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Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Founders' Day
address and luncheon talk. 1992-1993.

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**Hebrew Union College-
Jewish Institute Of Religion**



Founders' Day Exercises

Wednesday, March 10, 1993
11:00 a.m.

PROGRAM

PROCESSIONAL

Brian Webster
Graduate Student Association

Andrew Kotzen Koren
Rabbinic Student Association

INVOCATION

Dr. Adam Kamesar
Associate Professor of Hellenistics

READER

Dr. Mark Washofsky
Associate Professor of Rabbinics

AWARDING OF DEGREES

Dr. Alfred Gottschalk
President

PRESENTATION OF ACADEMIC HOODS

Rabbi Kenneth E. Ehrlich
Dean

CONFIRMATION OF DEGREES

Charles H. Tobias, Jr.
Board of Governors
Hebrew Union College-
Jewish Institute of Religion

Jacques C. Morris
Midwest Council
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

ADDRESS

"STEPHEN S. WISE - THE GIANT OF HIS TIME:
MORALIST, ZIONIST, PLURALIST"

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman
President, The Wexner Heritage Foundation

BENEDICTION

Dr. Richard S. Sarason
Professor of Rabbinic Literature and Thought

RECESSIONAL

DIRECTOR OF CHOIR

Bonia Shur
Director of Liturgic Arts

GUEST CANTOR

Cantor Gail P. Hirschenfang
Birmingham, Michigan

DOCTOR OF DIVINITY, *Honoris Causa*

Recipients

Rabbi Howard I. Bogot
New York, New York

Rabbi Alan D. Bregman
Chicago, Illinois

Rabbi Michael V. Fox
Madison, Wisconsin

Rabbi Aaron D. Koplin
Sarasota, Florida

Rabbi Daniel F. Polish
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

Rabbi Fredric S. Pomerantz
Closter, New Jersey

Rabbi Howard Shapiro
West Palm Beach, Florida

Rabbi Donald M. Splansky
Framingham Centre, Massachusetts

Rabbi Barry Tabachnikoff
Miami, Florida

Rabbi Dov Taylor
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HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

Cincinnati • New York • Los Angeles • Jerusalem

Vice President for
Planning and Development

March 12, 1993

Brookdale Center
One West 4th Street
New York, N.Y. 10012-1186
Tel: (212) 674-5300
Fax: (212) 533-0129

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman
President
The Wexner Heritage Foundation
551 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Herb:

Foremost among the reasons I am glad that I was able to attend Founders Day is the opportunity to hear your talk about Stephen S. Wise. While I had read about this extraordinary man before, your incisive, elegant, authoritative commentary truly brought Wise to life. As I listened to you, I thought of the images of Stephen Wise I had seen in newsreel footage and the power of his voice (even when reproduced by old technology) and tried to imagine him in your classroom. Your words, provocative and personal, were spellbinding. Thank you for a memorable time.

I remarked to Fred Gottschalk and others that I hope that we can provide a copy of your speech, in typescript or perhaps on audiotape, to every member of the Board of Overseers of the New York school. All our Governors and Overseers could benefit from your knowledge of Wise, his accomplishments and failures, his impact on his times, but New York school board members would derive special pleasure from such a concise and comprehensive description of the founding and heritage of JIR.

Your talk also reminded me of one of Fred's remarks at the JIR anniversary lunch last November -- his announcement that he had appointed you to lead the effort to complete funding the Stephen Wise chair through gifts from JIR alumni. I hope that you and I can get together soon to talk about that project. I would also welcome a chance to bring you up to date on the endowment campaign and our celebration dinner on May 12.

With warm regards.

Sincerely,

John S. Borden

FOUNDER'S DAY

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - CINCINNATI

March 10, 1993

by Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

STEPHEN S. WISE - THE GIANT OF HIS TIME

MORALIST, ZIONIST, PLURALIST

Mr. President, Honored faculty, colleagues, students, ladies and gentlemen. I am keenly aware of the honor implicit in this invitation to present The Founder's Day address, and thank you for the opportunity. There are two Wises, the memories of whom resonate this day, but only one of whom I had the exquisite pleasure of knowing well and close up. That was Stephen. Isaac is known to you, in this city, in this school, with much greater familiarity, and it would be an insult to your intelligence if I were to recite biographical material from books which most of you know far more intimately than I. Therefore, I shall deal exclusively with the man I knew in the flesh for many years, with the fervent hope that you will consider this no disrespect to the man whom I know only as a reflection of what others have written about him.

Stephen Samuel Wise was a man shaped in the matrix of his time, as all of us are, but his time was more tumultuous than most and embraced the seminal events of this century - Zionism,

two World Wars, the Holocaust, the birth of Israel and the broadening of the Reform movement through the seminary he founded, and the kind of rabbinate he practiced. These events and movements were the stuff of his life - utterly consuming his prodigious energy. He was the leading American Jew of the first half of the 20th century - his name and deeds familiar to the entire Jewish population and a good part of the non-Jewish as well, throughout the entire United States. In an era of no airplanes, he travelled scores of thousands of miles each year by train. On that rainy day in April 1949, hundreds of porters and red caps marched from Grand Central Station to Carnegie Hall to attend his funeral, for they all knew and respected him.

The lives of Stephen and Isaac intersected only once, and only by correspondence at that. Stephen Wise, in the spring of 1892, as he prepared to graduate from Columbia, at the age of 18, was thinking of completing his rabbinical training. He had studied in the Semitics Department at Columbia with Richard Gottheil, son of Gustav Gottheil, the rabbi at Temple Emanu-El. And now he wrote to the aging Isaac Wise about the possibility of studying for the rabbinate under the direction of HUC faculty, but not be resident in Cincinnati. He wanted to begin a doctorate at Columbia with Gottheil, and requested permission to remain in New York as his base. Isaac Wise, at first suggested that the young man reverse the plan, but sensing resistance, reluctantly agreed to register Stephen Wise in absentia, and the faculty at the college began outlining work for him to undertake.

Following his father's counsel as to where he should study, Wise opted for Europe, went to Vienna and began to work under the great Adolph Jellinek, the chief exponent of Wissenschaft des Judentums, from whom he received s'micha. He returned to the U.S. to become a junior rabbi at B'nai Jeshurun, then on Madison Avenue in New York.

Many years later, in 1915, when Wise was creating a Zionist movement in the United states, he encountered the strong anti-Zionism emanating from Cincinnati. He wanted to press an attack on Kaufman Kohler and David Phillipson, but Brandeis urged a more cautious policy. Wise agreed and cancelled a speaking engagement in Cincinnati saying that "Phillipson and men of his stamp must be left severely and contemptuously alone." A month later, in response to insistent demands, he rescheduled and spoke in a calm and friendly manner, stressing the need for unity. The outright hostility of the Reform leaders compared poorly to the conciliatory statements of Wise. Slowly the anti-Zionist crowd was isolated, and Brandeis' strategy was vindicated. These were Wise's only contacts with Cincinnati.

There are two chief biographers of Stephen Wise, both still living. The first is Dr. Carl Hermann Voss, a Christian minister whose background included Union Theological Seminary and the Yale Divinity School. He evolved into an incredibly devoted Zionist, worked alongside of Wise, wrote several books about him and also recorded in still another volume the life-long friendship between him and John Haynes Holmes, the then leading Protestant minister

in New York. Voss, now in the 9th decade of life is a splendid model of liberal Christianity in its most admirable form, still vigorous, charming and available for any who wish to plumb his encyclopedic knowledge of the life and times of Wise. The second biographer is a much younger man, Melvin Urofsky, professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, who has done an excellent research and written in a most engaging style. His volume, entitled "A Voice that Spoke for Justice", stresses most beautifully the classic integration of Judaism and Americanism which marked Wise's approach to public life. An enduring influence on Wise was the philosophy and personality of Brandeis who said of himself "my approach to Zionism was through Americanism...Zionism is essentially a movement of freedom, a movement to give the Jews more freedom."

When Wise was battling within the Reform movement to combat the charge that Zionism was dangerous and anti-American because of its dual-loyalty implications, President Woodrow Wilson appointed Brandeis to the Supreme Court. This enabled Wise gleefully to ask what David Phillipson, Samuel Schulman and others thought about the president naming a Zionist to the Court, a man they had denounced as un-American.

Zionism was the great fire in his life, born out of the passion generated through his contact with Herzl at the Second Congress in Basle in 1898. Although only 25 years old at the time, Wise was praised by Herzl as the foremost Zionist speaker in America. Such encomiums of course went to his leonine head,

and during a long life on the public platform he attempted to prove Herzl right. He created organizations by which to spread the message and labored through incredible minutiae of meetings, minutes, by-laws, personalities, egos - all the processes of political maneuvering required to obtain consensus and get some action started. First came the World Jewish Congress, later the American Jewish Congress, both of which he founded and funded, and over which he presided for decades. There was the Zionist Organization of America, and the United Palestine Appeal - and at one point, in 1936, he was simultaneously president of all four bodies. And he did succeed in starting and sustaining the slow but inexorable acceptance by American Jewry of the need for and legitimacy of the movement toward Jewish statehood in Palestine.

This volatile man was continuously sparking off major bursts of creativity. He wrote to his wife Louise almost every day of his life, and in a letter in 1909, he broached an idea: "Now, madam, please hold your breath while I tell you something. Why shouldn't I have a school for the training of Jewish ministers?....The practical experience, training and discipline they could get under me! I am just aflame with the idea and I will do it, and you'll help me and it will be blessed of God."

The idea lay dormant for eleven years, during which he became convinced that due to his struggles with the HUC and CCAR over the Zionist issue, he would never be able to win them over to any of his ideas. The one personal instrument Wise had at his disposal, was the Free Synagogue. This was born after his

contretemps with Louis Marshall, president of Temple Emanu-El, over the principle of freedom of the pulpit. Wise and Marshall were discussing the possibility of the former becoming the rabbi of the New York cathedral-synagogue.

Wise: "If I go to Emanu-El, the pulpit must be free while I preach therein.

Marshall: "Dr. Wise, I must say to you at once that such a condition cannot be complied with; the pulpit of Emanu-El has always been and is subject to and under the control of the board of trustees."

Wise exploded and there was a strong exchange with other trustees at the meeting. Some did not agree with the "Marshall Law" expressed in the inflexible position. Jacob Schiff called and asked Wise to come for a walk on Fifth Avenue. He said, "Of course they want to restrict your sermons, but you take it (the job) anyhow. After you're elected, tell them to go to hell - and I'll back you up."

Later that evening, Wise wrote an answer to Louis Marshall:

"Dear Sir: If your letter of December first be expressive of the thought of the trustees of Temple Emanu-El, I beg to say that no self-respecting minister of religion, in my opinion, could consider a call to a

pulpit which, in the language of your communication, shall always be subject to, and under the control of, the board of trustees. I am, yours very truly, Stephen S. Wise."

In that one sentence, Wise struck the clarion note, the clanging of the bell of emancipation, which liberated every one of us sitting in this synagogue, and enabled us in the decades since to practice our profession without fear of harassment or rebuke. We are free men today because of what he said and did then. We take this freedom for granted, as an inalienable right, but it was certainly not so until his sword flashed.

And so he created the Free synagogue - free in pulpit and pew - no dues, no assigned seats, no muzzling of speech. For 30 years the Free Synagogue had no home. Services were conducted in Carnegie Hall on Sunday morning, the only time the Hall had no concerts, and could be rented. Between 1500 and 2000 persons attended every week to hear the music of his oratory and the thunder of his exhortations. What he said was always news on Monday morning's New York Times.

It was to the Free Synagogue board that he turned with his idea of creating an alternate seminary. At a special meeting in November 1920, the board gave its blessing to the plan. The discussion ranged around the concept of the rabbinate as a profession, akin to medicine and law, requiring a broad-based liberal education. At that time both H.U.C. and the Jewish

Theological Seminary accepted youths of thirteen or fourteen, who went through preparatory work before entering rabbinical studies. Wise believed that an adequate college education was a prerequisite, and the J.I.R. should be a professional graduate school.

Another consideration was that the new seminary should be pluralistic in approach (how advanced that thinking was three-quarters of a century ago) for both its students and faculty, embracing all denominations and ideologies. The first time I ever heard the phrase K'lal Yisrael was in my opening interview in the spring of 1940. Dr. Henry Slonimsky asked me if I knew how to dance, and Dr. Wise asked me if I was comfortable in a school where the differences between Orthodox, Conservative and Reform were relevant only insofar as one could learn something new from a fellow student who practiced Judaism differently from oneself. I remember years of sitting in class without a kipa, next to Usher Kirshblum, , who was destined to become a president of the Mizrachi Zionist organization. Neither he nor I suffered from our differing approaches to headgear, and each of us learned much from the other (I in the realm of texts, and he in English literature). There was a wonderful atmosphere of pluralism in the school.

A third basic premise was that the students had to participate in the social problems of their day, in order to understand the social justice precepts of Prophetic Judaism. Wise carried out this dictum to the very fullest throughout his

entire life. He was the Commissioner of Child Labor for the State of Oregon, when he served as rabbi in Portland. He worked with John Haynes Holmes to break up the corrupt influence of Tammany Hall, a political machine which dominated New York City government. He backed the labor union movement, taking the side of the workers against the U.S. Steel Company in the great strike of 1921. He was a pacifist in World War I, and volunteered to work in a naval shipyard to prove both his patriotism and his opposition to bearing arms. He actively supported liberal and reform candidates for office and was found in every struggle for the rights of women and children and minorities. It was natural, therefore, that he should want to teach the future rabbis that practicing the social gospel would make it easier for them to preach it.

For many years he signed his letters as Acting President of the J.I.R. and tried hard to secure an internationally recognized scholar as President. He offered the post to Emil Hirsch of Chicago, who demurred because of age, as did the well-known English scholar Israel Abrahams, for the same reason. Wise really tried hard to persuade Mordecai Kaplan, many of whose views conformed to the basic philosophy of the JIR, to accept the presidency, but Kaplan feared that Henry Slonimsky, the Dean, and Chaim Tchernowitz, the revered Talmudist, were both opposed to his Reconstructionist ideas. After several years of talks, Wise finally realized that he himself would have to accept the title as well as the duties - and so it was until his death.

The faculty was brilliant, gathered from Europe as well as America, with Wise making trips abroad to convince scholars to migrate to the United States. How fortuitous that this little school, almost inadvertently, saved the lives of many talented men, who would have perished a decade later in the fires of the Shoah, by offering them jobs and also finding positions in many other institutes and universities. Those who, at one time or another, taught at the JIR included Israel Abrahams, Salo Baron, Ismar Elbogen, Kaplan, Ralph Marcus, Julian Oberman, Guido Kisch, Shalom Spiegel, Harry Wolfson, David Yellin, John Tepfer, Harry Orlinsky, and many others.

As for the students, the highlight of their week was the Thursday session, listed in the catalogue as "Problems of the Ministry." With Wise in the chair and a dozen of us seated around a circular table, we expected to hear about conducting funerals or how to fight with a congregational board, but instead were treated to inside tidbits and episodes in Stephen Wise's chaotic public life. Out of his pocket would come the latest telegram he had sent to President Roosevelt, or the latest argument he had held with the American Jewish Committee which disagreed with absolutely everything he was doing to fight Hitler. We became privy to the broadest spectrum of Jewish concerns worldwide, and came away with his conception of what a rabbi should deal with outside the four walls of his synagogue. He focused, laser-like, on three subjects: the struggle for Jewish political independence; freedom from oppression

everywhere, and the contribution Jewish thought and values could make to the betterment of society for all people.

He showed us the pain and frustration, as well as the glory, which accompanied these struggles. I shall never forget that moment in August 1942 when he pulled from his pocket Gerhard Riegner's telegram from Geneva which was the first formal charge accusing Hitler of intending to murder the entire Jewish population of Europe. And month after month, he continued to relate to us how Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles urged him not to publish the telegram until its information could be confirmed through the State Department representative at the Vatican. Permission finally came ten weeks later, with the statement to Wise that the United States government "can now confirm and justify your deepest fears." We students learned from Wise that our deepest obligation was to fight, at whatever cost, for the creation of a Jewish state in order to protect the security of the Jewish people. We learned it through the burning passion of his eyes and voice - we learned it week after week, year after year, from the manner in which he impacted our very souls by exposing his own to us, his beloved students.

Wise was 60 years old when he began the most important fight of his life - the battle against Hitler. This battle was fought on many fronts: first, against the Jewish leadership in Germany which assured him in the fall of 1932 that Hitler would never come to power and that attacks against Hitler would strengthen not weaken him, therefore, it was best simply to ignore him; and

secondly, against the Jewish organizational leadership in the United States who were happy to accept that line and accused Wise of being a sensationalist and trouble-maker. Brandeis alone stood with Wise and said publicly that all Jews must leave Germany immediately.

On January 30, 1933, Franklin Roosevelt was inaugurated as President, and the same day Adolf Hitler was installed as Chancellor of the Third Reich. Wise immediately called for a national boycott of Germany and public rallies of protest. The American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith, Jewish Labor Council and other organizations actively opposed Wise's call. The synagogues of America were silent. Wise and his American Jewish Congress organized a rally at Madison Square Garden a few weeks later, with 25,000 people inside and another 30,000 outside in the street. Governor Al Smith, Senator Robert Wagner, 2 Christian bishops, and other luminaries shouted their support.

During the next 6 1/2 years, until World War II broke out, the Jewish organizations continued to oppose; the Jews of America slowly woke up but took no major action, Hitler tightened the noose on German Jews while gobbling up Austria, Czechoslovakia, and armed himself for wider conquests. Wise was heartsick, despairing, alone. Breckenridge Long and the State Department were his chief opponents as he struggled to stimulate FDR to action. He had complete access to the President, and he had allies in Brandeis and Morgenthau, but he failed essentially. The President's closest advisers were telling Roosevelt that the

mood of the country was isolationist, that coming out strongly on behalf of European Jewry would win him no friends or future elections, that America would have to stay out if indeed Hitler was planning war, etc., etc. And in this emotional contest for FDR's ear, Wise lost.

It is ironic indeed that one of the attacks against Wise in later years, long after the fires at Aushwitz were banked, and the guilt-feelings of American Jewry swelled into a search for a scapegoat, was the charge that he had not tried hard enough, that he was, in effect, a shtadlan, a court Jew who bowed to the wishes of his king. It is astonishing that no one less than Elie Wiesel should have accused Wise thirty years later, in 1968, in these words:

"What did American Jews do to aid their brothers in Europe...By the time Stephen Wise (whom I consider a very great man and a very great Jew) talked with Sumner Welles, Wise already knew of Hitler's 'Final Solution.' Welles asked Wise not to reveal this information until it was proven conclusively true, and Wise consented. He gave no information to the press...How could he pledge secrecy when millions of lives were involved?...What happened after Rabbi Wise was released from his pledge? Not much. Not much at all. Did he and other Jewish leaders proclaim hunger strikes to the end? Did they organize daily marches to the White House? They should have shaken heaven and earth,

echoing the agony of their doomed brothers; taken in by Roosevelt's personality, they in a way became accomplices to his inaction."

Such a "cri de coeur" is understandable, but to select as the target the one man who above all others struggled the earliest and the hardest to waken the conscience of Jews and non-Jews in America is unfair and inaccurate. Carl Herman Voss and Melvin Urofsky, the two chief biographers of Wise, both concluded that such charges cannot be justified, and we, the students, who saw him almost daily struggling with the problem, can offer our similar testimony. The villains of the piece were Jewish opposition, Jewish powerlessness, the nature of American society at the time, the State Department and the President.

When it was all over, in 1945, I had the unusual opportunity to experience at first hand the opinion in which Stephen Wise was held by survivors of the Shoah in Europe. I was a chaplain in Germany, assigned to the office of the Adviser on Jewish Affairs to the Commanding General. The adviser was Rabbi Philip Bernstein, fellow-graduate of JIR, and later President of the CCAR. He was a remarkable man - keen, friendly, soft-spoken, powerful in his simple explanations to the topmost army commanders of who the displaced persons were, what they had suffered, what hopes they had for a new future. By 1947, we had a quarter-million Jews in 64 camps in Germany and Austria. I had been recruited by Ben Gurion himself into the Haganah, and was working in Berlin (in American Army uniform) in the Mossad Aliyah

Bet. Our team alone brought 100,000 Jews through that city into the American Zone of Germany. I knew those people, and they knew me. I learned their secrets, including their code language. I heard them often using a word I did not understand - not in Hebrew or Yiddish. It was "stefanka". I sensed the root "stefan" - Stephen. A stefanka was an American dollar, the code word used in black-market dealings. When they wanted to coin a word which connoted America - they took the name of the one person they knew, who symbolized America and American Jews. To them, Stephen Wise represented the person who had done the most to save them and help them.

When Wise came to Germany in 1947 with a small delegation including Naham Goldmann and Jacob Blaustein, to visit the DP camps, he was greeted with tumultuous applause everywhere he went. They shouted his name - and clustered around him in their thousands. When General Lucius Clay gave a luncheon in his honor at Headquarters, Wise was seated at his right and Clay introduced Wise as the leader of American Jewry.

Incidentally, when Golda Myerson came to the United States from Palestine in spring 1948, to raise money for the Haganah, the code-word for one million dollars was - "a Stephen". There could be no higher accolade.

Abba Hillel Silver now took the stage - employing a fierce militancy which American Jews were eager to display. The entire focus was now on one target only - statehood. The dead were behind us - nothing could be done about that - but the future

demanding that a place be created for our people where Jews could be in control of Jewish destiny. Wise was happy to see this proliferation of Zionist action, although not terribly pleased that it was in Silver's hands.

The final regret of his life was that he was not privileged to set foot on the independent soil of the new state. Already the stomach cancer was beginning to sap strength, and every effort to make the trip to Israel was thwarted. The last big event was his 75th birthday on March 17, 1949. Twelve hundred people attended the dinner. President Harry Truman sent Wise one of the pens used to sign the de jure recognition of Israel, and praised him for his life-long fight for social justice based on religious principles. John Haynes Holmes wrote a poem for the occasion:

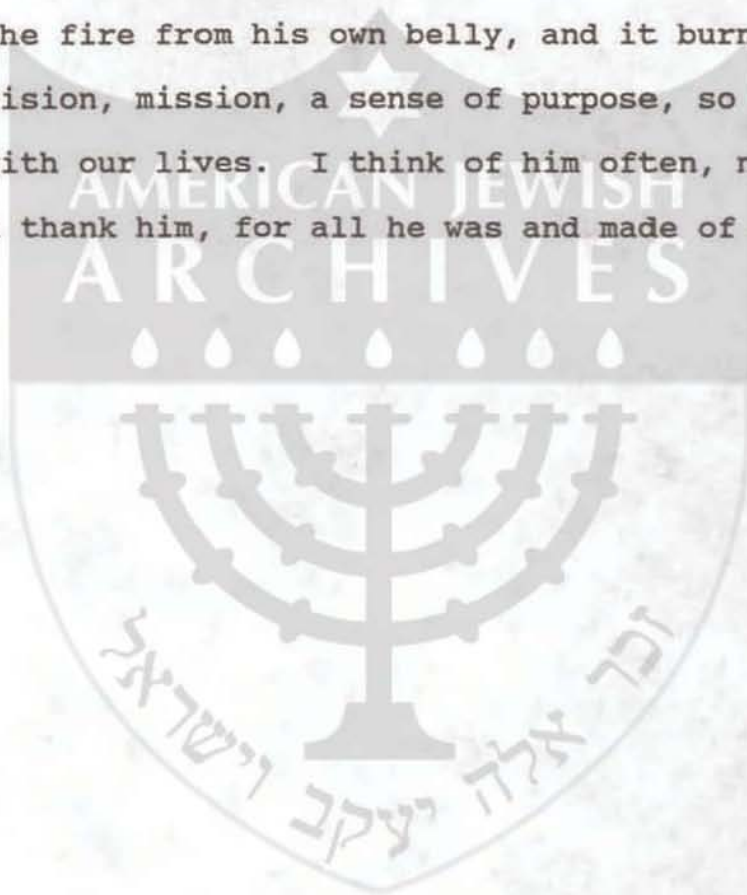
"The years have flown, God's hammer droops and drips,
And you are weary from the ceaseless fight.
But still the living coal burns on your lips.
And high the sword is pointed to the light."

Urofsky's final paragraph is a beautiful tribute:

"Wise slowly went to the rostrum, his hands shaking as he spread out his hand-written talk. It was unusual for him to do this, but he feared the emotions of the evening. Slowly and eloquently he listed his achievements, first among them Zionism,

but he also spoke of all the work still unfinished...And then he raised his fist and shouted 'I'll fight. I'll fight', and the audience came roaring to its feet, the applause rolling on and on as Wise stood there with tears in his eyes."

Four weeks later he was dead. We, his students, loved him with a love surpassing ordinary respect or even reverence, for he gave to us the fire from his own belly, and it burned in ours. He gave us vision, mission, a sense of purpose, so that we knew what to do with our lives. I think of him often, named my son for him, and thank him, for all he was and made of me.



This could be a conclusion

Suggestions for March speech - Founder's Day

1. Is Wise's social justice imperative needed today?
Homelessness; poverty; child welfare; family disintegration
2. Is Wise's religious pluralism needed today?
In U.S., where ^{some} rabbis won't sit on platforms with other rabbis
In Israel, where right-wing religious triumphalism creates fissures in ^{Society}
3. Is Wise's Zionism, with its idealistic base, needed in Israel today
4. Is Wise's sense of dual identities needed today?
in the face of hemorrhaging intermarriage - Jewish identity being devalued and discarded.

SSW - a giant in his time - was also a prophet,
for he identified the issues which afflict us today.

The rabbis ~~are~~ educated in his merged school today
must be given the values which SSW espoused. They are
needed today perhaps even more than ^{3/4} ~~half~~ century ago

Gerhart Riegner, sec-general W.J.C., born in Berlin 1911
(today 82)

Ten years ago, in 1983, gave the ~~first~~ inaugural SSW lecture at the H.U.C. on the subject:

"A Warning to the World"

The efforts of the World Jewish Congress
to mobilize the Christian Churches
Against the Final Solution.

Riegner
He made these points about SSW:

1. He uses the voice of the people, the spokesman of the masses. He said what they felt. He was not afraid.
2. He joined all the great humanitarian causes of his time: Was a great moral force!
 Supported labor unions
 Fought against child labor
 Fought for women's right + Black rights
 Supported an independent Czechoslovakia
 Stood up for the Armenians
3. He was one of first Zionists - attended the Second Congress in Basel in 1898
4. Was a great orator - people came to hear the music of his voice - he was not an original thinker, nor an intellectual giant, but his audiences sensed the moral power of the man.
5. He loved people - not in the abstract, but individuals - refugees from Germany whom he helped get jobs + housing + gave money from his own pocket, to redcaps in Grand Central Station, all of whom he knew from his thousands of trips all over the country.
6. He was Public Enemy Number One in the Nazi press - *Völkischen Beobachter* and *Der Angriff* of Goebbels.

FOUNDER'S DAY

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - CINCINNATI

March 10, 1993

by Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

STEPHEN S. WISE - THE GIANT OF HIS TIME

MORALIST, ZIONIST, PLURALIST

Beloved patriarch Dr. Marcus

Mr. President, Honored faculty, colleagues, students, ladies and gentlemen. I am keenly aware of the honor implicit in this invitation to present The Founder's Day address, and thank you for the opportunity. There are two Wises, the memories of whom resonate this day, but only one of whom I had the exquisite pleasure of knowing well and close up. That was Stephen. Isaac is known to you, in this city, in this school, with much greater familiarity, and it would be an insult to your intelligence if I were to recite biographical material from books which most of you know far more intimately than I. Therefore, I shall deal exclusively with the man I knew in the flesh for many years, with the fervent hope that you will consider this no disrespect to the man whom I know only as a reflection of what ~~others have~~ ^{has been} written about him. *Other*

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two World Wars, the Holocaust, the birth of Israel and the broadening of the Reform movement through the seminary he founded, and the kind of rabbinate he practiced. These events and movements were the stuff of his life - utterly consuming his prodigious energy. He was the leading American Jew of the first half of the 20th century - his name and deeds familiar to the entire Jewish population and a good part of the non-Jewish as well, throughout the entire United States. In an era of no airplanes, he travelled scores of thousands of miles each year by train. On that rainy day in April 1949, hundreds of porters and red caps marched from Grand Central Station to Carnegie Hall to attend his funeral, for they all knew and respected him.

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Following his father's counsel as to where he should study, Wise opted for Europe, went to Vienna and began to work under the great Adolph Jellinek, the chief exponent of Wissenschaft des Judentums, from whom he received s'micha. He returned to the U.S. to become a junior rabbi at B'nai Jeshurun, then on Madison Avenue in New York.

Wise's Zionism was integrated with his Americanism. He saw no conflict, and was not afflicted by the dual-loyalty syndrome which characterized so many in the Reform movement of earlier times. A life-long friend and an enduring influence was Justice Brandeis who said of himself "my approach to Zionism was through Americanism...Zionism is essentially a movement of freedom, a movement to give the Jews more freedom."

When Wise was battling within the Reform movement to combat the charge that Zionism was dangerous and anti-American because of its dual-loyalty implications, President Woodrow Wilson appointed Brandeis to the Supreme Court. This enabled Wise gleefully to ask what David Phillipson, Samuel Schulman and others thought about the president naming a Zionist to the Court, a man they had denounced as un-American.

* Zionism was the great fire in his life, born out of the passion generated through his contact with Herzl at the Second Congress in Basle in 1898. Although only 25 years old at the time, Wise was praised by Herzl as the foremost Zionist speaker in America. ✓ ~~Such encomiums of course went to his leonine head,~~ and during a long life on the public platform he attempted to

prove Herzl right. He created organizations by which to spread the message and labored through incredible minutiae of meetings, minutes, by-laws, personalities, egos - all the processes of political maneuvering required to obtain consensus and get some action started. First came the World Jewish Congress, later the American Jewish Congress, both of which he founded and funded, and over which he presided for decades. There was the Zionist Organization of America, and the United Palestine Appeal - and at one point, in 1936, he was simultaneously president of all four bodies. And he did succeed in starting and sustaining the slow but inexorable acceptance by American Jewry of the need for and legitimacy of the movement toward Jewish statehood in Palestine.

This volatile man was continuously sparking off major bursts of creativity. He wrote to his wife Louise almost every day of his life, and in a letter in 1909, he broached an idea: "Now, madam, please hold your breath while I tell you something. Why shouldn't I have a school for the training of Jewish ministers?... ^{what} ~~the~~ practical experience, training and discipline they could get under me! I am just aflame with the idea and I will do it, and you'll help me and it will be blessed of God."

The idea lay dormant for eleven years, during which he became convinced that due to his struggles with the HUC and CCAR over the Zionist issue, he would never be able to win them over to any of his ideas. ^{And so he decided to found the school by himself.} The one personal instrument Wise had at his disposal, was the Free Synagogue. This was born after his contretemps with Louis Marshall, president of Temple Emanu-El,

over the principle of freedom of the pulpit. Wise and Marshall were discussing the possibility of the former becoming the rabbi of the New York cathedral-synagogue.

Wise: "If I go to Emanu-El, the pulpit must be free while I preach therein.

Marshall: "Dr. Wise, I must say to you at once that such a condition cannot be complied with; the pulpit of Emanu-El has always been and is subject to and under the control of the board of trustees."

Wise exploded and there was a strong exchange with other trustees at the meeting. Some did not agree with the "Marshall Law" expressed in the inflexible position. Jacob Schiff called and asked Wise to come for a walk on Fifth Avenue. He said, "Of course they want to restrict your sermons, but you take it (the job) anyhow. After you're elected, tell them to go to hell - and I'll back you up."

Later that evening, Wise wrote an answer to Louis Marshall:

"Dear Sir: If your letter of December first be expressive of the thought of the trustees of Temple Emanu-El, I beg to say that no self-respecting minister of religion, in my opinion, could consider a call to a pulpit which, in the language of your communication,

shall always be subject to, and under the control of,
the board of trustees. I am, yours very truly, Stephen
S. Wise."

In that one sentence, Wise struck the clarion note, the
clanging of the bell of emancipation, which liberated every one
of us sitting in this synagogue, and enabled us in the decades
since to practice our profession without fear of harassment or
rebuke. We are free men today because of what he said and did
then. We take this freedom for granted, as an inalienable right,
but it was certainly not so until his sword flashed.

And so he created the Free synagogue - free in pulpit and
pew - no dues, no assigned seats, no muzzling of speech. For 30
years the Free Synagogue had no home. Services were conducted in
Carnegie Hall on Sunday morning, the only time the Hall had no
concerts, and could be rented. Between 1500 and 2000 persons
attended every week to hear the music of his oratory and the
thunder of his exhortations. What he said was always news on
Monday morning's New York Times.

It was to the Free Synagogue board that he turned with his
idea of creating ^{the} an alternate seminary. At a special meeting in
November 1920, the board gave its blessing to the plan. The
discussion ranged around the concept of the rabbinate as a
profession, akin to medicine and law, requiring a broad-based
liberal education. At that time both H.U.C. and the Jewish
Theological Seminary accepted youths of thirteen or fourteen, who

went through preparatory work before entering rabbinical studies. Wise believed that an adequate college education was a prerequisite, and the J.I.R. should be a professional graduate school.

Another consideration was that the new seminary should be pluralistic in approach (how advanced that thinking was three-quarters of a century ago) for both its students and faculty, embracing all denominations and ideologies. The first time I ever heard the phrase K'lal Yisrael was in my opening interview in the spring of 1940. ^{Dean} Dr. Henry Slonimsky asked me if I knew how to dance, and Dr. Wise asked me if I was comfortable in a school where the differences between Orthodox, Conservative and Reform were relevant only insofar as one could learn something new from a fellow student who practiced Judaism differently from oneself. I remember years of sitting in class without a kipa, next to Usher Kirshblum, ^{Dr.} "S", who was destined to become a president of the Mizrahi Zionist organization. Neither he nor I suffered from our differing approaches to headgear, and each of us learned much from the other (I in the realm of texts, and he in English literature). There was a wonderful atmosphere of pluralism in the school.

A third basic premise was that the students had to participate in the social problems of their day, in order to understand the social justice precepts of Prophetic Judaism. Wise carried out this dictum to the very fullest throughout his entire life. He was the Commissioner of Child Labor for the

State of Oregon, when he served as rabbi in Portland. He worked with John Haynes Holmes to break up the corrupt influence of Tammany Hall, a political machine which dominated New York City government. He backed the labor union movement, taking the side of the workers against the U.S. Steel Company in the great strike of 1921. He was a pacifist in World War I, and volunteered to work in a naval shipyard to prove both his patriotism and his opposition to bearing arms. He actively supported liberal and reform candidates for office and was found in every struggle for the rights of women and children and minorities. It was natural, therefore, that he should want to teach the future rabbis that practicing the social gospel would make it easier for them to preach it.

For many years he signed his letters as Acting President of the J.I.R. and tried hard to secure an internationally recognized scholar as President. He offered the post to Emil Hirsch of Chicago, who demurred because of age, as did the well-known English scholar Israel Abrahams, for the same reason. Wise really tried hard to persuade Mordecai Kaplan, many of whose views conformed to the basic philosophy of the JIR, to accept the presidency, but Kaplan feared that Henry Slonimsky, the Dean, and Chaim Tchernowitz, the revered Talmudist, were both opposed to his Reconstructionist ideas. After several years of talks, Wise finally realized that he himself would have to accept the title as well as the duties - and so it was until his death.

The faculty was brilliant, gathered from Europe as well as

omit
?
America, with Wise making trips abroad to convince scholars to migrate to the United States. How fortuitous that this little school, almost inadvertently, saved the lives of many talented men, who would have perished a decade later in the fires of the Shoah, by offering them jobs and also finding positions in many other institutes and universities. Those who, at one time or another, taught at the JIR included Israel Abrahams, Salo Baron, Ismar Elbogen, Kaplan, Ralph Marcus, Julian Oberman, Guido Kisch, Shalom Spiegel, Harry Wolfson, David Yellin, John Tepfer, Harry Orlinsky, and many others.

As for the students, the highlight of their week was the Thursday session, listed in the catalogue as "Problems of the Ministry." With Wise in the chair and a dozen of us seated around a circular table, we expected to hear about ^{how to} conducting ~~the~~ funerals or how to fight with a congregational board, but instead were treated to inside tidbits and episodes in Stephen Wise's chaotic public life. Out of his pocket would come the latest telegram he had sent to President Roosevelt, or the latest argument he had held with the American Jewish Committee which disagreed with absolutely everything he was doing to fight Hitler. We became privy to the broadest spectrum of Jewish concerns worldwide, and came away with his conception of what a rabbi should deal with outside the four walls of his synagogue. He focused, laser-like, on three subjects: the struggle for Jewish political independence; freedom from oppression ~~for Jews~~ everywhere, and the contribution Jewish thought and values could

make to the betterment of society for all people.

He showed us the pain and frustration, as well as the glory, which accompanied these struggles. I shall never forget that moment in August 1942 when he pulled from his pocket Gerhard Riegner's telegram from Geneva which was the first formal charge accusing Hitler of intending to murder the entire Jewish population of Europe. And month after month, he continued to relate to us how Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles urged him not to publish the telegram until its information could be confirmed through the State Department representative at the Vatican. Permission finally came ten weeks later, with the statement to Wise that the United States government "can now confirm and justify your deepest fears." We students learned from Wise that our deepest obligation was to fight, at whatever cost, for the creation of a Jewish state in order to protect the security of the Jewish people. We learned it through the burning passion of his eyes and voice - we learned it week after week, year after year, from the manner in which he impacted our very souls by exposing his own to us, his beloved students.

Wise was 60 years old when he began the most important fight of his life - the battle against Hitler. This battle was fought on many fronts: first, against the Jewish leadership in Germany which assured him in the fall of 1932 that Hitler would never come to power and that attacks against Hitler would strengthen not weaken him, therefore, it was best simply to ignore him; and secondly, against the Jewish organizational leadership in the

United States who were happy to accept that line and accused Wise of being a sensationalist and trouble-maker. Brandeis alone stood with Wise and said publicly that all Jews must leave Germany immediately.

On January 30, 1933, Franklin Roosevelt was inaugurated as President, and the same day Adolf Hitler was installed as Chancellor of the Third Reich. Wise immediately called for a national boycott of Germany and public rallies of protest. The American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith, Jewish Labor Council and other organizations actively opposed Wise's call. The synagogues of America were silent. Wise and his American Jewish Congress organized a rally at Madison Square Garden a few weeks later, with 25,000 people inside and another 30,000 outside in the street. Governor Al Smith, Senator Robert Wagner, 2 Christian bishops, and other luminaries shouted their support.

During the next 6 1/2 years, until World War II broke out, the Jewish organizations continued to oppose; the Jews of America slowly woke up but took no major action, Hitler tightened the noose on German Jews while gobbling up Austria, Czechoslovakia, and armed himself for wider conquests. Wise was heartsick, despairing, alone. Breckenridge Long and the State Department were his chief opponents as he struggled to stimulate FDR to action. He had complete access to the President, and he had allies in Brandeis and Morgenthau, but he failed essentially. The President's closest advisers were telling Roosevelt that the mood of the country was isolationist, that coming out strongly on

behalf of European Jewry would win him no friends or future elections, that America would have to stay out if indeed Hitler was planning war, etc., etc. And in this emotional contest for FDR's ear, Wise lost.

It is ironic indeed that one of the attacks against Wise in later years, long after the fires at Aushwitz were banked, and the guilt-feelings of American Jewry swelled into a search for a scapegoat, was the charge that he had not tried hard enough, that he was, in effect, a shtadlan, a court Jew who bowed to the wishes of his king. It is astonishing that no one less than Elie Wiesel should have accused Wise thirty years later, in 1968, in these words:

"What did American Jews do to aid their brothers in Europe...By the time Stephen Wise (whom I consider a very great man and a very great Jew) talked with Sumner Welles, Wise already knew of Hitler's 'Final Solution.' Welles asked Wise not to reveal this information until it was proven conclusively true, and Wise consented. He gave no information to the press...How could he pledge secrecy when millions of lives were involved?...What happened after Rabbi Wise was released from his pledge? Not much. Not much at all. Did he and other Jewish leaders proclaim hunger strikes to the end? Did they organize daily marches to the White House? They should have shaken heaven and earth, echoing the agony of their doomed brothers; taken in by

Roosevelt's personality, they in a way became accomplices to his inaction."

Such a "cri de coeur" is understandable, but to select as the target the one man who above all others struggled the earliest and the hardest to waken the conscience of Jews and non-Jews in America is unfair and inaccurate. Carl Hermann Voss and Melvin Urofsky, the two chief biographers of Wise, both concluded that such charges cannot be justified, and we, the students, who saw him almost daily struggling with the problem, can offer our own similar testimony. The villains of the piece were Jewish opposition, Jewish powerlessness, the nature of American society at the time, the State Department and the President.

When it was all over, in 1945, I had the unusual opportunity to experience at first hand the opinion in which Stephen Wise was held by survivors of the Shoah in Europe. I was a chaplain in Germany, assigned to the office of the Adviser on Jewish Affairs to the Commanding General. The adviser was Rabbi Philip Bernstein, fellow-graduate of JIR, and later President of the CCAR. He was a remarkable man - keen, friendly, soft-spoken, powerful in his simple explanations to the topmost army commanders of who the displaced persons were, what they had suffered, what hopes they had for a new future. By 1947, we had a quarter-million Jews in 64 camps in Germany and Austria. I had been recruited by Ben Gurion himself into the Haganah, and was working in Berlin (in American Army uniform) in the Mossad Aliyah Bet. Our team alone brought 100,000 Jews through that city into

the American Zone of Germany. I knew those people, and they knew me. I learned their secrets, including their code language. I heard them often using a word I did not understand - not in Hebrew or Yiddish. It was "stefanka". I sensed the root "stefan" - Stephen. A stefanka was an American dollar, the code word used in black-market dealings. When they wanted to coin a word which connoted America - they took the name of the one person they knew, who symbolized America and American Jews. To them, Stephen Wise represented the person who had done the most to save them and help them.

When Wise came to Germany in 1947 with a small delegation including Naham Goldmann and Jacob Blaustein, to visit the DP camps, he was greeted with tumultuous applause everywhere he went. They shouted his name - and clustered around him in their thousands. When General Lucius Clay gave a luncheon in his honor at Headquarters, Wise was seated at his right and Clay introduced Wise as the leader of American Jewry.

Incidentally, when Golda Myerson came to the United States from Palestine in spring 1948, to raise money for the Haganah, the code-word for one million dollars was - "a Stephen". There could be no higher accolade.

The final regret of his life was that he was not privileged to set foot on the independent soil of the new state. Already the stomach cancer was beginning to sap strength, and every effort to make the trip to Israel was thwarted. The last big event was his 75th birthday on March 17, 1949. Twelve hundred

people attended the dinner. President Harry Truman sent Wise one of the pens used to sign the de jure recognition of Israel, and praised him for his life-long fight for social justice based on religious principles. John Haynes Holmes wrote a poem for the occasion:

"The years have flown, God's hammer droops and drips,
And you are weary from the ceaseless fight.
But still the living coal burns on your lips.
And high the sword is pointed to the light."

Urofsky's final paragraph is a beautiful tribute:

"Wise slowly went to the rostrum, his hands shaking as he spread out his hand-written talk. It was unusual for him to do this, but he feared the emotions of the evening. Slowly and eloquently he listed his achievements, first among them Zionism, but he also spoke of all the work still unfinished...And then he raised his fist and shouted 'I'll fight. I'll fight', and the audience came roaring to its feet, the applause rolling on and on as Wise stood there with tears in his eyes."

Four weeks later he was dead. We, his students, loved him with a love surpassing ordinary respect or even reverence, for he gave to us the fire from his own belly, and it burned in ours. He gave us vision, mission, a sense of purpose, so that we knew

what to do with our lives. I think of him often, named my son
for him, and thank him, for all he was and made of me.



Quote Slonimsky - "Essays"

1. on SSW - p. 143 bottom to 144 top
2. on chosen people - p. 141
3. on God - (limited) - p. 123, last para to p. 124 middle.



JEANNE R. FORMAN

Ms. Berkman wanted you to know that some papers have recently been put in order and you might want to speak to Abe Peck, Director of Archives about them. They relate to letters Rabbi Wise received about the Holocaust that for political reasons he was unable to release to the world.

Your bio, photo and robe card and hotel request have all been sent in.



HEBREW UNION COLLEGE—JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

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(513) 221-1875

January 14, 1993

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman
The Wexner Heritage Foundation
551 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Rabbi Friedman,

The HUC community is so pleased that you will deliver the Founders' Day address at the Cincinnati campus on Wednesday, March 10 at 11:00 am. Robing and a photography session will begin at 10:00 am in the Classroom Building.

After the Exercises, you and your spouse are invited to a luncheon in Mayerson Hall. Please let us know if she will attend.

Enclosed you will find a hotel reservation card, a robe card and a Founders' Day Procedure. Should you choose to stay at the Vernon Manor Hotel, please return the card to them as soon as possible. At 9:30 am on Founders' Day, a Vernon Manor van will convey guests to campus. The hotel receptionist will direct you to the van location. Following the luncheon, vans will return guests to the hotel.

Please let us know the title of your address for the program and, at your convenience, send us the text. We will also need your biography and a photograph.

We look forward to welcoming you to our campus.

Cordially,

Maxine Berkman
Director, Office of
Community Relations

PROCEDURES FOR HUC FOUNDERS' DAY EXERCISES

Wednesday, March 10, 1993 at 11:00 am

SCHEUER CHAPEL IN THE CLASSROOM BUILDING 3101 Clifton Avenue

PROCEDURES PRIOR TO EXERCISES

- I. **Honorary Degree Recipients, Sponsors, and Service Participants**
 - A. **Robing.** Room 10 at 10:00 am
Robers will assist you.
 - B. **Photographs**
 1. Each Honoree with Dr. Gottschalk and Sponsor, **Room 11**
Please return to your assigned seat in Room 10
 2. All Honorees with Dr. Gottschalk and Sponsors, **Room 12**
Please return to your assigned seat in Room 10
- II. **Processional Participants**
 - A. **Robing.** Classroom Building, **Room 8/9 at 10:30 am**

Rooms 8/9 and 10 will be open at 9:30 am, should you choose to robe early.

PROCEDURES DURING EXERCISES

- I. **Processional.** Judy Greer and BJ Brown will assist you in line formation. Marshals will lead. An organ prelude will indicate the beginning of the Processional.

more ...

II. Seating

- A. **Chairs next to the Ark:** Dr. Gottschalk, Degree Confirmers, and Keynote Speaker.
- B. **Rows to the right of the Ark:** Service Participants, Honorees (in alphabetical order), and respective Sponsors
- C. **First rows facing the Bima:** all robed marchers
- D. **Rows behind robed marchers:** Governors, Overseers, and Alumni

III. Service

- A. **Invocation**
- B. **Reader**
- C. **Awarding of Degrees.** Dr. Gottschalk will announce the name of each Honoree. A Sponsor will accompany the Honoree to the lectern. Dr. Gottschalk and Dean Ehrlich will present a degree and hood to each Honoree. Honorees and Sponsors will then return to their seats.
- D. **Confirmation of Degrees.** Dr. Gottschalk will call the HUC representative and then the UAHC representative to the lectern.
- E. **Address.** Dr. Gottschalk will introduce the Speaker.
- F. **Musical Interlude**
- G. **Kaddish.** Dr. Gottschalk will note the names of deceased HUC Presidents.
- H. **Benediction.** Participant will ask the congregation to remain seated until after the Recessional.
- I. **Recessional.** The Marshals will lead participants in reverse order of the Processional.

Please return your robe to a robing room. The robing rooms will be locked after the Service.

p. vii - Intro - para 2 - Summary of his life

p. 7 - George Kohut became SSW's closest friend - Kohut died in 1933.

p. 23 - para 1 - SSW caught fire of Zionism. at Second Congress 1898

24 - Although he was only 25 years old, Wise was cited by Herzl himself as the foremost Zionist speaker in America.

33 para 2, middle - marriage to Louise Waterman performed by Gottlieb Kohn. Stayed in Portland 5 years.

55 - quote on duties of rabbis (see 53 - Louis Marshall letter to SSW)

64 - para 1 - Samuel Shulman and cigar.

para 2 - mercurial nature - blew up, calmed down.

65 - Carnegie Hall 1910 - for 30 years. Every Sun. morn. 1600-2000 people.

para 2 - bottom

112 - Wise's friendship with Wilson, and earned the following accolade "-"

bottom para

122-3 - Wise vs Cincinnati

123 - Wilson appointed Brandeis, a Zionist, to the Supra Court. Is he un-American?

para 1

146-8 Wise and Wilson + Balfour Declaration.

171 - ^{para 1} Wise and Steel strike - "million dollar fine"

182 - para 1 - last sentence - W. left the Reform movement behind

183 - para penult - JTR as professional scholar; and eclectic. He wanted ^{Mordecai} Kaplan as pres.

194-5 Famous sermon on "A Jew's View of Jesus"

202 - final para - as conclusion of Jesus sermon affair.

at age 60,
begin

- * 260 - para 2 - most important fight of SSF life: anti-Hitler battle
- 262 - Para 4 - German Jews in fall 1932 assured AT Cong. that Hitler would not ^{come to power}
- 264 - para 1 - Brandeis said all Jews must leave Germany.
- 264 - para 5 - March 27, 33, Wise called for boycott of Germany + rally. AT Comm + OB ^{were against}
- 25 K inside Garden; 30 K outside; Gov. Al Smith, 2 Xian bishops, Sen. Wagner
- 268 - para 3 - Wise heart sick, despairing, accused of making situation worse, alone.
During the 6 1/2 years, to outbreak of war, Amer. Jews slowly came awake, ^{major action} but no action
But the period was awful in its frustration.
- * 284 - para 2 - In 1936 - Wise was pre-eminent Jew in America, pres. ZOA, ATC, WJC + UPA.
delayed White Paper, enabled about 50 K Jews to get into Palestine.
- * 306-7 - Breckinridge Long + State were the villains - Wise essentially failed with FOR.
- 317 - para 1 - critics charged Wise with being a shidduh, a court Jew - failing to act vigorously
- * 318 - para 2 - Riegner document Aug. 8, 42. Wise received it Aug. 28, via London. Sumner
Welles asked Wise not to release it, until State could confirm. Wise agreed. Welles
called Wise on Nov. 24 to confirm. Dec 8, Wise led delegation to FOR. No U.S. action
American Jews did protest - but were powerless.
- p. 323
- p. 330 - para 2 - Charge vs. Wise cannot be justified.
- p. 331 - last para - villain of piece was FOR and the action of U.S. at that time.
- p. 346 - - Wise lost out to Silver, who projected a fierce militancy which Amer. Zionists ^{in 1935} wanted.
- p. 347 - para 2 - Wise listened to FOR's explanation of his sentence about King Ibn Saud.
- 354 - para 2 - "Stephanim" - "Stephenka" as I heard it.
- 356 - para 1 - Golda raised money for Hagana - each million code-named "a Stephen."
- 363 - para 1 - Wise received Hon. D.P. from HUC in 1945. ~~Wise~~ With OP's very much
on his mind, he gave Zionist speech about opening gates of Palestine. Audience uncomfortable.
- 365 - para 1 - summary of ^{meaning of} JTR.
- 368 - para 4 - 75th birthday March 17, 49 - Pres. Truman sent pen. 1200 attended
- 370 - para 1 - April 7, quarantined; April 19, died
- 371 final para - "History will record"

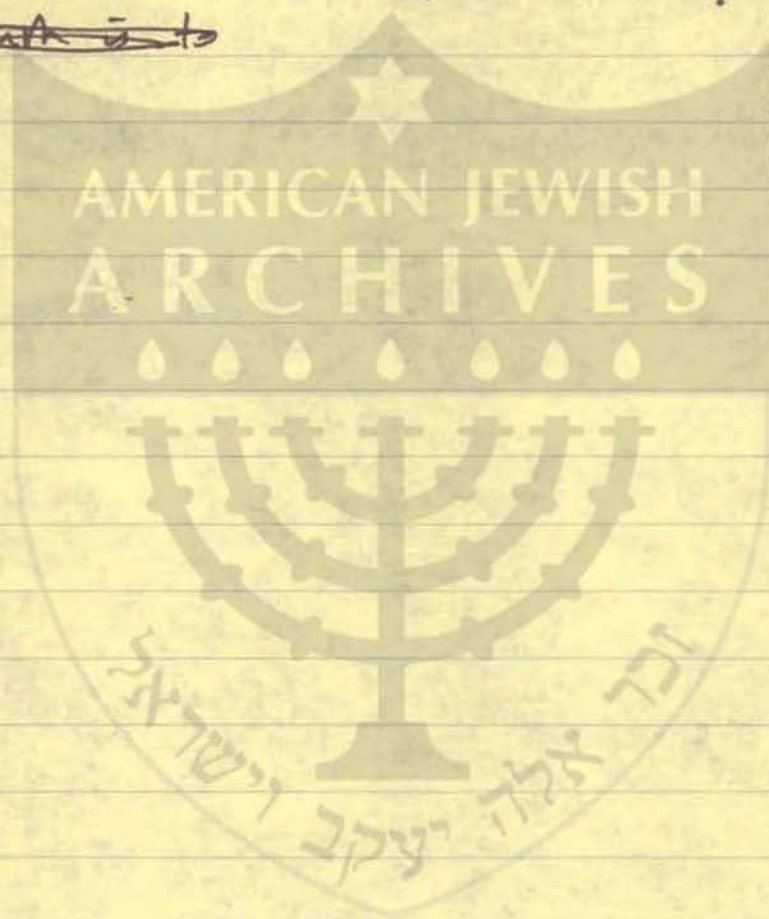
Your first loyalty is to the Jewish people and the Jewish land and the Jewish heritage and the Jewish God

Your first institutional loyalty is to the professional school which trained and prepared you for a useful life

Your second loyalty is to the congregation, organization, etc. in which you practice your profession

Your third is to the larger community around you

~~Your fourth is to~~



STEPHEN S. WISE -

~~MORALIST~~
THE
~~MORALIST~~ GIANT
OF HIS TIME

~~THE~~

- MORALIST, ZIONIST, ~~JEW~~ PLURALIST

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

STEPHEN S. WISE - THE GIANT OF
HIS TIME

Moralist, Zionist, Pluralist

SS
Wise —

No really integrated
Stronger Jew in U.S.
at same time
Deepest connection with
ministers (Holmes), mayors,
labor leaders, etc.



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BROOKDALE CENTER
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NEW YORK, N.Y. 10012-1186
(212) 674-5300

November 19, 1992

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman
500 East 77th Street, #2519
New York, NY 10021

Dear Herb:

While the glow is yet with us, I did want to thank you for your wonderfully moving, brief presentation. Your being with us added a special dimension to the day -- as I knew it would.

Unfortunately, your remarks were not taped. Therefore, we hope to publish some excerpts of the day. Would it be possible for you to forward to me a precis of your reminiscences? We would be most grateful.

With every good wish and warm personal regards,

Sincerely,

Paul M. Steinberg
Vice President and
Dean of Faculty

PMS:tw

acknowledge classmates + Voss

Nov. 19 - Luncheon speech - 10 minutes

1. Pluralistic nature of school attracted me - Usher Kirshblum, pres. Micrahi today N.H.P.
(look up other names in HUC-JER Alumni Directory)
also - Horace Menachem led me there.
 2. Feeling that the school was ~~strongly~~ influencing the Reform movement in the "right" direction attracted me - people like Philip Bernstein, and Morton Berman, Jerome Malino
 - 2a. Zionism - top leader
 3. Credibility of SSW as the only leader of ~~the~~ U.S. Jewry who fought Hitler right from the beginning - Hitler became Chancellor Jan. 30, 1933 and seven ^{and 27} weeks later the Amer. Jew. Congress, which was founded, held a mass protest meeting in Madison Square Garden.
 4. ^{Munschy} Class on "Problems of the Ministry". Cigars - open window - take out papers from pocket.
Guthardt Riagna's famous telegram - sent Aug. 8 ¹⁹⁴² through U.S. consulate in Geneva to State Dept. for SSW. It was not delivered to him until Aug. 28 - delayed by Undersec. Sumner Welles, who sought "corroboration" in Europe. SSW got ^{copy of} cables from London Office of World Jew. Congress; then Welles admitted, and still urged SSW not to do anything about it until Myron Taylor (rep. to Vatican) checked it.
(Arthur Morse - "White Six Million Died" - p. 8).
 5. He gave me an ideology - he was a role model - a fighter - ^{a great moral force, a giant, unique} ~~not~~ ^{intellectual} ~~but~~ a voice, for social justice (^{act} founders of NAACP; ACLU; ^{supported} labor union in strike against U.S. Steel; fought Tammany Hall), ~~and~~ interpreter of Judaism to Christian America.
 6. In Europe, DP's know his name. Code word for American dollar was "stefanka"
- STENTORIAN VOICE: LEONINE HEAD - A GIANT
Bold, brilliant, advocate of causes, fearless - I loved him, as I felt he loved me.
He really loved people - personally intervened and rescued hundreds from Germany.

A DAY OF STUDY AND CELEBRATION
COMMEMORATING THE 70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE
FOUNDING OF THE JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

November 19, 1992

- 8:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. Tefillah - Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller,
HUC-JIR
- Rabbi Shira Milgrom,
JCC of White Plains
- 9:45 a.m. REMARKS
--Dr. Norman J. Cohen, Dean, New York School
--Dr. Alfred Gottschalk, President, HUC-JIR
Keynote Theme: "Stephen S. Wise and the School
He Built"
- 10:00 a.m. KEYNOTE ADDRESS
"The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise"
--Professor Melvin Urofsky,
Virginia Commonwealth University
- 11:00 a.m. FORUM
"The Agenda of Stephen S. Wise: Legacies for
the Future"
--Rabbi David Saperstein, Director,
The Religious Action Center
--The Right Reverend Paul Moore, Jr.,
Episcopal Bishop of New York, Retired
- 12:15 p.m. LUNCHEON
--Chairperson, Dr. Paul M. Steinberg,
Vice President and Dean of Faculty, HUC-JIR
--Remarks: Rabbi Herbert Friedman
Rabbi Jerome Malino
Rabbi Harold Saperstein
Dr. Carl Hermann Voss
- Presentation Honoring J.I.R. Alumni
- 2:00 p.m. FORUM
"The Legacy of Stephen S. Wise: The Jewish
Contribution to Social Justice in Twentieth
Century America"
--Mr. Hyman Bookbinder, Washington
Representative Emeritus, American Jewish
Committee
--Mr. Robert St. John, Author, Jews, Justice and
Judaism
- 3:15 p.m. Dedication of New York Faculty Wall

HERBERT FRIEDMAN

Harold Englanda

Julius Funk

Monos Goldfarb

Bill Kramer

Sandy Sperster

Shay Schnitzer



I am a child of my times - I come out of a certain matrix which shaped me.

March 25¹⁰, 1993 - Founders Day Speech - 25 minutes

Influences leading me to the Rebbe

1. My mother - 1935-6 (?) - Walter Krone, Helmut Frank, Hans Goldschmidt
2. My work at Yale - with Kohut Forum - difficult. Says Dan Oren in his history of Jews at Yale entitled "Joining the Club", p. 107 - "Jewish students altogether avoided on-campus social activities, however, as they were considered 'segregating'. They continued to fear that a close identification with Judaism would be a stigma on their attempts to participate in 'nonsectarian' campus activities". Gradually we brought speakers, held discussion groups, worked on interfaith projects.
3. Lassitude, inactivity, indecisiveness of Amer. Jew leadership to the Nazi war on the Jews.
Only SSJW protested; Amer. Jew Committee opposed.

Which school

1. H.U.C. out of question - ideologically
2. Finkelstein interview
3. J.T.R. - Slonimsky - do you know how to dance?
SSJW - do you know any Hebrew?

perfect place - ideologically

SSJW - great role model

- most famous Jew of first half of century
- faked at society tables. He told story: some body would boast of her ancestors arriving on Mayflower.
SSJW would say: speaking of voyages, madam, your ancestors crossed the Atlantic in 1620; mine crossed the Red Sea in 1250 BCE, almost 2500 years before yours.

Family

Slonimsky - ^{hidrograph and analysis} limited God - Zech. 1/12 & 1/12

Spiegel - Ashal Ha-am

Tchernavitz - Talmud

Teffar - ^{+ artistry} Bible

Guido Kisch - history

What I learned from SSW

1. pluralism, Zionism, Hebrew, ritual
2. qualifications for rebbe -
 - a. lead your people to a goal; be a fighter
 - b. be independent; take risks; don't be afraid of losing your job
 - c. work on the largest stage (community, world, Palestine), as well as the smaller (4 walls of your synagogue).

What I learned from two friends - earlier graduates

1. Morton Benmen - he in Chicago, I in Milwaukee - talked about aliyah - he did it in 1955 and stayed there until his death. I got there in 1971 - but had to leave in 1978 (family reasons).
2. Philip Bernstein - pres. CCAH; exec. dir. chaffetz commission; Advisor on Jew. Affairs to CG on SS's. first president of AIPAC.

Only about 200 men graduated from JIR - but they started the Reform movement in U.S.

Mayer

HUC gradually shifted; Columbus platform 1935; CCAH resolution on Zionism + Reform 1942-3 (?)

Nelson Glusck's relationship to Palestine

SSW died in 1941 - never set foot on Israeli soil. Crashed

Mayer ^{then} became possible - few years later.

Future

We still don't have his dream of a democratically elected Congress - perhaps the CDF will work out a parliament of federations - which might then evolve a national election system. SSW was flexible.

Other points to be included

His work to fight Hitler - and the opposition

His wife's work with Congress houses & elite refugees

Social justice ^{emphasis} ~~work~~ of his earlier years (1921 steel strike -
he supported workers -
blew his chances for big
money payoff for a synagogue)

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES



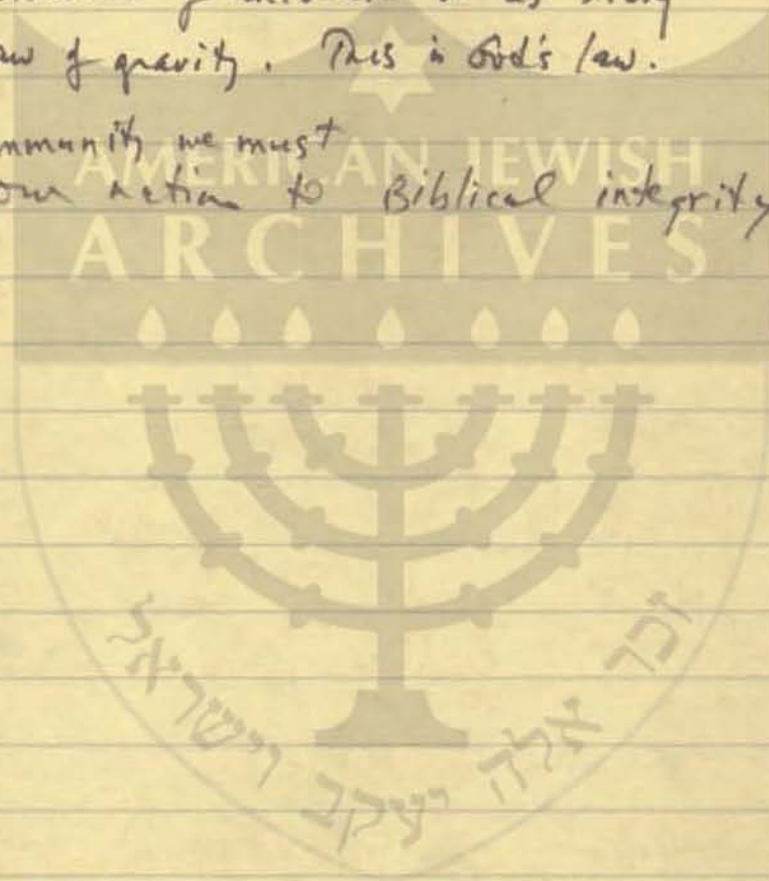
Bishop Moore

"Surprised by joy" - C.S. Lewis

When things are darkest, there is the "blessed assurance"
(Methodist)

Moral structure of universe is as strong
as law of gravity. This is God's law.

as a religious community, we must
lead our action to Biblical integrity



Fred Gottschalk on Nov 19, 92

called JIR a "revolutionary" institution.
That marks it.

Urofsky (get copy of speech)

His life was a symbol of the struggle of the entire
U.S. Jewry of first half of 20th c. He was not assimilationist -
He wanted Jews who were also Americans.

In the JIR SSW ^{best} expressed his ideals for American Jews
Zionism; free pulpit; pluralism; higher education before
professional rabbinical education.

Students had to take part in the social service program.

V.A.H.C. rejected JIR - and this only strengthened SSW's resolve.

Gottschalk appoints me to fill endowment
for SSW chair 350 to 1.2

IN PRAISE OF STEPHEN S. WISE

*No argument from
hindsight can
diminish Wise's
foresight.*

CARL HERMAN
VOSS

Stephen Wise has been coming in for a hard time lately. One article asks in its title, "Did America's Foremost Jewish Leader Betray His People?" (*Reform Judaism*, Spring 1985). In other articles and books, Wise-bashing has become a veritable pastime. The revisionist wisdom maintains that Wise was "naive" in his relationship with Franklin Delano Roosevelt and that he gave the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine priority over the rescue of Jews during World War II.

Before this new dispensation takes hold, it would be well to review the record. I do this in part because I am convinced that the day will yet come when it will be widely understood that Stephen S. Wise was a giant; I do it because of my own personal and professional relationship with Wise, and because after his death I devoted 20 years of my life to studying his words and his actions, and I cannot sit idly by while those words and those actions are so brutally distorted; I do it in the name of truth.

My own encounter with Wise goes back to 1916, when I would listen to my father, Carl August Voss, honored pastor of Pittsburgh's oldest church—the Smithfield Evangelical Protestant Church—tell our family about the fiery rabbi (then 40 years old) who in 1916 endorsed Woodrow Wilson's bid for a second term because "the President kept us out of war."

During the following winter and spring, however, after Wilson's reelection and inauguration, things changed. As an utterly fascinated lad, I heard my father read aloud to us about the complete turnaround in the

views of Wilson, Wise, and the nation. The famous rabbi had preached in his Free Synagogue in New York City endorsing the President's call for a declaration of war against Germany, now an enemy power. Yet there was nothing exceptional about this; we, a German church, had taken the same stand in 1916, and it did not seem incongruous that the rabbi had broken with his anti-war vow of the year before and now supported America's entry into what had become known as "The Great War."

Only in later years did I learn of the anger Wise's shift had aroused, especially among Christian pacifists who had considered Wise an ally and among German Jews who had wanted Wise to join them in supporting Kaiser Wilhelm and Germany's cause. Later, I also learned of the abuse these people hurled at Wise for taking his 16-year-old son to work by his side in a shipbuilding plant in Stamford, Conn. That act was denounced as "a publicity stunt . . . playing to the gallery . . . not fitting for a man of God."

Controversy surrounded Wise on almost all fronts. I remember being intrigued by the diatribes hurled at him by Jewish friends of my family, usually leading lights of Reform Jewry, critical of him for the major role he played with Justice Brandeis in securing White House support for Great Britain's Balfour Declaration. Only dimly did I then understand the protests of these fine people from Temple Rodef Shalom, as they would say, "We are not a nation, we are a religion. This Zionism illusion is a menace to us Jews."

Wise was used to it. As I was to discover, he had already been denounced in 1897 for helping found the Federation of American Zionists and for attending the World Zionist Congress in Basel the next year, as also for signing "The Call" for the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909, and then for fighting for freedom of speech for all Americans in 1916 through the Committee Against Militarism and, in 1918, its successor group, the National (later, in 1920, the American) Civil Liberties Union. He was active in support of suffrage

Carl Herman Voss, Protestant minister, teacher, scholar, and writer, is author of Rabbi and Minister: The Friendship of Stephen S. Wise and John Haynes Holmes (1964), and is editor of a new ecumenical series published by Fortress Press of Philadelphia, of which Rabbi Howard R. Greenstein's Judaism—an Eternal Covenant is the first book and A Catholic Vision, by Father Stephen Happel and Father David Tracy, the second.

5 for women, in campaigns against child labor and sweat shops, and, finally, in searching for democratic procedures in American Jewish communal affairs, a commitment that led him to found the American Jewish Congress in 1915 and to re-found it after the war.

6 Each of these commitments, the more so the combination of them, was bound to evoke criticism, and did. "He should stay in his pulpit" was the most common. But he did not stay in his pulpit, of course, to the irritation of Christians and Jews alike. And even from his pulpit, he managed to provoke—as, for example, when he preached a sermon in which he asserted that Jesus of Nazareth was a Hebrew prophet. Jews, Wise said, should accept Jesus as another in the procession of Hebrew prophets, a true "Son of Man, and, like all the rest of us, a child of God." Among those who denounced him for that were several rabbis, and the issue threatened for a time to divide the Jewish community and cause Wise to lose his rabbinic standing. Yet his integrity and sincerity prevailed, and he found new friends and received both understanding and acclaim.

By now his work had begun to appear frequently in rotogravure sections of major metropolitan newspapers, as well as in the *Literary Digest* and *Review of Reviews*, leading news magazines of the day. He was without doubt the American rabbi best known to the non-Jewish world, as well as the most controversial in the Jewish world.

That controversy escalated still more in 1922, when Wise founded a new theological seminary in New York City, a school for rabbis that was boldly catholic in its orientation. The Jewish Institute of Religion (merged in mid-century with the Hebrew Union College) invited both men and women, Liberal and Reform, Conservative and Orthodox, to apply for admission to study on West 68th Street, just off Central Park West, in a building adjacent to Wise's Free Synagogue. I could not comprehend the caustic attacks this action provoked, but the barbs seemed not to bother Wise one whit.

By the early 1930s (when I entered Union Theological Seminary), two issues were uppermost on Wise's agenda. One was the malfeasance in office of the "Playboy Mayor of Manhattan," Tammany Hall's James L. ("Jimmy") Walker; the other, and by far the more important, was the headlong rise to power in Germany of the National Socialist Party under the leadership of an Austrian house painter, Adolf Hitler. To these Wise now devoted his intensified attention and impassioned oratory, his unique organizational abilities and his prophetic denunciations—and with effective impact. My own admiration for the man and his work—I was, after all, an enthusiastic devotee of the prevalent social gospel in both Protestantism and Judaism—continued to grow.

Wise had joined with John Haynes Holmes, minister of the Community Church of New York and a leading social liberal of the era, to chair the City Affairs Committee in order to expose Walker's misdeeds, sins of omission and commission. By the spring and summer of 1932 they had succeeded in relentlessly prodding a reluctant governor, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, to hold public hearings on Walker's misdeeds. Under the steady probing of the distinguished Samuel Seabury, revelations showed such flagrant misconduct that the miscreant mayor found it expedient to resign from office and flee, with his inamorata, to Europe. (And still there was criticism, even from those who believed in "clean city government," that a rabbi and a minister should be so involved in "secular" affairs.)

By the following year, Stephen Wise entered the battle of his life: to arouse sluggish, unconcerned Jewish communities, both in America and abroad, and, as well, a completely oblivious Christian world, to the menace of Hitlerism. Here he encountered not only opposition, but opprobrium, for many Jews felt he should mute his condemnations of the Nazis. He should, instead, indulge in "quiet diplomacy," not a new phrase even then. And many non-Jews considered the issue so remote, so far away, that it was of no concern to America, itself still trying to cope

with the economic depression of the early 1930s.

As a young man from Pittsburgh I was now in the midst of my studies and enjoying New York. During a semester when I was not engaged in "field work," I found myself free to attend whatever service in church or synagogue I chose. It was usually an even choice for me on Sunday mornings between the eloquent, scholarly John Haynes Holmes, then holding services in Town Hall, and Holmes's dearest friend, the powerful, compelling Stephen Wise, conducting services at the Free Synagogue at the same hour in Carnegie Hall. My choice, whether Wise or Holmes, did not, however, please the president of the seminary, the aristocratic, urbane, Henry Sloane Coffin. On Monday mornings Coffin would invariably accost me and ask whom I had heard preach the previous day.

"Whom did you hear, Voss? Sockman or Fosdick? Buttrick or Poling?"

When I told him, the seminary president would burst forth: "I'm disappointed in you, young man. Never forget that you are studying to be a minister of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. How can you go to hear John Haynes Holmes, who is really a blatherskite and doesn't even believe in God?" [An untruth] "Or listen to such a demagogue, a false messiah, as Stephen Wise? To me these men are poseurs and charlatans."

Wise, of course, had more important issues on his mind than Henry Sloane Coffin's derogatory remarks about him and Holmes. In every speech, sermon, article, editorial, or public utterance he was consumed with the crisis of the day, the advent of the Nazis' "New Order" and its threat to his people. This I discerned in every word of his I heard or read at the time.

Thirty-five years later, in 1969, I found a letter in the Stephen Wise archives of the American Jewish Historical Society in Waltham, Mass., that graphically reflected what gnawed at the man. In April 1933, Wise had written to his friend and fellow Zionist, Judge Julian W. Mack, chairman of the Board of Trustees of

the Jewish Institute of Religion:

I wonder whether many Jews realize that we are facing today, in 1933, a Jewish upheaval which parallels, if it does not surpass in significance, the upheaval of 1881, which both of us remember, I rather dimly. In some ways this is graver than possibly '81, for the frontiers of civilization have been crossed. . . . The trouble, Mack, is that none of us is quite alive to the fact that this may be the beginning of a worldwide movement against us, a worldwide conflagration, a worldwide undertaking against the Jews.

In those parlous times, Wise had few sympathizers, Jewish or Christian. Prominent Jews from abroad, especially from Germany, attacked him fiercely; among Christians, Holmes and Reinhold Niebuhr were notable supporters, but among his associates there were those who caused him great anxiety. In 1934, Dr. Everett J. Clinchy, president of the newly founded National Conference of Christians and Jews, compared the tension between Hitler's Germany and the democracies to a domestic spat between husband and wife, best resolved by a "cooling-off period." Wise, astounded by the fatuous remark, took Clinchy to task, but to no avail; Clinchy termed Wise an "alarmist."

Still, Wise persisted. By the late 1930s and early 1940s, his name was truly a household word. He was rabbi of the Free Synagogue, leader of diverse nationwide fund drives, president of the Jewish Institute of Religion, chairman of the American Zionist Emergency Council, a founder and co-chairman of the American Jewish Conference, founder and president of the American Jewish Congress, founder and president of the World Jewish Congress. But he was best known for his fearless speaking out against the Hitler horror wherever and whenever he could. No other American, in or out of the Jewish community, denounced Nazism so forthrightly and consistently as he.

And that, of course, was the issue. Many were the voices that counselled

caution. In June of 1938, Wise wrote to his cousin in Chicago, Rosemary Ehrenreich Krensky, in response to her plea that he speak with more restraint:

There is too much soft-soaping in American Jewish life. No one speaks the truth, excepting secretly and clandestinely. The bitterest lies are spoken by those who disagree with us. . . .

I shall not change my method of frank and direct speech. If I have any influence in American life, it is for two reasons—because American Jews know I am not afraid and because they know I speak the truth as I see it. Sometimes I speak it roughly and brusquely, but I shall continue to speak it.

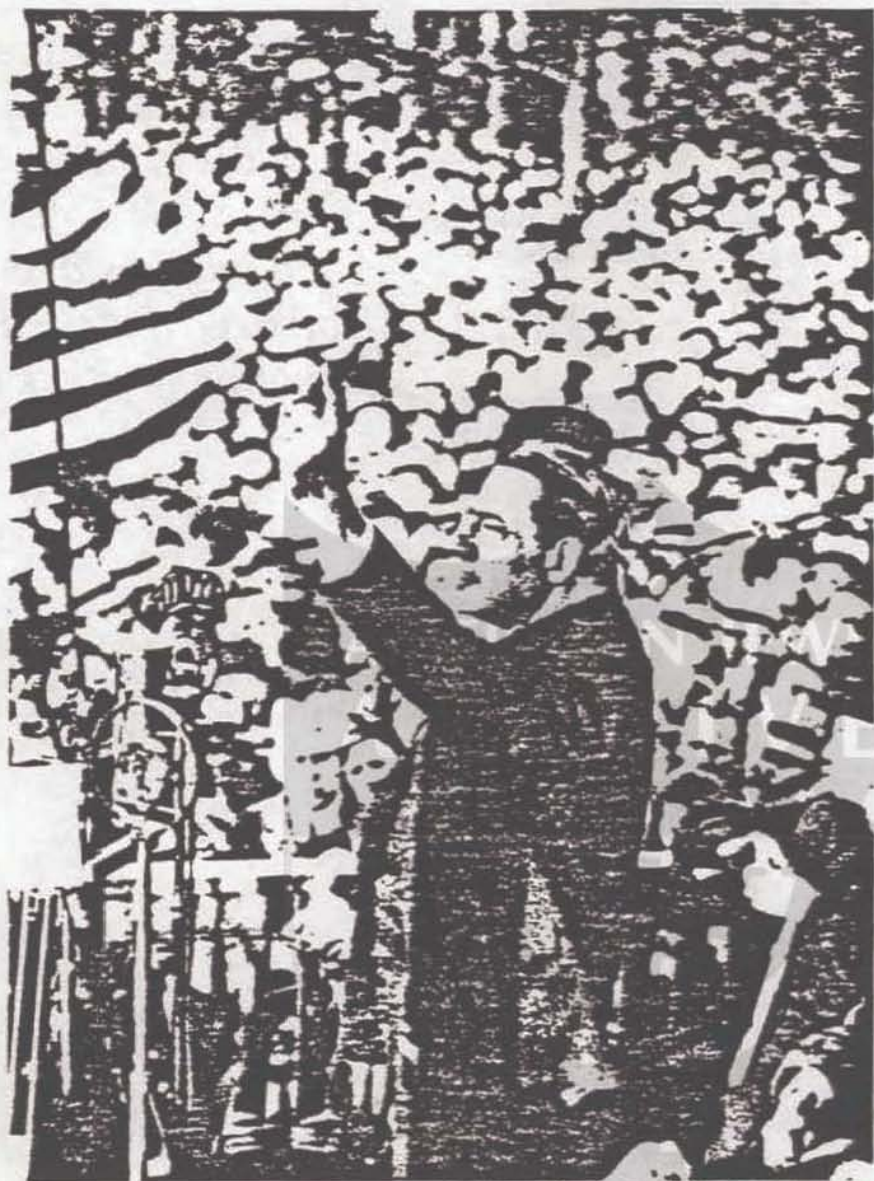
Only a month before, he had written to Mrs. Krensky that the lack of democracy in American Jewish life was its greatest liability:

. . . Let me say that unity is not what they desire who talk about unity. It is dominance. They resent the introduction of democracy into Jewish life, but there we part and part hopelessly forever. While I live I will not tolerate the oligarchic method of control which repudiates democracy. Democracy means that all people shall have a share in the management of their affairs. This the older generation of German Jews is determined to deny the masses. This I am resolved to assure them. Everything else could be settled, but there is no compromise here.

Then he described to her a graphic example of the lack of courage, unity and foresight among the leaders of American Jewish life:

We had a meeting for three hours yesterday—[Louis] Lipsky, Professor [Jerome] Michael and [Horace] Kallen and myself with representatives of B'nai B'rith and the [Jewish] Labor Council. What can you do with people who frankly say to you that they are afraid of the unfortunate impression which will be made upon the non-Jewish world

At no time was there reason to doubt that each decision, each move, each word, each public stand had been impelled by devotion to others.



Stephen S. Wise speaking at an anti-Nazi protest meeting, 1933

by the appearance of Jewish solidarity? It is hopeless. The fight is on. Win or lose we shall go through with it.

By this time, I had served in my first church, in Raleigh, N.C., and by 1938 I had entered a graduate program at the Divinity School of Yale University, fully aware of what was transpiring in Europe. I had been awakened to the crisis by Wise's constant writing, speaking, appealing; but I was nonetheless troubled because of the remoteness of my colleagues, both faculty and students at Yale, by their myopia, their unawareness, and their insensitivity to world events.

By 1940 I was back in Pittsburgh as associate pastor in the Smithfield Church and beginning to be acutely aware of the pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic views of many of those with whom I had grown up and whom I was now serving as pastor. I was therefore much heartened when, in 1941 and 1942, guided by Zionist executive Emanuel Neumann, ecumenical pioneer Henry A. Atkinson of the Church Peace Union, archaeologist William Foxwell Albright of Johns Hopkins University, Methodist bishop Francis J. McConnell of New York City, and theologian Reinhold Niebuhr of Union Seminary—among many others—began a new organization. To-

gether with two of Wise's chief lieutenants, the brilliant, young, and already famous rabbi of New York's Park Avenue Synagogue, Milton Steinberg, and the courageous, articulate Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein of Rochester, N.Y., they founded the American Christian Palestine Committee, destined to become a powerful organization. The ACPC demanded the opening of Palestine's locked gates for the entry of Jewish refugees and the establishment there of a Jewish commonwealth. Those objectives had been clearly and eloquently outlined for them by Stephen Wise in the organizational meeting in early December 1942 at the Hotel Statler in New York City.

When, in 1943, I came from Pittsburgh to New York to direct the program of the ACPC, spending part of my time as an executive of the Church Peace Union and its affiliate, the World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches, I discovered yet another contribution by Wise. In the fragmentary files of the Zionist Archives and Library we found receipts for bills he had paid out of his own pocket for luncheons and newspaper advertisements, receipts for long distance calls, and extensive correspondence undertaken on his own for the Pro-Palestine Federation [of Christians] and an "American Palestine Committee" that came respectively out of the 1920s and 1930s and then failed for want of adequate support.

What merits honorable recollection and respectful tribute is his initiative in prophetic vision, ideas, and courage, expressed by telephone, mail, personal conversation, appeal from platform or by radio, speaking to both Christians and Jews, to awaken the Christian conscience "in a Christian world." He dared to say through word and deed that "the Jewish problem" was really a "Christian problem."

During those days of the early 1940s I came to know him personally and marveled at the seemingly tireless energy of this man both as organizer and as orator. Astonishing, too, was the number of personal affidavits Wise signed to rescue refugees and guarantee their safety and solvency

when they came to America. He would give his personal attention to many people, often hundreds, including famous scholars, renowned rabbis and humble folk, whom he brought over from Nazi-occupied Europe, saving them from the maw of the concentration camps.

My *Doktorvater* at Union Seminary, Reinhold Niebuhr, told the story best when he reviewed the posthumous publication of Wise's autobiography, *Challenging Years*, for *The New York Times* in November 1949. Niebuhr wrote with affection of the "leonine figure in physical appearance and in spiritual stature." He pursued the analogy:

Only one aspect of Wise's life is not mirrored in these pages—his capacity for sympathy in every case of individual need which came to his attention. I know of one sensitive European intellectual who was completely frightened by Wise's power as orator and statesman. But he saw the whole character in a new light when he found how the busy man would take infinite pains to alleviate the distress of any unfortunate who sought his aid. This touch of lamb in the lion should have appeared somewhere in the record to make it complete.

In July and August, 1945, Dean Howard M. LeSourd, on leave from Boston University, and I, as co-directors of the American Christian Palestine Committee, accepted the invitations of Sir William Deedes, chairman of the British Association for a Jewish National Home, and David Ben-Gurion, head of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, to attend the World Zionist Conference in London and plan a World Committee for Palestine. Wise took us to the various Zionist delegations and, as a Zionist leader for almost half a century, introduced us to many of his comrades of earlier years and helped us organize our World Committee, composed of 19 different "Pro-Palestine" Committees of eminent Christians from many nations. The World Committee was a not insignificant force in the following years as the United Nations debated "the Palestine question" and, in 1947,

adopted the Partition Plan that months later led to the establishment of Israel.

In these last 40 years, I have had occasion to pore over thousands of Wise's letters, written by one of the most prolific letter writers I have ever encountered. I have read the sermons, addresses, and articles he wrote for many diverse publications, especially for the *Congress Weekly* and his own journal, *Opinion*. At no time was there reason to doubt that each decision, each move, each word, each public stand had been impelled by selfless devotion to others, to the Jewish people primarily but to all others, as well.

More, then, the pity that so many Jews remained unaware of the greatness of this man, the uniqueness of this Jew. And more still the pity, and the shame, that there are those today who claim that to save Jews Wise did nothing, proposed nothing, and was always subservient to Franklin Roosevelt.

The fact is that Wise did all he could, and this at a time when often he stood alone. I think, for example, of his letter to Nahum Goldmann, his associate in the World Jewish Congress, to whom he wrote in 1943, exactly ten years after Hitler's rise to power:

The thing I am most fearful of is that any strong complaint against FDR, at this time, will simply mean that we will hand him a gift of Congressional support for the first time in this Congress because Congress will certainly approve of what is not being done for the refugees.

It is so very easy to hold press conferences and to call meetings; but we must in advance consider what it will lead to—that it will utterly shut every door and leave us utterly without hope of relief as far as FDR is concerned. He is still our friend, even though he does not move as expeditiously as we would wish. But he moves as fast as he can, in view of the Congress on his hands, a bitterly hostile and in a very real sense a partially anti-Semitic Congress.

"I have had the unhappiest day of my life."

When Wise pressed again for action, Morgenthau instructed his associates to learn what had happened.

(I discovered this letter in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, and later found a copy in the American Jewish Archives of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.)

People who lived through those days will recall with me the atmosphere of hatred and suspicion, especially affecting the Jews; it was not without cause that Wise chose such sharp words with which to characterize the Congress. I well remember seeing members of Congress John Rankin and Claire Hoffman as they rose in the House of Representatives in the 1940s and delivered themselves of anti-Semitic diatribes. Nor will I forget the cool reception accorded me and my colleagues on numerous visits to the State Department. So, too, did ecumenical leaders, churchmen, and missionaries in large measure remain aloof.

Only recently I reviewed these events in Geneva with Dr. Gerhart Riegner, who, as representative of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva since 1934, was often the channel through which information of the European carnage came to Wise's attention. Riegner remains convinced that Wise's assessment was brutally realistic; Wise knew that America in the 1930s and 1940s, receptive as it was to "Rev." Gerald L. K. Smith and Father Charles Coughlin, was very different from the America of the 1980s.

"It is absurd," Riegner told me, "to pretend that the methods of pressure used in the late 1980s were available in the 1940s." As he observed, "during the first two years of the war, there was complete silence on the Jewish tragedy, both on the part of the press and on the part of the Allied governments. Even the Jewish leadership itself was very cautious in its public statements, for they were afraid of being accused of trying to drag America into the war. Until Pearl Harbor, the whole Nazi propaganda machine was directed at convincing the public that the War was a 'Jewish war.'"

Nor can we permit ourselves to forget the skepticism with which the reports of Riegner and others were regarded by very many people in the Allied administrations. Despite the steady flow of reports, there was

widespread conviction that the Jews were simply exaggerating. Indeed, Riegner retraced for me the well-known story of how he had learned of the murder and the potential extermination of the Jewish people, in the summer of 1942, and of the difficulty he had in transmitting this information to Wise through the State Department, as well as to the member of the British parliament, Sidney Silverman. He reminded me that it had been necessary for Wise to refrain from making public the cablegram lest he be accused of transmitting "atrocity stories" in the manner of World War I.

Days after receiving that cablegram from Riegner, Wise wrote to John Haynes Holmes: "I have had the unhappiest days of my life . . . [suffering] over the uniquely tragic fate of my people. . . . Think what it means to hear, as I have heard, through a coded message—first from Geneva, then from Berne, through the British Foreign Office—that Hitler plans the extermination at one time of the whole Jewish population of Europe, and prussic acid is mentioned as the medium."

He also wrote to Felix Frankfurter, on September 4, 1942, mentioning the cablegram from Silverman, telling of his futile visit to Sumner Welles in the State Department, describing his own utter depression, and begging Frankfurter to tell Roosevelt about the tragedy:

My heart is so full that I just must write to you. You may not be able to help any more, alas, than I can, but I want you to share the knowledge of this horror. You may think of something that could be done. . . .

I was tempted to call up Henry [Morgenthau, Jr.] and ask him to put it before the Chief [FDR], just that he might know about it, even though, alas, he proves to be unable to avert the horror. . . . One somehow feels that the foremost and finest figure in the political world today should not be without knowledge of this unutterable disaster which threatens—and may now be in the process of execution.

I wish I had more joyous tidings to send you. Alas, that I must share this with you.

Then he wrote, on September 9, to Fanny Mayer Korn, a supporter of the Free Synagogue and the American and World Jewish Congresses:

I have been so overwhelmed with work that I have hardly had time to think about Holy Day preaching. I should, these few days before Rosh Hashanah, be writing at my desk. Instead of that I meet all day with committees, and at midnight I must go to Washington to see what, if anything—and I wonder whether it will be anything—can be done for our poor fellow Jews threatened with extermination. . . . I haven't been able to sleep since that earlier cable to me telling me of the plans to kill all the Jews in Hitler's Germany, etc., etc. . . . It is all too unspeakable.

Almost 20 years ago, Elie Wiesel was quoted in *Dimensions in American Judaism* as asking, "How was it possible for Wise to sleep at night? How was he not driven mad by his secret?" The answer is straightforward: Wise could not sleep at night. And he was not driven mad; he was driven to even greater intensity in his ongoing efforts to find some way to make a difference.

In Gerhart Riegner's view, "insofar as the Jewish community of America bears responsibility for the events of the 1940s, that lies much more in its attitude and lack of unity and action before the war broke out than in its behavior during the war. Before the war, the official Jewish organizations of the western democracies, namely Great Britain and France, followed the policy of appeasement towards Hitler and Germany of their governments, and the American Jewish 'establishment' followed the same lines. But Stephen Wise did not. From 1930 on, he did not cease trying to mobilize the Jewish masses against such a policy and against danger of the Nazi threat, to the Jews and to the democracies. That he was not followed when there was still time to influence the situation—and to stop Hitler—is one of the major mistakes the Jewish communities have on their records—and on their conscience, too. I think espe-

cially of the American Jewish Committee, which sent Rabbi Morris Lazaron to Germany in 1933 to warn the American ambassador and the Jewish community there against 'this crazy American rabbi, Stephen Wise.' Today it will seem unbelievable that such a thing could happen, but it did. And those who today condemn Wise, who was right from the start, are utterly wrong."

"That is why," Riegner adds, "when I think of Wise, I think of one who had to combat frightful resistance in America, apathy among non-Jews, and a cowardice and inability to act on the part of the Jews. I believe that the real failure was among our own people, and here I speak in reproach to say that the real failure was that of American Jews in not having followed Wise in 1932, '33, and '34."

Still, neither in Riegner's view nor in my own is culpability the major issue. The fact is, as Riegner hastens to point out, that "the decisive issue in the entire situation during the war was the position of utter powerlessness of the Jewish leadership; the Jewish people have never been as powerless as in the moment of their greatest need. Jews had in fact no influence whatever on the political

leadership during the war."

That powerlessness owed in part to the historical circumstances of the time, and in part to the fragmentation of Jewish leadership. Wise, for his part, did whatever he could, operating under enormous constraints, not the least of which was the caution of other leading Jews. Is the one who was most active or those who failed to work with him the proper target for revisionist criticism?

The second attack of the revisionists alleges that Wise—and the Zionists in general—concentrated their efforts on the struggle for a Jewish state, neglecting all efforts for rescue.

There is in this a gross inaccuracy. The matter of rescue was so wretchedly difficult, so awesomely painful. Well do I remember the high expectations, in Christian and Jewish circles alike, that followed the publication of the United Nations Declaration of December 17, 1942, which condemned the Nazi extermination plan. Here was a ringing announcement, simultaneously published in Washington, London, and Moscow. That winter, my friends in Jewish organizations worked day and night to prepare and submit proposals for rescue efforts to the Anglo-American confer-



Wise with Albert Einstein, 1945



Wise on his 75th birthday on
March 17, 1949

ence that was convoked in Bermuda in the spring of 1943 to deal with the problem of refugees. We did not know then what became known little by little afterwards—that the Bermuda conference (from which the Jews were barred) had in fact resolved to do nothing for the rescue of Hitler's victims.

An enormous disillusionment set in as we learned the truth. And only then, when it became clear that the

United States had failed to prevail on other nations to open their doors, that there was no nation willing to accept refugees, that the Bermuda conference had made no plans whatsoever, did Zionist leaders turn to insist on the only alternative—namely, the creation of a Jewish state. (A year earlier, at the Biltmore Conference, Ben-Gurion had proclaimed that statehood was the aim of the Zionist movement. But it was not until after Bermuda that the

real concentration of effort in that direction began.) In the face of the complete isolation and loneliness that had become clear, there was no other solution—just as Wise had foreseen.

Wise has also been attacked indirectly for his opposition to the so-called Peter Bergson-Irgun group. Some authors, such as David Wyman (*The Abandonment of the Jews*) and Monty Penkower (*The Jews Were Expendable*) claim that Bergson and his colleagues were responsible for the creation of the War Refugee Board, which proved to be the only constructive contribution of the United States to the rescue efforts.

But the fact is that the flamboyant propaganda and grandiose claims and promises of the Bergson group were only marginally responsible for the creation of the WRB. A careful examination of the documents would include, for example, the long message from Riegner on behalf of the World Jewish Congress to the American Legation in Berne, on April 14, 1943. Riegner's message, passed on to the World Jewish Congress, proposed a number of rescue activities that might be undertaken, and even discussed the financial aspects of his various proposals. On June 4th, Riegner expanded on the original message in an interview with the commercial attaché of the legation, answering a number of questions that had been transmitted from New York. Wise was then able to take these proposals to Henry Morgenthau, secretary of the treasury under Roosevelt. In late July, he insisted once more that the proposals be accepted and acted on; on July 30, Morgenthau informed Wise that the Treasury Department had "earlier this month" advised the State Department that it was "fully sympathetic to this proposal for the evacuation of the Jews from Rumania" and was "prepared to take the necessary action to implement the proposal."

Nothing transpired, however, and when Wise pressed again for action, Morgenthau instructed his associates to learn what had happened. His order led to the famous report written by Randolph Paul, general counsel to the Treasury Department, and John

Pehle, director of the department's Division of Foreign Funds Control. The emergent document was known to a select group as "Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews" (January 13, 1944). In it, the long held and deeply entrenched negative attitude of the State Department was denounced, and the delay of more than five months was condemned.

Morgenthau took the report in person to the president, who then realized how the whole question of help to the Nazi victims had been mishandled by the State Department. Under these circumstances, it was not difficult for Morgenthau to persuade Roosevelt to sign the executive order that established the War Refugee Board on January 22, 1944. The order itself was drafted by Oscar Cox, then in the Lend-Lease administration, and presented by Morgenthau to Roosevelt on January 16. The Senate resolution, in short, was not the key element in the creation of the board.

Those, like Edwin Black, who claim that Stephen Wise "often subordinated the defense of European Jews in favor of employing every tactic at his disposal in the cruel pragmatic war of securing a Jewish state—while there still remained a Jewish people left in Europe to redeem," err, and err grievously.

Wise was himself painfully aware of the dilemma posed by the competing claims of European rescue and the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine. He was in anguish over it. But it is, again, all too easy—too easy and too cheap—forty and more years later to cast harsh judgment on the choices that were made back then, the more so when such judgment is directed against a man who so often stood alone in his effort to arouse his fellow Jews and those few Christians who were interested. Wise stressed both rescue and a homeland, not the one or the other but both at the same time. He never insisted on putting Zionism above rescuing Jews from Hitlerism, nor did he permit his belief that Zion should be in the center of the rescue activity to cause him to oppose any other rescue plan. Perhaps that is why some Zionists criticized him for being too committed to rescue, while

those for whom rescue was the whole of the matter criticized him for being too committed to a homeland.

In March 1949, the magazine *Opinion*, founded by Stephen S. Wise, published a 75th birthday issue in his honor. Knowing he was so ill that the end was near, the editorial staff gave prime place to a paragraph from Princeton, N.J. Within one month and two days, on April 19, Stephen Wise died. And these words, penned by a trusted friend and comrade over many decades, have become his epitaph:

Among all those whom I have personally met who have labored in the cause of justice and in the interest of the hard-pressed Jewish people, only a few were at all times selfless. But there was no one who gave his love and energy with such consuming devotion as Stephen Wise. All his life he has been a fighter for the cause of Zionism to which the memory of his ceaseless activities will be bound forever. He has walked the thorny paths of the true prophet, at all times disdaining sordid compromise and never bending the knee to those in power. By relentlessly exposing the weakness and imperfections both in our own ranks and in the larger political arena of the non-Jewish world, he has made great and lasting contributions wherever he has gone. There are those who do not love him, but there is no one who has ever denied him recognition and respect, for everybody knows that behind the enormous labors of this man there has always been the passionate desire to make mankind better and happier.

—Albert Einstein



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The Lion and the Lamb

AN EVALUATION OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF STEPHEN S. WISE

CARL HERMANN VOSS

Twenty years have sped by since April 19, 1949, when Stephen Samuel Wise died at the age of seventy-five in New York City's Lenox Hill Hospital. He had served in the rabbinate since 1892 when, recently graduated from Columbia University and only eighteen years of age, he had been ordained in Baden-bei-Wien by Dr. Adolf Jellinek, Chief Rabbi of Vienna.

During an active career of fifty-seven years, Wise held three rabbinical posts: Congregation B'nai Jeshurun (known also as the Madison Avenue Synagogue) in New York City from 1893 to 1900; Congregation Beth Israel in Portland, Oregon, from 1900 to 1906; and the institution he founded, the Free Synagogue of New York City, from 1907 until his death forty-two years later. Each of these he served with devotion and distinction. His work, his bold utterances, and his forthright actions thrust him into positions of leadership in Jewish and American affairs.

Wise's genius for establishing personal relationships won him a host of friends in all walks of life and throughout the whole world. The alumni of the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City were so devoted to him that scores of them named their sons "Stephen" in his honor.

His keen interest in social problems and his unflagging zeal for justice impelled him to take a vigorous part in the work of groups like the Child Labor Committee, the Old Age Pension League, the Religion and Labor Foundation, the American Union Against Militarism, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the National

Dr. Voss, a Congregational minister long associated with Rabbi Wise in Zionist advocacy, is the author of *Rabbi and Minister: The Friendship of Stephen S. Wise and John Haynes Holmes* (1964) and editor of the forthcoming *Stephen S. Wise: Servant of the People — Selected Letters*.

Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Several of these, notably the N. A. A. C. P., he helped found. To all of them he gave generously of his time and efforts, often speaking on their behalf. That was a gift of great value, for he was one of America's foremost orators, capable of holding audiences, large and small, under the sway of his eloquence.

He was more than an orator, however. Had he never led a synagogue or belonged to a single Jewish organization, he would have been remembered by his contemporaries and later generations as a social prophet whose influence was equal to that of a Henry Demarest Lloyd or a Henry George, a Jacob Riis or a Josiah Strong; but because he cherished his calling as a rabbi and his heritage as a Jew, he made an even greater contribution to the advancement of his people. What Walter Rauschenbusch, of Rochester, New York, "the Father of the Social Gospel," meant to twentieth-century Protestantism, Stephen Wise meant to contemporary Judaism in many of its manifestations; he was the source of a progressive, socially minded faith. Wise would have been ninety-five years old in 1969, and had he lived, he would have beheld the attainment of many an objective for which he battled valiantly — in particular, the steady growth of modern Israel, whose establishment as an independent Jewish state this pioneering Zionist hailed in the last year of his life.¹

Chief among Wise's loyalties were the several significant Jewish organizations among whose founders he was numbered and which he often guided as an elected officer: the Zionist Organization of America, to which he devoted himself as honorary secretary from 1898 to 1904, when it was a fledgling society known as the Federation of American Zionists, as vice-president from 1918 to 1920, and as president from 1936 to 1938; the American Jewish Congress, which he served initially as vice-president from 1922 to 1925, as president from 1925 to 1929, and subsequently as honorary president from 1929 to 1935, assuming the active presidency again from 1935

¹ At Boston's Ford Hall Forum, in his address "My Challenging Years; A Seventy-Fifth Birthday Anniversary Address," on March 27, 1949, Wise said: "I have lived to see the Jewish State. I am too small for the greatness of the mercy which God has shown us."

to his death; and the World Jewish Congress, whose president he was between 1936 and 1949. Not least was the Jewish Institute of Religion, whose acting president Wise was from 1922 to 1927 and whose regular presidency he held from 1927 until 1948, when he stepped aside for Nelson Glueck as a preliminary to the Institute's merger with the Hebrew Union College.

THE SPIRIT KEEPETH ALIVE

During his lifetime, Wise was loved, envied, and hated. Invariably the center of controversy, he was a man about whom strong, often opposing, views were expressed by both friend and foe. I have heard his fellow-rabbis denounce him as a "phony" and a "fake," and my Christian colleagues damn him as "a demagogue" and "a blatherskite." The president of a leading Jewish communal organization said to me one day in the mid-1940's: "The trouble with you ministers and rabbis — and some of your followers, too — is that you make a demigod of Stephen Wise."

Many more, however, were singleminded in their praise of Wise, as I learned during my years of research in his papers. I have been intrigued by the wide range of tributes to Wise from men of vastly different backgrounds and vocations, and impressed by the courage and vision, candor and bluntness, sensitivity and concern, reflected in the thousands of letters Wise wrote in the years between the early 1890's, when he was a young man, and 1949, the year of his death.²

In the opening days of 1900, Thomas Davidson, the founder and head of the Breadwinners' College at Croton-on-Hudson, wrote of Wise's talents and potential in a letter to Felix Adler, founder and leader of the Ethical Culture Society. The picturesque Davidson,

² Most of Wise's letters are housed in the Stephen Wise Archives at the Goldfarb Library of Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts; others may be found, either in carbon copies or photocopies, at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati; the American Jewish Historical Society on the Brandeis University campus; the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem; the Archives of the Jewish Historical Society, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, and the National and Jewish Library, Hebrew University, Jerusalem; as well as the Yale University Library, the Harvard University libraries, and the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

an unorthodox Scottish theologian, who was the beloved teacher of Wise in the 1890's and of John Dewey and Morris R. Cohen as well, had received an inquiry from Adler. The Waterman family, knowing that Wise had only honorable intentions in courting the lovely Louise Waterman, nevertheless wanted to learn more about the young rabbi: his capabilities, interests, character, and prospects. Davidson assured Adler and, through him, the Waterman family:

The fact is, I am so fond of Stephen Wise personally, that I cannot, perhaps, be trusted to judge him impartially. I have known him for the past six or seven years, and my respect and affection for him have grown all that time. He is loyal in his personal relations, and socially attractive. I cannot think of him as doing a mean thing. When roused, he is an eloquent and powerful speaker, with a delightful sense of humor.

He is still young — only twenty-seven, I think — and may have some of the faults of the young and inexperienced, delight in sense of power and perhaps desire for popularity, though the last is not especially prominent.

He is distinctly a stirring man, original and forcible, with great schemes in his mind. I always leave him with the sense that I have been facing a brisk, bracing wind.¹

In June, 1900, as Wise prepared to leave B'nai Jeshurun and begin his duties as rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel in Portland, Oregon, Davidson wrote to his "dear, dear Stephen" from Glenmore, New York, where he was preparing the program for his annual summer camp devoted to seminars on philosophy and theology:

I have just read your parting address to your New York congregation with tears in my eyes. It contains sentences that Jeremiah might have been proud of. You are of the stuff that he was made of, and your life will be immortal. . . .

I want you to do me a great favor. Before you leave, you must send me a good photograph of yourself, and I will send you a recent one of myself. I want to have your face on my desk before me all the time.

New York will be poorer for your absence; we shall all be poorer. My boys and girls will miss you and your encouraging words. But you go to great work, and we shall follow your career with the deepest interest.

¹ C. H. Voss, *Rabbi and Minister* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1964), p. 44.

You will not forget that Judaism, like all living things, changes as it grows, and that, while the letter killeth, the spirit keepeth alive. You will diffuse a twentieth-century Judaism, fitted to meet the needs of the present day. In waging your immortal battle in behalf of immortal things, you will use all the weapons of modern warfare, and all the generosity of the modern warrior. "Truth and righteousness" will be your motto. . . .⁴

Wise never forgot Davidson nor what Davidson had urged on him. On September 14, 1900, Davidson died, and Wise wrote from Portland, Oregon, to his fiancée, Louise Waterman, in New York:

I would have been so happy over your letter of last night, had it not been for the sad, sad news of dear Professor Davidson's death over which I cried like a baby. I revered him and I loved him. Poor lonely man — battling for "Truth and Righteousness" all his life, as he bade me do in that precious letter which I trust you have treasured up. He has been an influence for good in many lives beside my own. Above all things he sought after truth and he made knowledge and wisdom not idols or fetishes to be worshipped, but instruments to be used for the weal of others. . . .

I have written to two friends in New York, suggesting a memorial service for him at the Educational Alliance, under the auspices of his classes at which I wish once more to pay my affectionate tribute to his sterling worth. I also suggest some endowment by popular subscription in his honor, a scholarship at some college or other.

We never met without embracing, in the street or anywhere else. His death makes me think. Oh, the marvel and mystery of it all — we cannot understand, for we see only with our eyes, but I cannot bring myself to believe that he is perished and gone for ever. Fond delusion? Say rather, blessed illusion. Dear Professor Davidson — God gives him peace — he was Heaven's own soldier, he wielded the sword of the Spirit.⁵

⁴ In 1911, Davidson was memorialized by William James as "a knight-errant of the intellectual life" in *Memories and Studies*, and by Morris R. Cohen in *A Cyclopaedia for Education*, Volume II. Born in Scotland in 1840, Davidson traveled widely in Europe and North America. In 1883, he founded at London the Fellowship of the New Life, which later developed into the famous Fabian Socialist Society. Wise worked with Davidson in association with the People's Institute and the Educational Alliance in New York City, as well as in the Summer School for the Cultural Sciences in New Jersey, then in Connecticut, and later in Keene, N. Y.

⁵ *The Personal Letters of Stephen Wise*, edited by Justine Wise Polier and James Waterman Wise, with an introduction by John Haynes Holmes (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), pp. 74-75.

BORN TO RULE EMPIRES

Nearly four decades later, the scholarly rabbi and Zionist leader Solomon Goldman wrote in similar fashion about Wise in his essay, "Portrait of A Leader."⁶ Describing Wise as "the most vital, the most dynamic, most challenging person in American Jewry," Goldman noted the overwhelming impression Wise made upon people by his "lion's voice, keen wit, overflowing kindness, . . . youthful gait, Jovian gestures, alertness, impatience," and called him "a proud, living, storming Israel." To Goldman, it was Wise's "sheer force of personality, . . . the vigor of his oratory, and the scope of his interests," which made the synagogue "once again commensurate with life." To be sure, he had reservations about Wise's holding services on Sunday morning, failing to plead for more intensive Jewish education, and forsaking some of the traditions of Jewry; yet flaws like these were dwarfed, he contended, because Wise was "the embodiment of his people — Israel, with its restlessness and its dynamic power, its eternal youth, its sense of justice, its mighty voice — aye, its failings, too."

Dr. Wise has been criticized for the attention the newspapers have given him; for the spectacular and dramatic in which he is supposed to indulge. Every time I hear this charge, I cannot help but contrast Wise with a Borah, a Lloyd George, or a Masaryk. I sigh within me, how little people understand. Wises are born to rule empires; all that Jewry could offer was a pulpit.

Only a few years earlier, the essayist and novelist Maurice Samuel had written in this vein, assessing Wise as "the outstanding popular leader in American Jewry, . . . a very extraordinary figure [with] all the requisites of leadership [and] the will to lead, . . . a master of publicity, . . . in action a terrific, leonine figure."⁷

Reinhold Niebuhr, of Union Theological Seminary, would use the same metaphor when he reviewed Wise's posthumously published autobiography⁸: "a leonine figure in physical appearance and in spiritual stature." Niebuhr pursued the analogy further:

⁶ S. Goldman, *Crisis and Decision* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938), pp. 74-78.

⁷ M. Samuel, *Jews On Approval* (New York: Liveright, 1932), pp. 132-38.

⁸ S. S. Wise, *Challenging Years* (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1949).

Only one aspect of Wise's life is not mirrored in these pages — his capacity for sympathy in every case of individual need which came to his attention. I know of one sensitive European intellectual who was completely frightened by Wise's power as orator and statesman. But he saw the whole character in a new light when he found how this busy man could take infinite pains to alleviate the distress of any unfortunate who sought his aid. This touch of lamb in the lion should have appeared somewhere in the record to make it complete.⁹

A summation of another sort came from Francis J. McConnell, Bishop of the New York East Conference of the Methodist Church, who wrote about Wise in "Some Notables I Have Met," the concluding chapter of his autobiography. After listing religionists like John Haynes Holmes, S. Parkes Cadman, and Harry Emerson Fosdick, and such public figures as William Jennings Bryan, J. Ramsay MacDonald, Harold Laski, Clarence Darrow, Fiorello H. LaGuardia, and Presidents Taft, Wilson, Hoover, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, Bishop McConnell turned to Wise and called him "a great church leader,"

... the builder of a synagogue [the Free Synagogue of New York City] which was a positive and enduring force in New York for a generation, of a theological seminary [the Jewish Institute of Religion] which has put a solid foundation of religious thinking under scores of intellectual students. He gave direction to the wisest forms of socially redemptive effort at the same time that he himself fulfilled the ideals of Old Testament prophecy. He was a Jew with the distinctiveness of genuine Judaism. In these days of flabbiness in much Protestant alleged thinking, it may be just as well to remember that Jewishness of Wise's type works incalculably to keep vital the essential of all true religion, namely, the conception of a moral God.¹⁰

Perhaps the most sensitive appraisal was delivered by Horace M. Kallen, of the New School for Social Research, at a memorial service in May, 1949:

Those of you who attended the funeral ceremony in Carnegie Hall [will] recall that, as against the few thousands who were assembled in the Hall, tens of thousands stood in the downpour on the streets outside,

⁹ *New York Times*, November 6, 1949, Sec. VII, p. 6, col. 1.

¹⁰ F. J. McConnell, *By the Way: An Autobiography* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), p. 253.

men and women of every rank and station, from all parts of the land, . . . Americans of every race and clime, . . . Negroes, Hindus, Chinamen, faces and features suggesting the miscellany of mankind, . . . multitudes standing together silently in the rain [as] the symbol, perhaps the truest symbol, of the role and meaning of Stephen Wise. [Although Wise had been] an unflagging leader in labors for his violated people, . . . his role was not primarily Jewish alone. . . . His labors on behalf of Israel were labors sustained by a vision of global fellowship; his invincible opposition to Nazism and all its work was an opposition illumined by his faith in equal liberty and equal security for all men everywhere. . . . For his faith in freedom, he himself suffered greatly and endured greatly. He was always a brave man, with a gaiety of spirit, and a spontaneous courage that often seemed quite other than Plato's wisdom concerning dangers.

Paying tribute to Wise for a generosity which "was uncommon at best, and rare indeed in members of the cloth," Kallen concluded:

In . . . [his] dedication to freedom, the innumerable contradictory qualities of the man, which irritated his friends and by which his foes justified themselves, were reconciled: the vanities always dissolving in a basic humility; the prophetic judgment tempered to a charity that forgave, in fellow-workers, cowardices and disloyalties I myself have never been able to forgive; the arbitrariness dissolved in a goodwill by which the man, who was on occasion peer and companion of the great ones of his times, was not less the equal friendly companion of the little people who looked to him for light and leading."

All six of these men, Davidson, Goldman, Samuel, Niebuhr, McConnell, and Kallen — three Jews and three non-Jews — agreed on one thing: Wise may indeed have been complex, but he was a heroic, often a prophetic figure in the first half of the twentieth century. Themselves of more than ordinary stature, they thought of Wise as an extraordinary man and, like countless others, were able during Wise's lifetime to tell him so, some in writing and others by the spoken word.

I BEGAN MY CAREER AS A SCHOLAR

Few know that, in 1892, Stephen Wise, as a budding scholar, considered enrolling at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati,

"H. M. Kallen, *"Of Them Which Say They Are Jews" and Other Essays on the Jewish Struggle For Survival* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1954), pp. 154-59.

but he wanted to stay in the East, to study in Europe during the summers, and to train in a rabbinical post around New York City. He wrote, therefore, to Isaac Mayer Wise, the aged founder-president of the College, about the possibility of working under the direction of the administration and faculty in Cincinnati, but from afar, so that he might continue towards his doctorate in Semitics at Columbia University with Richard J. H. Gottheil as preceptor. In the late summer of 1892, Isaac Mayer Wise sent him a copy of his *Pronaos to Holy Writ* and answered that, notwithstanding his young correspondent's lack of talmudic study, he would "register . . . [his] name with the remark *in absentia temp.* in first collegiate class. . . ."

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If at the end of the semester (last week in Jan.) or the year (last weeks in June) you are prepared for examinations, you come to Cin. and make your examinations with the class.

My private opinion, however, is that it would be much better for you if you could reverse the order, viz. to get permission from Columbia to make your postgraduate studies for the degree you seek "*in absentia*" and come here to make your rabbinical studies regularly. You cannot do the amount of work in "Rabbinica" by private tuition which you can do here. Your main object, however, is the "Rabbinica" which I think should now occupy your main attention and the work for the Ph. [D.] or any other degree be done simultaneously. But as your father [Rabbi Aaron Wise] seems to think otherwise and your taste runs in the same direction, I submit — בטלתי רצוני מפני רצונכם [suspending my will in favor of your own] and register you *in absentia* for this year anyhow.¹²

Thus Stephen Wise was enrolled as a student at the Hebrew Union College in 1892, but his work was carried on under Jellinek in Vienna, Adolf Neubauer in Oxford, and Gottheil at Columbia.

That he kept in close touch with his European mentors is evident from a letter sent him three years later, in November, 1895, by Israel Abrahams, reader in rabbinics at Cambridge University, in anticipation of Wise's return to Great Britain in 1896:

It was delightful to hear from you, and if — as Mr. [Solomon] Schechter says is possible — you come to England next summer, I do hope to have

¹² I. M. Wise, Cincinnati, to S. S. Wise, N. Y., September 4, 1892 (American Jewish Archives).

the opportunity of seeing more of you. Your [Israel] Zangwill cutting amused him and me greatly. Z. thanks you for sending it, *but* — such is the perversity of genius — he begged me not to call attention to it in print. . . .

How is your Arabic work getting on? [Wise was translating Solomon ibn Gabirol's eleventh-century ethical treatise on "The Improvement of the Moral Qualities" for a doctorate at Columbia University.]

We have had a rather amusing incident in England lately. Dr. [Moses] Gaster has given the *החזקת הוראה* [authority to teach and make rabbinical decisions] to two very ignorant students. I do not know whether in the States you treat this title lightly? I am not myself in favor of giving it, except as a real mark of knowledge of the Rabbinical Law. If one wants to give a mere diploma, then he should not appropriate an old, well-established title, which means something else.

But Abrahams had more than "the Rabbinical Law" on his mind:

I hear that there is going to be a new outburst of Jewish *Nationalism* — based on the [anti-Semitic] Vienna incidents. This is at present a secret, but we have had an exciting visit from a leading man of letters of Austria [Theodor Herzl] and the thing is likely to be promulgated soon. I have little sympathy with it and yet when I remember what happened when Ezra took back the Exiles and how the world's religion was then fixed for centuries, who knows but that the Religion of the Future may be formulated once more in Zion?¹³

The twenty-one-year-old Wise's scholarly abilities elicited such respect that, in December, 1895, he received a flattering letter from the Jewish Publication Society of America, inviting him to prepare a translation of the Book of Judges for a new English version of the

¹³ Stephen Wise Archives, Goldfarb Library, Brandeis University. Wise would invite Abrahams to the United States in 1911-1912 for the Lewisoohn Lectureship (founded at his invitation by Adolph Lewisoohn) and would thus make Abrahams available for lectures at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. When Wise founded the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City in 1922, he offered the presidency of the institution to Abrahams, who declined but came as visiting lecturer. On February 3, 1923, during his initial visit to the J. I. R., Abrahams wrote to Louise Waterman Wise:

My first week has passed since I arrived, & I feel that I must write a sentence to tell you how much I have already gained from my intimacy with your wonderful husband. It is no use trying to tell *him*, for he will not listen. Nor need I say more to you. It was worth coming over to see, hear, & commune with him. That is all I need say. It says everything. And as for *your* kindness to me, I can say nothing at all. It passes words.

After Abrahams' sudden death in 1924, Wise arranged for the J. I. R. to pay Mrs. Abrahams a pension of \$2,000 per annum over a period of several years.

Hebrew Bible.¹⁴ Wise accepted the assignment and in November, 1908, submitted his translation to Max L. Margolis, the editor-in-chief of the new Bible.

Though an activist, Wise yearned for the scholarly life throughout his days; he persisted in encouraging scholars, young and old, and in finding posts for them. He founded the Jewish Institute of Religion with scholarship as a prime objective and played a leading role in rescuing scholars from Europe, first in the inflationary era of the post-World War I years and then during the Hitler nightmare. With wry humor he often said: "I began my career as a scholar; but events turned me in other directions, too. Why must I be the policeman for the Jewish people?"

NOT THE GLORY OF VICTORY

Assertions that Stephen Wise was "not very spiritual" were on occasion based on unjust inferences which readers drew from a curiously and unfortunately exaggerated incident recalled by Abraham Cronbach, his onetime associate at the Free Synagogue. While talking to the children of a confirmation class led by Cronbach, Wise told them that, in his crowded life, he often found it difficult to experience God's presence — "between God and him," as Cronbach remembered Wise putting it, "there was a barrier, a thick wall which he was unable to penetrate."¹⁵ This remark, made in humility and unusual self-knowledge, may well have reflected a unique awareness of God and closeness to Him. Cronbach certainly intended no aspersion of Wise's spirituality.

Wise's thousands of letters, his work, and his thought were informed by an ardent and genuine religious faith. His was a profoundly religious spirit. Had it been otherwise, he could never have borne the abuse heaped upon him, often by colleagues in the ministry, both Jewish and Christian. He was always a voice in the wilderness, ✓

¹⁴ Marcus Jastrow, Germantown, Pa., to S. S. Wise, N. Y., December 26, 1895 (Stephen Wise Archives, Goldfarb Library, Brandeis University). The Jewish Publication Society's new translation of the *Holy Scriptures* was published in 1917.

¹⁵ A. Cronbach, "Autobiography," *American Jewish Archives*, XI (1959), 49.

but especially so from 1933 to 1945 when few heeded his warnings and prescience of disaster for world Jewry. In 1942, he wrote to his friend John Haynes Holmes:

I am almost demented over my people's grief . . . and still I must add, I do not lose faith — my faith that we will, in part, because of these awful sacrifices, march on to a decenter, juster and, it may be, a warless world. Faith, as we both know, isn't a thing to be reasoned about. One has it, or one has not. You and I both have it. Both of us see the divine, even from far off, toward which all creation moves, though it move haltingly, painfully and, perhaps it must be so, sacrificially.¹⁶

One day someone will edit a book of Wise's prayers, especially those he voiced in the morning chapel services with his "boys" at the Jewish Institute of Religion, or at funerals where he would offer petitions of poetic beauty. The famous prayer, given by him at the Democratic National Convention in Madison Square Garden on June 26, 1924, exceeded in meaning and power the prayers offered by sundry other clergymen before those monotonous sessions, and was unique in coming from the lips of an Alternate Delegate:

Almighty God and Father, give Thy merciful guidance to this gathering of the Sons and Daughters of our beloved Nation, that together we may greatly serve the highest and noblest interests of our Country. Help us to be brotherly and forbearing to one another, but dauntlessly resolute for the right. May we battle for truth, not for advantage, for public honor and not private gain, for the privilege of service and not the glory of victory. Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it. So let this mighty gathering help to build the house of a righteous and peace-furthering Nation; and in the unity of our fellowship and the bond of our abounding fulfillment of the prophecy, "For Mine house shall be called the house of prayer unto all peoples." And Thine, O Father, be the honor and the praise and the glory, forevermore. Amen.¹⁷

When word came to the Convention that the younger son of the Republican President, Calvin Coolidge, had died, the chair recognized "Mr. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a delegate from New York, who offers a resolution which will be read by Rabbi Wise." According to the Convention record:

¹⁶ *The Personal Letters of Stephen Wise*, p. 261.

¹⁷ *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention held in Madison Square Garden, New York City, June 24-July 9, 1924*, p. 227.

RABBI STEPHEN S. WISE (of New York): I offer this resolution on behalf of Mr. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Chairman of the New York State Delegation.

This Convention of the Democratic Party gathers this morning under the shadow of the grief that has come to the home of the Chief Magistrate of our Nation, together with all our fellow Americans. We bow our heads in sympathy and reverence by the side of our President as he and his family pass through the valley of the shadow of death. We pray that the Divine comfort and healing may be vouchsafed to the sorrowing parents. May the father and the mother of the lovable youth who has been called from life to life find solace and strength in the thought of the loving sympathy of all the American people.

In token thereof this Convention silently bows its head with loyal and affectionate regard for the President and for Mrs. Coolidge, the mother of Calvin Coolidge, Jr.¹⁸

Wise was clearly the author of Roosevelt's resolution; and, as with his prayer, he raised the whole tone of the tumultuous convention. It was at that same convention that he struggled valiantly to have the Democratic Party reaffirm the principles of Woodrow Wilson and emphasize anew America's obligation to join the League of Nations, as well as to defy Southern delegates and insist on denunciation of the Ku Klux Klan.

HIS CAUSE SHALL BE OUR CAUSE

Few Americans were as fearless as Wise. He was always on the front line of battle, especially on behalf of freedom of the pulpit, whether at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in New York City or at Temple Beth Israel in Portland, Oregon. The most dramatic instance of his convictions on this score was his rejection of overtures from the trustees of Temple Emanu-El in New York City and his founding shortly thereafter of the Free Synagogue. But his courage took him much further afield. Before World War I he demanded higher safety standards after the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, and denounced the Steel Trust. After the War, he led the way in condemning anti-union Garyism, stood in the forefront during important strikes of the mid-1920's, denounced Fascism in the 1920's

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 852-53.

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Companion of the little people

Wise visiting survivors of Nazism at the Zeilsheim Displaced Persons Camp

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A gaiety of spirit:
Wise with Albert Einstein and Fiorello LaGuardia

and 1930's when Mussolini and Hitler were coming into power, protested government-sanctioned repression of free speech, and exposed the anti-Semitism already apparent in policies of the Soviet Union.

A lesser man might have been more timid or expedient; Wise could be neither. He fought Tammany Hall from the mid-1890's all through his life — most spectacularly and successfully when the City Affairs Committee which he and John Haynes Holmes headed proved ultimately responsible for compelling Mayor "Jimmy" Walker's resignation.

It would have been simple, too, for him to have restrained his Zionist convictions, for in its early days Zionism was unpopular among American Jews, especially Reform Jews and their rabbis. In 1898, Wise wrote to Herzl in Vienna that he anticipated "a hard, uphill fight for Zionism in this country." The Jewish press was "almost unanimous in its opposition," and Wise owned himself "half ashamed that the fewest of the American Jewish ministers, who should have been the first to forward this great movement, are lending it any support whatever. . . ." He defended Herzl when nearly everyone else considered him an impractical and dangerous visionary, and at Herzl's death in 1904, Wise told his congregation in Portland:

He was one of the rarest of men, dreamer and doer alike. "*Wenn Ihr wollt ist es kein Maerchen.*" ["If you will it, it is no mere dream."] To charge him with having been an irresponsible dreamer is wickedly and cruelly libelous. The pygmies, plodding and unprophetic, looked upon this giant, gazing at the distant horizon, and they cried aloud, "Irresponsible dreamer!!" — For us he died. His cause shall be our cause; for it will we live and labor.²⁰

Wise was more concerned with principle than with practicality, with truth rather than expediency. Utterly heedless of consequences, disdaining possible reprisals, he served as a dedicated minister in three pulpits, fought entrenched bureaucracy in the American Federation of Labor during the 1925-1926 textile strike in Passaic,

¹⁹ S. S. Wise to Theodor Herzl, June 16, 1898 (Goldfarb Library, Brandeis University).

²⁰ *Beth Israel Pulpit*, Portland, Oregon, Vol. V, No. 1, p. 1.

THE LION AND THE LAMB

supported Gandhi in his struggle against the British Empire in the 1920's and 1930's — and later criticized the Mahatma mercilessly for his lack of discernment about Zionism and the objectives of the Jewish people. He condemned Franklin Delano Roosevelt, then Governor of New York, for a lack of courage and forthright action in the Mayor Walker episode in New York City. Subsequently, however, out of conviction — and indeed with complete selflessness — he supported Roosevelt for his second, third, and fourth terms as President.

The letters Stephen Wise wrote were not always to the great and powerful, not always in support of noble causes or downtrodden minorities. His tender and concerned letters to children, to the bereaved, to the countless little people in his congregation or his circle of acquaintances, reveal a different side of this extraordinary man. He was never too busy, never too tired, to offer comfort or support. Despite a multitude of activities, a diversity of interests, and an endless correspondence, he never failed to remember birthdays, to send a note of comfort on the anniversary of a death, or to go to the bedside of a dying person at any hour of the night and to stay as long as he could be of help. There was nothing of the public figure here, and these "little remembered acts of kindness and of love" typified Stephen S. Wise just as much as did his more publicized struggles, his ceaseless battles to safeguard freedom and justice for men of all creeds and colors.