



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**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

The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

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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 3. American Battle Monuments Commission, 1937-1970
- 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 9. American Jewish Tercentenary, 1954-1955
- 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 16. American Legion, 1947-1955
- Box 1. Folder 17. American Legion, 1970-1976
- Box 1. Folder 18. American Legion. Commander, 1958-1959
- Box 1. Folder 19. American Legion. Galbraith Post, 1968-1976
- Box 1. Folder 20. American Legion. Ohio Department Chaplain, 1947-1965
- Box 1. Folder 21. American Security Council, 1971-1975
- 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 3. Bachman, Annette L., 1930-1955

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 13. B'nai B'rith, 1950-1970

Box 2. Folder 14. B'nai B'rith. Anti-Defamation League, 1940-1963

Box 2. Folder 15. Botwin, N. H., 1970-1974

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 9. Broken lights, 1949-1954

Box 3. Folder 10. Broken lights, 1954-1972

Box 3. Folder 11. Bromfield, Louis, 1948-1950

Box 3. Folder 12. Bunge, Robert C., 1953-1971

Box 3. Folder 13. Burton, Harold H., 1943-1945

Box 3. Folder 14. Byrnes, Martin J., 1971-1975

Box 3. Folder 15. Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), 1952-1973

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 26. Disabled American Veterans of the World War, 1927-1935

Box 3. Folder 27. Disabled American Veterans of the World War, 1936-1975

Box 3. Folder 28. Disabled American Veterans of the World War. Cincinnati convention, 1933

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 4. Foster, Solomon, 1958-1964

Box 4. Folder 5. Fredman, J. George, 1947-1951

Box 4. Folder 6. Freed, Abraham, 1954

Box 4. Folder 7. Freedom Library, 1962-1975

Box 4. Folder 8. Freehof, Solomon B., 1919-1964

Box 4. Folder 9. Free Press (Cincinnati, Ohio), 1965-1972

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 19. General correspondence, 1960-1964

Box 4. Folder 20. General correspondence, 1965-1976

Box 4. Folder 21. Germany (pre- and post-WWII), 1924-1969

Box 4. Folder 22. Glatz, J. M., 1941-1959

Box 4. Folder 23. Glueck, Nelson, 1947-1963

Box 4. Folder 24. Hamilton, Oris E., 1942-1975

Box 4. Folder 25. Hebrew Institute (Cincinnati, Ohio), 1947-1954

Box 4. Folder 26. Hebrew Orphan Asylum, 1968-1976

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 5. Folder 9. Henry George School, 1937-1938
Box 5. Folder 10. Henry George School, 1938-1939
Box 5. Folder 11. Henry George School, 1939-1941
Box 5. Folder 12. Henry George School, 1941-1947
Box 5. Folder 13. Henry George School, 1947-1960
Box 5. Folder 14. Henry George School, 1962-1976
Box 5. Folder 15. Henry George School. Frank Chodorov, 1937-1963
Box 5. Folder 16. Hettleman, Isidore, 1947-1974
Box 5. Folder 17. Hill, Lister, 1938-1941
Box 5. Folder 18. Hill, Lister, 1942-1943
Box 5. Folder 19. Hill, Lister, 1944-1947
Box 5. Folder 20. Hill, Lister, 1950-1955
Box 5. Folder 21. Hill, Lister, 1956-1964
Box 5. Folder 22. Hirschberg, Rachel, 1925-1963
Box 5. Folder 23. Hitchcock, Harry R., 1971-1973
Box 6. Folder 1. Jappe, Al, 1922-1944
Box 6. Folder 2. Jappe, Al, 1944-1964
Box 6. Folder 3. Jewish Braille Institute, 1919-1932
Box 6. Folder 4. Jewish Braille Institute, 1932-1934
Box 6. Folder 5. Jewish Braille Institute, 1934-1941
Box 6. Folder 6. Jewish Braille Institute, 1942-1953
Box 6. Folder 7. Jewish Braille Institute, 1953-1958
Box 6. Folder 8. Jewish Braille Institute, 1959-1960
Box 6. Folder 9. Jewish Braille Institute, 1960-1968
Box 6. Folder 10. Jewish Braille Institute, 1971-1972
Box 6. Folder 11. Jewish Braille Institute, 1972-1974
Box 6. Folder 12. Jewish Newsletter, 1960-1964
Box 6. Folder 13. Jewish Society of America, 1968-1969
Box 6. Folder 14. Jewish War Veterans, 1933-1937
Box 6. Folder 15. Jewish War Veterans, 1937-1962
Box 6. Folder 16. Jewish Welfare Board, 1948-1959
Box 6. Folder 17. Jewish Welfare Board, 1959-1973
Box 6. Folder 18. John Birch Society, 1969-1971
Box 6. Folder 19. Jung, Leo, 1960
Box 6. Folder 20. Kohler, Kaufmann, 1915-1945
Box 6. Folder 21. Kohler, Kaufmann, 1945-1964
Box 6. Folder 22. Lukens, Donald E., 1969-1970
Box 6. Folder 23. Lush, S. Beryl, 1934-1955
Box 7. Folder 1. Mark, Jerry, 1925-1933
Box 7. Folder 2. Mark, Jerry, 1933-1974
Box 7. Folder 3. Mayerberg, Samuel, 1921-1942

Box 7. Folder 4. McCarthy, Joseph R., 1954-1960

Box 7. Folder 5. Menorah Society, 1921-1949

Box 7. Folder 6. Newman, Max, 1973-1975

Box 7. Folder 7. Nixon, Richard M., 1969-1973

Box 7. Folder 8. Ohio National Guard, 1917-1975

Box 7. Folder 9. Ohio National Guard, 1917-1975

Box 7. Folder 10. Ohio National Guard, 1917-1975

Box 7. Folder 11. Ohio National Guard. Cincinnati convention, 1935-1936

Box 7. Folder 12. Peace Heroes Memorial Society, 1926-1946

Box 7. Folder 13. Plaut, Gunther, 1962

Box 7. Folder 14. Progressive New Thought Church, 1964-1974

Box 7. Folder 15. Purple Heart, Military order of the, 1932-1972

Box 7. Folder 16. Red Cross, 1921-1942

Box 7. Folder 17. Retarded Children, Hamilton County Council for, 1948-1949

Box 7. Folder 18. Retarded Children, Hamilton County Council for, 1950-1971

Box 7. Folder 19. Retarded Children, Hamilton County Council for. Personnel Committee, 1956-1957

Box 7. Folder 20. Retarded Children, Hamilton County Council for. Presidency, 1952-1953

Box 7. Folder 21. Retarded Children, Hamilton County Council for. Presidency, 1953

Box 7. Folder 22. Retarded Children, Hamilton County Council for. Presidency, 1953-1954

Box 7. Folder 23. Retarded Children, National Association for, 1953-1968

Box 7. Folder 24. Retarded Children, National Association for. Religious Nurture Committee, 1965-1969

Box 7. Folder 25. Retarded Children. Ohio Division of Mental Hygiene, 1951-1964

Box 7. Folder 26. Ritchey, Louise, 1956-1969

Box 7. Folder 27. Rockdale Temple (Cincinnati, Ohio), 1933-1975

Box 7. Folder 28. Rosenau, William, 1919-1969

Box 7. Folder 29. Rosenwald, Viola, 1929-1933

Box 8. Folder 1. Salomon, Haym, 1920-1955

Box 8. Folder 2. Seligson, Sylvia, 1927

Box 8. Folder 3. Sherry, Robert, 1970-1976

Box 8. Folder 4. Shinedling, Abraham I., 1930-1956

Box 8. Folder 5. Shinedling, Abraham I., 1956-1975

Box 8. Folder 6. Taft family, 1926-1963

Box 8. Folder 7. Tandowsky (Ross), Muriel, 1926-1934

Box 8. Folder 8. Taxation, 1940-1963

Box 8. Folder 9. Thomson, Joseph C., 1942-1954

Box 8. Folder 10. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1923-1929

Box 8. Folder 11. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1929-1959

Box 8. Folder 12. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1960-1971

Box 8. Folder 13. Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Family, 1930

Box 8. Folder 14. Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Family, 1930-1931

Box 8. Folder 15. Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Family, 1931

Box 8. Folder 16. United States Citizens Committee, 1963-1973
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 2. Weitzman, Louis I., 1971-1972
Box 9. Folder 3. Williamson, Mike, 1919-1958
Box 9. Folder 4. Willkie, Wendell L., 1940
Box 9. Folder 5. Wolk, Samuel, 1919-1929
Box 9. Folder 6. Wolk, Samuel, 1929-1932
Box 9. Folder 7. Wolk, Samuel, 1933-1957
Box 9. Folder 8. World War II, 1941-1943
Box 9. Folder 9. World War II, 1943-1944
Box 9. Folder 10. World War II, 1944-1946
Box 9. Folder 11. Zionism, 1935-1943
Box 9. Folder 12. Zionism, 1943-1951

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 8. Henry George School newspaper clippings, 1935-1947
Box 10. Folder 9. Magazine articles by and about Michael Aaronsohn, 1921-1958
Box 10. Folder 10. Miscellaneous, 1913-1955
Box 10. Folder 11. Newspaper clippings, 1917-1972
Box 10. Folder 12. Newspaper clippings, 1917-1972
Box 10. Folder 13. Newspaper clippings, 1917-1972
Box 10. Folder 14. Newspaper clippings, 1917-1972
Box 10. Folder 15. Newspaper clippings, 1917-1972
Box 10. Folder 16. 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 4. Prayers, 1960-1972
- 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 11. Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Articles and reports, 1923-1932
- Box 11. Folder 12. World War II speeches, 1933-1944