

Martin Buber correspondence

Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem

Born in Vienna on the 8th of February in 1878, Martin Buber spent his youth in the home of his grandfather, Salomon Buber, the well-known scholar in the field of rabbinic literature, who lived in Lemberg, Galicia, which at that time belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was there that young Buber received his first impression of Chassidism, the great Jewish popular movement of religious revival, which arose in the eighteenth century in Eastern Europe and especially Podolia and Galicia. This movement influenced Buber's thinking and studies, and in his books on Chassidism, from the *Stories of Rabbi Nachman* (1906) to the *Tales of Hassidim* (1947), he succeeded in bringing this theme closer to the Western reading public. Buber studied philosophy and art in Vienna, Leipzig, Zürich, and Berlin, and took his doctoral degree in Vienna in 1904.

While still a student, Martin Buber joined the Zionist Organization, founded by Theodor Herzl. Although he almost continually opposed the official political Zionism, he saw this movement as a source of spiritual renewal of Judaism.

Buber's philosophy is based on the idea of understanding of what he called the encounter: the encounter of mankind with the surrounding world.

His most important philosophical work *Ich und Du* (I and Thou) (1923) led him from his earlier work *Daniel* (1913) on the mystic unification with God, to the lively dialogue between man and man, between man and God.

In 1923, Buber accepted the position of lecturer for Jewish religion and ethics at the University of Frankfurt-am-Main and was appointed Professor of comparative religious philosophy in that university in 1930. In 1925, Buber

undertook together with Franz Rosenzweig, a new translation of the Hebraic Bible, the *Schrift*, into German. After the death of Rosenzweig in 1929, Buber continued this work alone and finished it in Jerusalem in 1961.

From 1933 until he emigrated to Palestine in the Spring of 1938, Buber led the Central Bureau for Jewish Adult Education in accordance with the *Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland* (state representation of the Jews in Germany). In 1935 he was appointed professor of Social Philosophy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, but only in 1938, after his arrival in Palestine, he took up this post.

Besides his scholarly work, Buber concerned himself with the already unceasing attempts to reach an understanding with the Arab population of Palestine, and in the years 1926-1933 he joined, while living in Germany, the "Brith-Shalom" ("Covenant of Peace") circle. In 1942, together with likeminded friends, he became a member of the *Ichud* (Union), which at that time strove for a bi-national Jewish Arab State in Palestine.

The years of the Second World War, during which Buber was completely cut off from the outside world, were for him "a period of incomparable concentration" and "surprising productivity"; those years he called the "real epoch of work" in his life. In the post-war years Buber undertook several lecture tours in European countries, and in 1952 also to the United States. He received many prizes and marks of honour, and also became the first President of the Israeli Academy of Sciences (1961). Today, Martin Buber is considered one of the great thinkers and spiritual authorities of his time. He died in Jerusalem on the 13th of June, 1965, at the age of 87.



Portrait of Martin Buber.

The archive

The personal archives of the world famous scholar, philosopher, theologian, author of numerous books and articles, Martin Buber, are preserved in the Jewish National and University Library of Jerusalem.

The Buber Archives are a unique source for research, not only on the person of Buber and his thinking, but since Buber, who lived between 1878-1965 has been one of the leading spirits of his time, his notes, lectures, correspondence with many outstanding personalities give a unique insight in the thinking and development of the ideas in the first half of the twentieth century. An epoch which saw two World Wars, the development of the relations between Arabs and Jews, where Buber worked for a better understanding between both groups through the *Ichud* movement and on the other side the birth and growth of Zionism.

The complete correspondence of Martin Buber has been made accessible by IDC in microfiche form.

The correspondence

The letters (between 45,000 and 50,000!) cover a wide range of subjects, such as:

- Philosophy (especially philosophy of dialogue)
- Hasidism
- Judaism
- Translator (the most important work: the Bible translation together with Rosenzweig)
- Editor: *Die Welt, Die Gesellschaft, Der Jude, Die Kreatur*
- Adult education in Weimar Germany and Israel
- Zionism: 1898-1904; 1921-1965
- The Arab problem
- Arts and literature
- World recognition after World War II

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Mrs. Margot Cohn, former secretary of Martin Buber, has, as the curator of the archives, arranged the archives systematically.

Mrs. Margot Cohn compiled a card catalogue of more than 10,000 cards on the entire archives, including an alphabetical file of all persons with whom Buber corresponded.

The card catalogue gives direct and easy access to the microfiche collection.

The card catalogue (which is part of the series of *Finding aids to Manuscript and Archive Collections of the Jewish National and University Library*) is also available separately.

Order no.: J-10-4/1

General information

(including the card catalogue on microfiche)

Number of fiche	798
Size of fiche	105 x 148 mm
Film type	Positive silver halide
Reduction ratio	1 : 20
Internal finding aids	Eye-legible headers with title on each fiche
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