A Finding Aid to the
Aaron Wise Papers

Manuscript Collection No. 818
Biographical Sketch

Born in Cincinnati in 1913, Aaron Wise graduated from the University of Cincinnati and was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1938. For the first nine years of his rabbinate he served as rabbi of the Nott Terrace Synagogue in Schenectady, New York where he had a weekly radio broadcast. In 1947 he helped found Adat Ari El in North Hollywood, California, a congregation he served for the next fifty-two years. Wise developed the synagogue’s school, community education programs and facilities, and even co-designed the chapel’s stained glass windows in 1949. Under his guidance, the synagogue gained a national reputation for its pioneering adult education classes, its Darshanim program that offered lay congregants the opportunity to explain the weekly Torah reading during Saturday morning services, and its commitment to equal status for women. In 1986, the synagogue became the first major Conservative congregation to hire a woman as a pulpit rabbi.

Active in social causes, Wise marched with Martin Luther King Jr. in the South and was an early opponent of the war in Vietnam. He helped create the San Fernando Valley’s first Jewish day camp and nursery school, and was a leader in establishing the West Coast branch of the University of Judaism. After his retirement from the rabbinate, Wise co-created and taught the 10-week university course "Making Marriage Work", in which engaged and newly married couples learned to cope with the difficulties of married life by working with trained counselors. Nearly 6,000 people completed the program with only a 9% divorce rate.

Wise also served as president of the Southern California Board of Rabbis and was a member of the executive counsel of the Rabbinical Assembly of America. He and his wife Miriam had three children. Wise died in 1999.

Scope and Content

Collection consisting almost entirely of sermons. Includes one folder of personal miscellaneous items (clippings, etc.) and one folder of student notebooks.

Arrangement

This 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 Aaron Wise Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-818. Aaron Wise Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance

Received from Miriam Wise, Los Angeles, Calif., October 2007.

Processing Information

Processed by Kevin Proffitt, September 2011.

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Index Terms

Subjects
Rabbis

Corporate Names
Adat Ari El (North Hollywood, Calif.)

Media
Sermons
Series A. General, 1960-1980

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Sermons, 1960-1980
Box 1. Folder 2. Sermons, 1960-1980
Box 1. Folder 5. Sermons, 1960-1980
Box 1. Folder 7. Sermons, 1960-1980
Box 1. Folder 8. Sermons, 1960-1980
Box 2. Folder 1. Personal miscellaneous, 1960-1980
Box 2. Folder 3. Sermons [miscellaneous], 1960-1980
Box 2. Folder 4. Sermons [miscellaneous], 1960-1980
Box 2. Folder 5. Sermons [miscellaneous], 1960-1980
Box 2. Folder 7. Sermons [miscellaneous], 1960-1980
Box 2. Folder 10. Sermons, 1960-1980