A Finding Aid to the
Richard J. Israel Papers
Manuscript Collection No. 722
Richard James Israel was born in Chicago and educated in the public schools there. He received his B.A. from the University of Chicago in 1950 and was ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati in 1957.

While enrolled at HUC-JIR, Rabbi Israel spent 1954-55 in Israel studying at Hebrew University and a yeshiva in Yavneh. He also spent time as a rabbi in Bombay, India, under the auspices of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

Following ordination, Rabbi Israel became Associate Director of the UCLA Hillel Council, a position he held until 1959 when he became Hillel Director at Yale University. In 1971 he was appointed Executive Director of the Hillel Council of Greater Boston.

At Yale, Rabbi Israel taught, counseled, officiated at religious services and lifecycle events, and led a successful major capital fund drive that resulted in the purchase and renovation of new Hillel facilities. As well, he played a major role in eliminating restrictions on Jewish admissions to the university. In Boston, Rabbi Israel supervised planning, programming and funding that served the area’s 38,000 Jewish students.

Upon leaving Hillel in 1985, he served as Director of Central Services and Judaica for the Jewish Community Center of Greater Boston, an appointment that oversaw day camps and community programming. He received a national award for his work. Rabbi Israel later worked as Director of the Alperin-Schecter Day School in Boston, the Bureau of Jewish Education for Rhode Island and taught a course in Hillel leadership for the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. During the 1990s, he was interim Hillel Director at both Brandeis and Princeton Universities.

As a speaker, consultant and workshop leader, Rabbi Israel attended conferences in Jewish Education and Leadership throughout his career and in all parts of the United States. As a writer, his articles on Jewish living and education were published in such periodicals as Moment, Commentary and Sh’ma. He also contributed to The Jewish Catalogue series. A collection of his writings was published under the title The Kosher Pig.

Rabbi Israel was listed in Who's Who in Religion, Who's Who in American Jewry and Who's Who in World Jewry. For two years he was President of the National Association of Hillel Directors. In 1962, the American Jewish Congress awarded him a special citation for civil rights activities, following his involvement in a clergy-led protest against segregation in Georgia. In 1974, Rabbi Israel traveled to the Soviet Union in an effort to establish contacts with Refuseniks. He also undertook numerous trips during his life to Israel. In 1982, Rabbi Israel was the recipient of a Honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

Rabbi Israel devoted his career to helping Jews of all ages to understand, appreciate and articulate their religious identity. Beyond his role as a rabbi, Israel was a longtime beekeeper and ultramarathon runner.

Rabbi Israel died in 2000 while hiking with his son Joshua. His wife, Dr. Sherry Israel and his four children, Alisa, Rachel, David and Joshua survived him.
from his years as a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, involvement in the American civil rights movement and as an advocate for Soviet Jewry. Overall, the archive reveals a man greatly influenced by the work of his own Hillel Director - Rabbi Maurice Pekarsky of the University of Chicago - and who in turn devoted his life to enriching the lives of young Jewish people.

Arrangement
The collection is arranged into nine (9) series: A. Writings; B. Correspondence; C. Hillel; D. Jewish Lifecycle and Ritual Resources; E. Jewish Holiday and Festival Resources; F. Conferences; G. Jewish Educational Resources; H. Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion; I. Subject Files.

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

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

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Index Terms
Subjects
Holidays / Jewish education

Personal Names
Israel, Richard J.

Corporate Names
B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations

Media
Sermons

Series A. Writings, 1957-2000

Extent
3.2 linear feet (8 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note
Consists of notes, writings and sermonic material that deal with Jewish living, learning, leadership and spirituality. The material covers his career at UCLA, Yale, in Boston and at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Pennsylvania. The voluminous notes and writings reflect his concern with Jewish identity, civil rights and administrative matters involving Hillel and the issue of Jewish learning and leadership. Included are a number of issues of Moment magazine and the Melton Journal in which his articles were published.

Arrangement
The files are arranged alphabetically, then chronologically within folders.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Bees and beekeeping, 1970s-1980s
Box 1. Folder 2. Chapel sermons at HUC-JIR, 1956
Box 1. Folder 3. Definitions of Jewish terms, 1969
Box 1. Folder 4. Experiential notes, 1970s
Box 1. Folder 5. Funeral sermonic material, 1960s-1980s
Box 1. Folder 7. Judaism and jogging, 1975-1987
Box 1. Folder 8. High Holiday writing, 1960s
Box 1. Folder 9. High Holiday sermons, 1950s-1990s
Box 1. Folder 10. High Holiday sermons, 1960s-1990s
Box 1. Folder 11. High Holiday writing, 1970s
Box 1. Folder 12. Homiletic materials, 1980s
Box 2. Folder 2. Lectures, 1965-1967
Box 2. Folder 3. Lectures, 1966-1970
Box 2. Folder 4. Memorabilia, 1950s-1990s
Box 2. Folder 5. Miscellaneous notes, 1950s-1990s
Box 2. Folder 6. Miscellaneous notes, 1976
Box 2. Folder 7. Miscellaneous notes, 1965-1987
Box 2. Folder 8. Miscellaneous notes, undated
Box 2. Folder 9. Miscellaneous writings, 1960s-1990s
Box 2. Folder 10. Miscellaneous writings, 1980s
Box 2. Folder 11. Miscellaneous writings, 1950s-1980s
Box 3. Folder 1. Miscellaneous writings, 1968-1987
Box 4. Folder 1. Miscellaneous writings, 1961-1989
Box 4. Folder 5. Miscellaneous writings, 1950s-1980s
Box 4. Folder 6. Miscellaneous writings, 1960s
Box 5. Folder 1. Miscellaneous writings, 1980s
Box 5. Folder 3. Miscellaneous writings, 1960s-1980s
Box 5. Folder 4. Miscellaneous writings, 1982-1992
Box 5. Folder 5. Parashot, 1970s-1980s
Box 5. Folder 6. Public prayers, 1950s-1980s
Box 6. Folder 2. Sermonic material, 1970s-1980s
Box 6. Folder 3. Sermonic material, 1974-1995
Box 6. Folder 4. Sermonic material, undated
Box 6. Folder 5. Sermons, 1950s-1960s
Series B. Correspondence, 1950-2000

Extent 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Consists of correspondence with colleagues and friends. The writing covers Israel's rabbinical student years at HUC-JIR in Cincinnati, directing Hillel organizations at UCLA, Yale and in Greater Boston, conference work, business involving Boston's Alperin Schecter Day School, the Bureau of Jewish Education of Rhode Island, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, salary and pension issues as well as correspondence with his publishers and many close friends and rabbinical colleagues.

Arrangement The files are arranged chronologically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 9. Folder 1. Correspondence, 1950-1957
Box 9. Folder 2. Correspondence, 1958-1959
Box 9. Folder 3. Correspondence, 1960-1963
Box 10. Folder 1. Correspondence, 1980-1983
Box 10. Folder 2. Correspondence, 1984-1985
Box 10. Folder 3. Correspondence, 1986-1987
Box 10. Folder 4. Correspondence, 1988-1989
Box 10. Folder 5. Correspondence, 1990-2000
Box 10. Folder 6. Correspondence, undated

Series C. Hillel, 1957-2000

Extent 1.6 linear feet (4 Hollinger boxes)
Scope and Content Note

Contains materials relating to Israel's work with Hillel. Included are memoranda, flyers, pamphlets, news clippings and numerous papers that focus on the Jewish presence within the campus community.

Arrangement

The files are arranged alphabetically, then chronologically within folders.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 11. Folder 1. Boston, Greater, 1970s
Box 11. Folder 2. Boston, Greater, 1985
Box 11. Folder 5. Budget issues, 1980s
Box 11. Folder 8. Campus ministry, 1970s
Box 11. Folder 11. College talk, 1960s-1980s
Box 11. Folder 13. College talk, 1960s-1980s
Box 11. Folder 15. Directors' Conference notes, undated
Box 12. Folder 1. Fundraising, 1960s-1980s
Box 12. Folder 2. Grant request, 1960s
Box 12. Folder 3. Group leadership activities, 1960s
Box 12. Folder 4. Israel trip, 1966
Box 12. Folder 6. Jewish Community Center programming, 1980s
Box 12. Folder 8. Jewish Student Conference, 1969
Box 12. Folder 10. Miscellaneous, 1940s-1980s
Box 12. Folder 15. Miscellaneous, 1981
Box 12. Folder 17. Miscellaneous, 1980s
Series D. Jewish Lifecycle and Ritual Resources, 1940-1990s

Extent 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Consists of writings and related materials pertaining to Jewish lifecycles and rituals. Included are files dealing with wedding, bar/bat mitzvah, circumcision as well as adoption, conversion and intermarriage.

Arrangement The files are arranged alphabetically, then chronologically within folders.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 15. Folder 1. Adoption, 1980s
Box 15. Folder 2. Adultery, undated
Box 15. Folder 4. Bar mitzvah (Temple Israel, Natick, Mass.), 1989
Series E. Jewish Holiday and Festival Resources, 1949-1992

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Comprised of writings and materials involving the Jewish holidays and festivals, including Shabbat.

Arrangement The files are arranged alphabetically, then chronologically within folders.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 17. Folder 1. Chanuka, 1940s-1990s
Box 17. Folder 2. High Holidays at Brandeis University, 1988-1989
Box 17. Folder 4. Passover, 1978
Box 17. Folder 7. Shavuot, 1950s-1970s
Box 17. Folder 8. Sukkot, 1960s-1980s
Box 17. Folder 9. Tisha B’av, 1980s

Series F. Conferences, 1969-1991

Extent 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Consists of writings and resources pertaining to Rabbi Israel’s participation as a speaker and/or workshop leader at Jewish educational and leadership conferences throughout the United States.
Series G. Jewish Educational Resources, 1950-1990s

Extent 1.2 linear feet (3 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Consists of educational resources and writings. Included are materials pertaining to Jewish learning at camps, synagogues and Jewish Community Center workshops. Topics include Jewish Leadership, the Land of Israel, Refuseniks in the Soviet Union, Social Action, Fundraising, The Holocaust and Pluralism.

Arrangement The files are arranged alphabetically then chronologically within folders.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 20. Folder 1. Academy of Religion and Mental Health, 1950s
Box 20. Folder 4. Boston Jewish Community Center, 1980s
Box 20. Folder 5. Brandeis Beit Midrash teaching notes, 1989
Box 20. Folder 7. Discussion guides, 1967
Box 20. Folder 10. Fundraising, 1995
Box 20. Folder 11. Group sensitivity training, 1960s
Box 20. Folder 12. Havurot resources, 1985
Box 20. Folder 15. Holocaust notes, 1980s-1990s
Box 20. Folder 18. Israel trip, 1986
Box 20. Folder 19. Israel travels, 1950s-1980s
Box 20. Folder 21. Jerusalem: Three View, undated
Box 20. Folder 23. Jewish Community Center material, 1980s
Box 21. Folder 1. Jewish identity games/resources, undated
Box 21. Folder 2. Jewish identity games/resources, undated
Box 21. Folder 5. Jewish learning material, 1980s-1990s
Box 21. Folder 7. Non-verbal communication exercises, 1960s
Box 21. Folder 8. Other congregations’ prayers/services, 1960s-1970s
Box 21. Folder 13. Rhode Island Bureau of Jewish Education, undated
Box 21. Folder 15. Sermonic material, 1960s-1980s
Box 22. Folder 1. Solomon Schecter Day School (Newton, Mass.), 1985
Box 22. Folder 2. Soviet Union trip, 1974
Box 22. Folder 3. Teaching materials, 1950s-1982

**Series H. Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1950-1957**

**Extent** 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

**Scope and Content Note** The series is a record of Israel's work while a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. Included are his voluminous class notes, syllabi distributed by instructors as well as writings and notes pertaining to his training in pastoral counseling at Bellevue Hospital in New York. There are also several copies of the satirical student journal, The Quandary. This collection provides a vivid picture of the HUC-JIR student life and curriculum in the 1950s.

**Arrangement** The files are arranged alphabetically then chronologically within folders.

**Box and Folder Listing**

Box 23. Folder 1. Bible class notes, 1950s
Box 23. Folder 2. Clinical pastoral work notes [Restricted], 1950s
Box 23. Folder 3. Hebrew language class notes (while in Israel), 1954
Box 23. Folder 4. History class notes, 1950s
Box 23. Folder 5. Human Relations/Pastoral Work notes, 1950s
Box 23. Folder 6. Human Relations class notes, 1950-1957
Box 23. Folder 7. Human Relations class notes, 1950-1957
Box 23. Folder 8. Introduction to Judaism class notes, 1951
Box 23. Folder 9. Jewish Religious Thought class notes, 1950s
Box 24. Folder 1. Liturgy class notes, 1953
Box 24. Folder 3. Miscellaneous class notes, 1950-1957
Box 24. Folder 4. Philosophy class notes, 1950s
Box 24. Folder 5. Skits, Songs, "Quandarys" (student magazine), 1951-1957
Box 24. Folder 6. Talmud class notes, 1951
Series I. Subject Files, 1946-1992

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Included are biographical material (including material from his high school and undergraduate student days), Israel's work with the Boston Jewish Community Center, pension matters and the controversy involving Christmas decorations in Hamden, Connecticut in 1961.

Arrangement The files are arranged alphabetically by individual subjects, then chronologically within folders.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 25. Folder 1. Biographical material, 1946-1956
Box 25. Folder 2. Biographical material, 1949-1991
Box 25. Folder 4. Biographical material, 1959-1985
Box 25. Folder 6. Boston Jewish Community Center job description, 1985
Box 25. Folder 7. Hamden, Conn. - Christmas controversy, 1961
Box 25. Folder 8. Homosexuality and Judaism, 1973
Box 25. Folder 9. Harvard University behavior class, 1979
Box 25. Folder 10. House (Richard J. Israel's) at Yale University, 1960s
Box 25. Folder 12. Pension plan, 1980s
Box 25. Folder 14. Synagogue Council of Massachusetts, 1986