

THE PAPERS of STEPHEN S. WISE (1874-1949) from the American Jewish Historical Society

We are pleased to be able to offer the American Jewish Historical Society/Brandeis University microfilm collection of the papers of Stephen S. Wise.

WISE'S LIFE

The famous rabbi, scholar and activist was born in Budapest in 1874, the descendant of a distinguished family of rabbis. He came to the United States at the age of seventeen months, graduated from Columbia University at eighteen and took his first pastorate the year later at New York's Madison Avenue Synagogue. In 1900 he became rabbi at Temple Beth Israel in Portland, Oregon, and during his six years in Portland was actively involved in interfaith cooperation, social service and civic leadership—interests which also characterized his later life. During this time he also received his PhD from Columbia.

In 1906, after considering and rejecting a call to the pulpit of Temple Emanuel, New York City, he returned to New York and founded the Free Synagogue in 1907. A dispute with Temple Emanuel had convinced him that complete freedom of expression for the rabbi, a position with which the Temple Emanuel Board of Trustees did not agree, was essential for him. His "Open Letter to the Members of Temple Emanuel of New York on the Freedom of the Jewish Pulpit" is famous. By making a public issue of pulpit freedom, Wise also helped strengthen the liberal forces in American Judaism. (He remained rabbi at the Free Synagogue for fifty years.)

Wise's later career was legendary:

He was a prolific writer, the author of numerous articles and books, and well as a powerful speaker, much in demand by Jewish and non-Jewish groups alike.

He was a prominent Zionist -- founder of the New York Federation of Zionist Societies, one of the leaders in the formation of the nationwide Federation of American Zionists, and American secretary of the world Zionist movement.

He was the Chairman of the United Palestine Appeal and represented Zionist interests at the Versailles Peace Conference.

He was active in a number of political campaigns and led the City Affairs Committee of New York, ultimately helping bring down the corrupt administration of Mayor James J. Walker.

He played a major part in the establishment of the American Jewish Congress and was an organizer of the World Jewish Congress.

He was the founder of the Jewish Institute of Religion, which provided training of rabbis from all branches of Judaism.

He was a social liberal, co-founder of the NAACP and the ACLU, and active in such organizations as the Child Labor Committee, the Old Age Pension League, the Religion and Labor Foundation, and the League to Enforce Peace. He also vigorously battled for the rights of workers to organize.

He sounded the first warning of the dangers of Nazism to the Jewish and non-Jewish world and presented the Jewish cause to President Roosevelt and the U.S. State Department.



The microfilm collection of Wise's papers includes the following sections:

Personal Affairs

Biographical information; personal documents; honors; early career correspondence; family correspondence; personal correspondence; miscellaneous personal affairs.

Publications

Articles; books; correspondence with publishers; Opinion magazine; radio debates and special programs; invitations to speak; prayers; speeches and reactions to Wise's speeches; sermons and tributes.

Free Synagogue

Synagogue affairs; Free Synagogue speakers; general correspondence regarding the Free Synagogue.

Jewish Institute of Religion

Institute affairs; correspondence with individuals.

American Jewish Affairs

Papers pertaining to organizations such as the Baroness Fund, Bnai Brith, UHC, CCAR and many others; papers on subjects such as education, Hebrew in N.Y. schools, and Reform Judaism; correspondence with individuals.

Relations with non-Jews

Papers on anti-Semitism, including correspondence with George Bernard Shaw and Henry Ford; correspondence with institutions such as the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the Ethical Culture Society, and the Church Peace Union; correspondence with individuals such as Henry Emerson Fosdick, Reinhold Niebuhr, Norman Vincent Peale and John H. Holmes.

New York Affairs

Papers covering the Civic Affairs Committee, charities, crime, education, elections, health, housing and unemployment; correspondence with figures such as Fiorello LaGuardia, David Sarnoff, and John D. and Nelson A. Rockefeller.

U.S. Affairs

Papers on education; Federal Government/Congressional affairs; Federal Government/Presidential Affairs (including correspondence with Woodrow Wilson, Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman); labor; health and welfare; legal affairs; war and peace; correspondence with many well-known figures such as Hugo Black, John Dewey, Samuel Gompers, Cordell Hull, Will Durant, William Douglas, Harold Ickes, Upton Sinclair and George Gershwin.

**World Affairs**

Papers organized by country, with a large amount of material on Germany, 1923-43; papers on organizations such as the Comité des Delegations Juives, the Jewish World Relief Organization, the International Committee for Political Prisoners, the League of Nations, and the United Nations; correspondence on world affairs, 1919-1946.

The Press

Clippings from the Jewish and non-Jewish press, 1900-1949.

American Jewish Congress and World Jewish Congress

American Jewish Congress committees, concerns and correspondence; World Jewish Congress correspondence.

Refugees

Organizations; papers on immigration policies, individual cases.

Zionism

Papers concerning many different Zionist organizations; correspondence with famous figures including David Ben-Gurion, Bernard Baruch, Louis Brandeis, Pearl Buck, Benjamin Cardozo, Abba Eban, Felix Frankfurter, Theodore Herzl, Julian Mack, Henry Morgenthau (Sr. And Jr.) and Chaim Weizmann.

Palestine and the State of Israel

Papers on/correspondence with many organizations, from the Hebrew University, to the UJA/UPA, to the Jewish National Fund.

Arts and Letters

Books and reviews; correspondence with literary figures such as Sholem Asch, Taylor Caldwell, Alfred Knopf and Irving Stone; papers on the cinema, music, painting, poetry, sculpture and theater.

General Individual Correspondence**Requests for Aid**

This fascinating microfilm collection will interest all libraries with collections in Jewish Studies, 20th-century history, and religion.