he ran for city council as a republican. Aaronsohn also spoke at the National Republican Convention in Philadelphia in 1940. Additionally, he was an outspoken anti-Communist and was given an award by the American Jewish League Against Communism in 1957.

Aaronsohn drew upon his life experiences to write three books: Broken Lights, Red Pottage, and That the Living May Know. He was married to Rachel Zemon Aaronsohn and had three children, Miriam, Elizabeth, and Jonathan. Aaronsohn died on February 25, 1976 at the age of 79.

Scope and Content
Correspondence, sermons, and other materials relating to Aaronsohn's experiences with the U.S. Armed Forces during World War I and II, and numerous other subjects.

Arrangement
The collection is divided into two (2) series: A. Correspondence; B. General.

Terms of Access
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Preferred Citation
Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Michael Aaronsohn Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-511. Michael Aaronsohn Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.
Provenance
Received from Aaronsohn family, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Index Terms

Subjects
Disabled veterans / Jews -- Ohio -- Cincinnati / Rabbis / Soldiers / Veterans / World War, 1914-1918 / World War, 1939-1945

Personal Names
Aaronsohn, Michael, 1896-1976

Corporate Names
American Council for Judaism / Jewish Braille Institute of America / Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America

Media
Personal narratives / Sermons

Series A. Correspondence, 1915-1976

Extent
3.6 linear feet (9 Hollinger boxes)

Arrangement
The series is alphabetically arranged.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Adams, James Truslow, 1947-1954
Box 1. Folder 2. American Battle Monuments Commission, 1937
Box 1. Folder 4. American Council for Judaism, 1942-1951
Box 1. Folder 5. American Council for Judaism, 1951-1969
Box 1. Folder 6. American Jewish League Against Communism, 1952-1957
Box 1. Folder 7. American Jewish League Against Communism, 1957-1958
Box 1. Folder 8. American Jewish League Against Communism, 1958-1971
Box 1. Folder 10. American Legion, 1921-1934
Box 1. Folder 11. American Legion, 1934-1940
Box 1. Folder 12. American Legion, 1940-1942
Box 1. Folder 13. American Legion, 1942-1944
Box 1. Folder 14. American Legion, 1944-1945
Box 1. Folder 15. American Legion, 1945-1947
Box 1. Folder 20. American Legion. Ohio Department Chaplain, 1947-1965
Box 1. Folder 22. Army letters, 1917-1918
Box 1. Folder 23. Army letters, 1917-1918
Box 1. Folder 24. Army letters, 1917-1918
Box 1. Folder 25. Avondale Co-ordinating Council, 1940-1944
Box 2. Folder 1. [Photographs], undated
Box 2. Folder 2. Baltimore, Md., 1917-1975
Box 2. Folder 4. Baltimore City College reunions, 1938-1975
Box 2. Folder 5. The Blind [various organizations for the blind], 1919-1928
Box 2. Folder 6. The Blind [various organizations for the blind], 1929-1941
Box 2. Folder 7. The Blind [various organizations for the blind], 1942
Box 2. Folder 8. The Blind [various organizations for the blind], 1942-1943
Box 2. Folder 9. The Blind [various organizations for the blind], 1943-1944
Box 2. Folder 10. The Blind [various organizations for the blind], 1944-1973
Box 2. Folder 11. Blind veterans, 1922-1948
Box 2. Folder 12. B'nai B'rith, 1921-1949
Box 2. Folder 16. Braun, Leo, 1926-1927
Box 2. Folder 17. Brevis, Harry J., 1926-1939
Box 3. Folder 1. Broken lights, 1933-1937
Box 3. Folder 2. Broken lights, 1938-1946
Box 3. Folder 3. Broken lights, 1946
Box 3. Folder 4. Broken lights, 1946-1947
Box 3. Folder 5. Broken lights, 1947
Box 3. Folder 6. Broken lights, 1947
Box 3. Folder 7. Broken lights, 1947-1948
Box 3. Folder 8. Broken lights, 1948
Box 3. Folder 16. CCAR. Youth, 1947-1962
Box 3. Folder 17. CCAR Commission on Church and State, 1949-1959
Box 3. Folder 18. Chaplains, Jewish, 1942-1945
Box 3. Folder 19. Cincinnati, City of, 1926-1944
Box 3. Folder 20. Cincinnati, City of, 1944-1974
Box 3. Folder 21. Cincinnati, University of, 1919-1963
Box 3. Folder 22. Cincinnati, University of. 50th reunion, 1973
Box 3. Folder 23. Cincinnati, University of. Papers, 1921-1927
Box 3. Folder 24. Disabled American Veterans of the World War, 1921-1922
Box 3. Folder 25. Disabled American Veterans of the World War, 1923-1927
Box 3. Folder 27. Disabled American Veterans of the World War, 1936-1975
Box 4. Folder 1. Fineberg, Howard L., 1925-1973
Box 4. Folder 2. Fineberg, Sol, 1919-1964
Box 4. Folder 3. Flood and flood control, 1945
Box 4. Folder 5. Fredman, J. George, 1947-1951
Box 4. Folder 10. General correspondence, 1920-1926
Box 4. Folder 11. General correspondence, 1927
Box 4. Folder 12. General correspondence, 1928-1929
Box 4. Folder 13. General correspondence, 1929
Box 4. Folder 14. General correspondence, 1930-1932
Box 4. Folder 15. General correspondence, 1933-1938
Box 4. Folder 16. General correspondence, 1940-1943
Box 4. Folder 17. General correspondence, 1944-1949
Box 4. Folder 18. General correspondence, 1950-1959
Box 4. Folder 21. Germany (pre- and post-WWII), 1924-1969
Box 4. Folder 27. Hebrew Union College, 1916-1940
Box 4. Folder 28. Hebrew Union College, 1941-1972
Box 4. Folder 29. Hebrew Union College (proposed doctoral thesis), 1941-1948
Box 4. Folder 30. Hebrew Union College (rabbinic thesis), 1923
Box 4. Folder 31. Hebrew Union College. Student pulpit (Hamilton, Ohio), 1921-1959
Box 5. Folder 1. Henry George School, 1934-1935
Box 5. Folder 2. Henry George School, 1935 August-December
Box 5. Folder 3. Henry George School, 1935 January-March
Box 5. Folder 4. Henry George School, 1936 March-May
Box 5. Folder 5. Henry George School, 1936 May-August
Box 5. Folder 6. Henry George School, 1936 August-October
Box 5. Folder 7. Henry George School, 1936 October-November
Box 5. Folder 8. Henry George School, 1936-1937
Box 8. Folder 17. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 1942-1943
Box 8. Folder 18. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 1942-1943
Box 8. Folder 19. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 1943 February-May
Box 8. Folder 20. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 1943 May-September
Box 8. Folder 21. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 1943-1972
Box 9. Folder 1. Waldauer, Abe, 1933-1939
Box 9. Folder 5. Wolk, Samuel, 1919-1929
Box 9. Folder 8. World War II, 1941-1943

Series B. General, 1910-1975

Extent  0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)
Arrangement  The series is alphabetically arranged.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 10. Folder 1. Broken lights, Reviews of, 1946-1958
Box 10. Folder 2. Certificates and awards, 1910-1953
Box 10. Folder 3. Certificates and awards, 1954-1975
Box 10. Folder 4. Chicago, University of. Papers, 1924
Box 10. Folder 5. Cincinnati, University of. Paper, 1922
Box 10. Folder 6. Disabled American Veterans addresses, 1920-1935
Box 10. Folder 7. Henry George School addresses and prayers, 1934-1946
Box 10. Folder 10. Miscellaneous, 1913-1955
Box 10. Folder 11. Newspaper clippings, 1917-1972
Box 10. Folder 15. Newspaper clippings, 1917-1972
Box 11. Folder 1. Prayers, 1921-1938
Box 11. Folder 2. Prayers, 1939-1943
Box 11. Folder 3. Prayers, 1943-1959
Box 11. Folder 5. Speeches, papers, etc., 1919-1922
Box 11. Folder 6. Speeches, papers, etc., 1922-1937
Box 11. Folder 7. Speeches, papers, etc., 1937-1943
Box 11. Folder 8. Speeches, papers, etc., 1943-1954
Box 11. Folder 9. Speeches, papers, etc., 1954-1963, undated
Box 11. Folder 10. Sermons, undated
Box 11. Folder 12. World War II speeches, 1933-1944