



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**A Finding Aid to the
Richard G. Hirsch Papers**

Manuscript Collection No. 868



Collection Summary

Title	Richard G. Hirsch Papers
Dates	1957-2009 (bulk 1991-2009)
Collection Number	MS-868
Repository	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator	Hirsch, Richard G.
Extent	3 linear feet (3 record cartons)
Language of the Material	English and Hebrew

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch

Richard G. Hirsch was born in Cleveland, Ohio and earned his B.A. from the University of Cincinnati and B.H.L. from Hebrew Union College in 1947. He received his ordination and M.H.L. from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 1951. The seminary later honored him with a Doctor of Divinity degree (1976) and a D.H.L. (1999).

After serving as rabbi of Chicago's Temple Emanuel (1951-1952) and Denver's Temple Emanuel (1953-1956), he was appointed director of the Chicago Federation and Great Lakes Council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (1956-1961). In this capacity, he was instrumental in establishing new Reform synagogues, initiated the Live and Learn Institutes (an intensive adult education retreat program), and organized the Chicago Interreligious Conference on Religion and Race.

Hirsch was the founding director of the UAHC Religious Action Center (RAC) in Washington, D.C., charting the course of the Reform movement's national center for political action and social justice from its inception in 1962 until 1973. He invited the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the United Negro College Fund, and the Citizens' Crusade Against Poverty to set up their headquarters in the RAC; in effect, RAC became Martin Luther King's Washington office, and much of the legislation of the United States' civil rights acts was formulated on its premises. As a civil rights leader, he organized Jewish participation in the March on Washington (August 28, 1963) and the Jewish response to King's call to Selma, Alabama. Hirsch also served as the Washington representative of the Synagogue Council of America as well as the National Conference for Soviet Jewry, testifying frequently before Congressional committees.

In 1972, he was elected the executive director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, accepting the position on condition that WUPJ's international headquarters be moved to Jerusalem. The Reform movement acquiesced; and in 1973, he and his family moved to Israel.

In 1978, Hirsch helped found the Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA) and later ARZENU, the International Body of Reform Zionists. He was instrumental in helping organize kibbutz Yahel, dedicated in 1976, and kibbutz Lotan, dedicated in 1983. Hirsch advocated building attractive facilities for synagogue-community centers and was influential in planning and raising funds for the construction of many buildings, including Beit Daniel in Tel Aviv and Or Hadash in Haifa.

Hirsch also served in leadership positions in the broader Zionist world. He was elected chairman of the Zionist General Council (1987-1992); served as chairman of the World Zionist Committee for Redesign and Reorganization of the WZO (1993-1993; elected president in 1997) of the 33rd World Zionist Congress, and was co-chairman of the Jewish Agency's Commission on the Former Soviet Union. He also remains a member of the Executives of both the WZO and the Jewish Agency.

Upon his retirement from WUPJ in 1999, Hirsch was elected honorary life president of the World Union. The auditorium in the Mercaz Shimshon was designated the Bella and Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch Theater. The following year, Hirsch published his fifth book: *From the Hill to the Mount — A Reform Zionist Quest* (2000); his previous works include *Judaism and Cities in Crisis* (1961); *There Shall Be No Poor* (1965); *The Way of the Upright* (1973); and *Thy Most Precious Gift* (1974). In addition, he contributed chapters and introductions to more than a dozen other books as well as articles to numerous publications, in both English and Hebrew.

In 1954 Hirsch married Bella Rosencweig. They had four children: Ora, Raphael, Ammiel, and Emmet.

--Adapted from "Hirsch, Richard". Encyclopaedia Judaica.

Scope and Content

Correspondence, speeches, talks, and articles by or about Richard Hirsch. These are organized topically according to major developments related to his roles in the World Zionist Organization and the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

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 Richard G. Hirsch Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows: [Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-868. Richard G. Hirsch Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.
Provenance	Received from Richard G. Hirsch, Jerusalem, Israel, July 2010.
Processing Information	Processed by Michelle Wirth Detroit, April 2012. This collection was arranged and described according to minimal-processing standards. Funding, in part, for the arrangement and description of this collection was provided by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Index Terms

Subjects	Israel / Rabbis / Reform Judaism / Zionism
Personal Names	Hirsch, Richard G.
Corporate Names	Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism / World Union for Progressive Judaism / World Zionist Organization

Series A. General, 1957-2009

Box and Folder Listing

- Box 1. Folder 1-8. Autobiographical.
- Box 1. Folder 9-10. Speeches, 1957-1972
- Box 2. Folder 1-9. Talks and articles, 1981-2009
- Box 2. Folder 10. Talks and articles. World Zionist Organization, 1999-2009
- Box 2. Folder 11. Establishing Reform Zionism and moving the World Union for Progressive Judaism to Israel.
- Box 3. Folder 1. World Union for Progressive Judaism affiliation with World Zionist Organization/Conservative movement/Reorganization of World Zionist Organization-Jewish Agency for Israel.
- Box 3. Folder 2-3. The Reform movement and the World Zionist Organization, 1991-1992
- Box 3. Folder 4-5. World Zionist Organization elections, 1992
- Box 3. Folder 6-7. Conversion battle/1993 reform on subject of proselytizing, 1993