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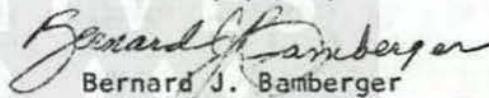
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BERNARD J. BAMBERGER  
205 W. 86th St.  
New York, N. Y. 10024

Dear Colleague:

Recently, in deep concern over the divisions within the CCAR, I wrote a rough draft of the memo which follows, and showed it to a few friends. As a result, some of our colleagues in the New York area met informally at my home to discuss it. They represented widely diverse viewpoints, but all of them were eager to foster shalom and unity within the Conference, and in American Reform Judaism. Despite their differences, which they accepted with mutual respect and good will, they found large areas of agreement. Those present, and a few who were invited but could not attend, felt that my statement, properly revised, might be helpful in generating both the mood and the kind of thinking we need, and that it should be sent out to the CCAR membership. In reading it, please understand that it is a personal unofficial statement, representing no organization or party; and the colleagues whose names are listed below have simply indicated that as individuals they are in substantial agreement with it. I hope you will find it of interest, and shall be pleased to receive your reactions.

Sincerely yours,

  
Bernard J. Bamberger

#### AGENDA FOR AN EXPLORATION

The CCAR resolution of 1942 calling for the creation of a Jewish army did not lead to the establishment of such a force; but it did lead directly to the establishment of the American Council for Judaism. The 1973 resolution calling on members of the Conference not to officiate at mixed marriages has not, so far as is known, reduced the number of such marriages or the number of rabbis who officiate at them; but it has had some far reaching consequences for the CCAR and for the Reform movement.

Fortunately, not all the mistakes of the past were repeated. The APRJ is still an organization of rabbis committed to working within the Conference. The President of the Conference and his associates have publicly acknowledged the right of the Association to exist. Channels of communication have been kept open. But there have been outbursts of vituperation from members of the APRJ and from its critics; tempers are obviously high, and disruptive actions are clearly possible. Further, many laymen have indicated a desire to join the APRJ, and the prudent on both sides see that this could spell trouble.

Nothing will be gained by chewing over the past or by name calling. Neither party is composed exclusively of unprincipled fanatics; neither is composed exclusively of spotless saints.

The suggestion has been made that the time is ripe for a "great debate" on the issues. Such a debate might well harden lines of division and exacerbate emotions. I would rather see a calm, reasoned, and sensitive exploration of the issues and problems by groups of rabbis representing divergent viewpoints, who respect each other even when they differ, and who recognize that no possible accommodation will be fully satisfying to everyone. This statement is an attempt to stimulate such exploration.



in outlining several (not all) of the basic problems, my intent is not to offer solutions, but to encourage study and discussion.

I INTERMARRIAGE The question whether rabbis should or should not officiate at mixed marriages is not unimportant, but it is relatively minor. The real problem is intermarriage itself. We are all committed to the survival of the Jewish people and of Judaism, and we know that mixed marriage is a threat to survival. What can we do to counter that threat, aside from trying to improve Jewish education? We hear few answers to that question. Virtually the only one I have heard of late comes from some of the conscientious rabbis who perform mixed marriages (in contradistinction to those who will marry anyone for a fee). They claim that their procedures result in a significantly high percentage of families retained within the Jewish fold. I believe these claims should be subjected to dispassionate and critical study. If a really objective analysis of them is possible, and if it should result in validating these claims, many "traditionalists" might have to revise their thinking. If, further, anyone can think of other possible avenues to explore, he should speak up. Emotional outbursts against those who officiate at mixed marriages are not relevant; for the intermarriage rate seems to be equally high in Britain and South Africa, where no rabbi will officiate.

II AUTHORITY On this subject, it seems to me, a great deal of heat is needlessly expended. One side clamors for discipline, order, and standards in Reform Jewish life; the other sees such proposals as a threat to our liberty and to the very essence of Reform. I cannot share either the enthusiasm of one side or the apprehensiveness of the other. There is no authority without power of enforcement--witness the ineffectiveness of the Atlanta resolution.

But while a code or guide for Reform Jewish practice is not likely either to bring discipline into our ranks or to destroy our liberties, one may still doubt the propriety of such a guide appearing in the name of the CCAR, a body which represents so wide a spectrum of opinion and practice. If a guide is to have any character at all, it must reflect a specific viewpoint; it could properly be written and published by an individual or individuals. The "Shabbat Manual", which contains much that we can all use with profit, also includes a number of highly debatable assertions. (It has also been criticized because it contains so little that is representative of Reform creativity). It would seem that if the Conference is to publish any other works in similar fields, they should eschew even the semblance of legislative intent, and should include materials expressive of the various viewpoints that coexist in the Conference--as is the case with most of our liturgical publications.

III TRADITIONALISM AND ITS ALTERNATIVES Just as our movement lacks external authority to enforce rules and observances, so it lacks a doctrine of revelation which might confer inner spiritual authority on any rule or code. Recognition of this fact may well be the starting point of an inquiry into our approach to tradition. Our decisions--let's face it--are subjective. They are not determined by scripture, precedent, or majority practice, but by our own judgment--if you will, by our personal tastes. There are unnumbered possible combinations of traditional and innovative procedures which individuals and congregations may choose to adopt. Three general trends, however, may be noted: one toward restoration of traditional forms; one toward experimental and "creative" liturgy and ceremony; and a third position, particularly marked among laymen, which seeks to preserve unchanged whatever forms one is used to, and to regard any departure from them as somehow treason to Reform. Though that static attitude cannot be defended logically, it should remind us to take into consideration the legitimate desire for continuity and the love of the familiar. The nostalgia of a third-generation Reform Jew for what he saw in Temple in his childhood is just as valid as the nostalgia of a first-generation Reform Jew for his Zede's schul.



Starting from these premises, we may profitably examine the norms by which traditional elements should be selected and adapted for Reform Jewish practice. Such a study is long overdue in view of popular pressure to revive some of the more dubious elements in supposedly "traditional" custom.

IV THE ROLE OF THE LAITY The important proposal of the APRJ to give lay people a greater part in decision making forces us to confront the contradictions in our customary talk on this subject. On one hand, we assert that Judaism is a democratic religion and that the rabbi is only a learned layman; on the other, we savor our priestly role and try to uphold our authority. We deplore the ignorance of our laymen on Jewish subjects, but perhaps we enjoy it as well; it justifies us in our claim that we should regulate every aspect of synagogue life except the fiscal. Many utterances in the CCAR Year Book and Journal imply that the laity is to be regarded as the enemy and the Board of Trustees as the arch-enemy. I am, however, assured that this attitude is representative only of a small, though shrill voiced minority.

We should examine these contradictions and try to separate reality from rhetoric. But the problem is far from imaginary. Even if the trustees and the rabbis are friends, how shall we reconcile the right of a congregation to set its own standards and policies with the freedom and leadership of the rabbi?--all the more since frequently the Board of Trustees does not represent that part of the membership that regularly attends services and other functions.

In theory, the problem seems insoluble: how can a paid employee also be a spiritual leader? But just as the bumble bee flies in defiance of the laws of aerodynamics, rabbinic leadership is possible in practice. The right kind of rabbi in the right kind of congregation can get his people to want to do what he wants them to do--not everything, of course, but why should he always win? There are even cases where a rabbi long established in his pulpit wields something like despotic power. We may disapprove of this, but it naturally disturbs us less than the opposite (and more frequent) phenomenon--the subjection of a rabbi to unreasonable pressures and bullying by powerful laymen.

Our congregations presently include many superior men and women, some of whom are well informed about Judaism. But they are not always the most vocal and influential lay people. Temple boards, and even regional and national councils of the UAHC, include not a few who are at heart minimalist and assimilationist, who tend to mean "the right to be nonobservant and non-participatory" when they talk of "individual freedom."

No doubt they have the right to be non-observant; but that right is not going to be seriously challenged, even by those "who are trying to drag us back into orthodoxy." No one will be coerced into reciting kiddush. What worries me is the possibility that rabbis may be coerced into performing mixed marriages against their own consciences. The APRJ must come to grips with the question: Will it defend the right of rabbis not to officiate at mixed marriages, if their convictions forbid them to do so?

The issues have grown increasingly difficult, not only because mixed marriage has become so common, but because of economic factors. In the past few decades, rabbis were scarce and money was relatively plentiful. Congregations were therefore eager to keep their rabbis happy, financially and otherwise. Today money is scarce and rabbis are more plentiful, with consequent threats to rabbinic security. I get the impression that some congregations at least, when they look for a new rabbi, prefer an amiable and docile mediocrity to someone with the ability and experience to be a leader.

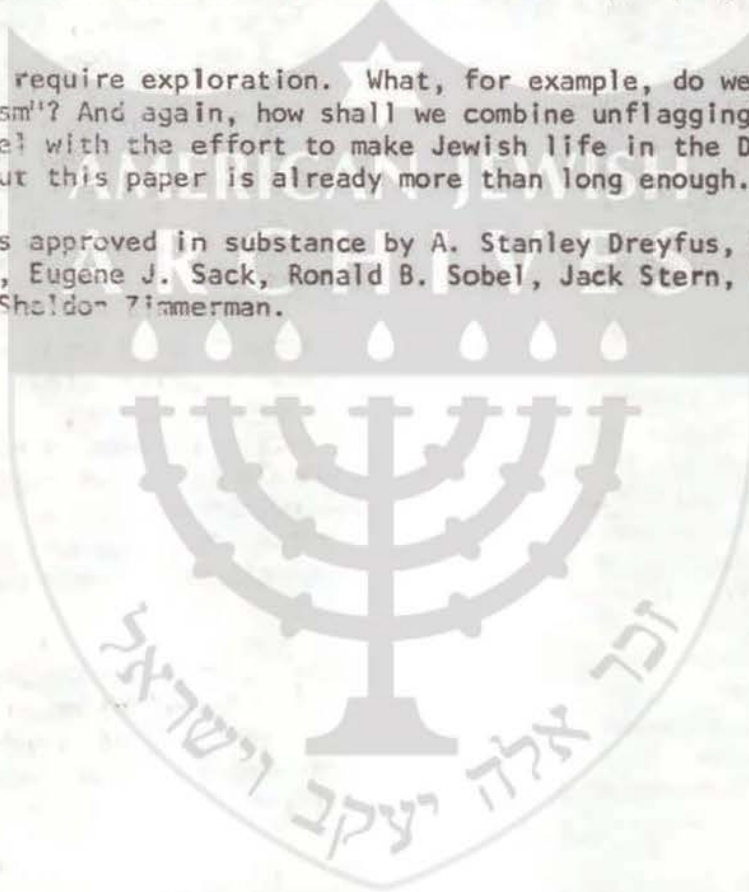


Within the UAHC constituency there has been a continuing demand for more lay participation in decision making. This may in part reflect a familiar anti-rabbinic mood, which incidentally is compatible with adulation of one's own rabbi. In part it may be a protest against certain policy decisions and public utterances made by Union staff more or less on their own. Again we have the problem of reconciling two legitimate concerns: the right of a constituency to exercise some control over statements made in its name, and the need of our national bodies to take significant positions on vital issues of the time.

In short, this proposal of the APRJ needs clarification. It could be a legitimate and salutary proposal; it could turn out to be a frontal assault on the dignity and integrity of the rabbinate. Its intent should be promptly and precisely spelled out.

Many other areas require exploration. What, for example, do we mean by the phrase "prophetic Judaism"? And again, how shall we combine unflagging and sacrificial support for Israel with the effort to make Jewish life in the Diaspora more vital and creative? But this paper is already more than long enough.

This statement is approved in substance by A. Stanley Dreyfus, Mark N. Goldman, Sidney L. Regner, Eugene J. Sack, Ronald B. Sobel, Jack Stern, Harvey M. Tattelbaum, Amiel Wohl, and Sheldon Zimmerman.





ASSOC

# אגוד הרבנים המתקדמים

## CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

790 MADISON AVENUE • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 • (212) AG 9-2811

Office of the President  
Rabbi Robert I. Kahn  
1500 Sunset Blvd., Houston, Tex. 77005  
December 17, 1974

My dear Colleagues,

During the past few months, I have received a good number of letters and calls about the Association for a Progressive Reform Judaism. I have deliberately refrained hitherto from responding in other than general terms because it was not apparent to me what the Association was all about. It is only now that I feel that I can communicate to you my impressions and my reaction.

Let me begin by telling you in serial order of my experience with the APRJ.

The first letters I received enclosed copies of the New York Times report of the St. Louis meetings, and the writers of these letters were very troubled. According to the Times, the organization arose in reaction to the CCAR's "forbidding its members from officiating at mixed marriages," and called for more active participation by laymen "in the national policies of the Reform rabbinate."

It turned out, however, that the Times reporter had misreported. President Mihaly sent me an authorized release, which did not mention mixed marriage, nor summon laymen to participate in the affairs of the CCAR. Then I was sent, with a warm misheberach from Eugene Mihaly, a copy of a sermon by Chanan Brichto, strongly attacking some of the trends in the CCAR, HUC-JIR, UAHC and WUPJ. Later, Joe Glaser and I were invited to meet with President Mihaly and other faculty members for an evening of discussion. And all along, Dr. Mihaly has sent me copies of his letters to the APRJ membership.

From these contacts and others, here and there about the country, and from reading the Association's releases and bulletins, I feel that I understand APRJ and the strong feelings it has aroused, and write to share this understanding as objectively and dispassionately as I can. And please understand that while I write as President of the CCAR, I do not write for the Conference, but to it, speaking only for myself.

I.

The membership of the APRJ embraces a wide variety of men and attitudes.

Obviously it came into being as a result of the Atlanta Conference's debate and decision on mixed marriage. Some of its members question whether the decision was a true reflection of Conference attitude and behavior. Others have expressed the fear that it was the first step toward sanctions. (This is what is meant in the APRJ public statements about "restriction of freedom".)

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- \*Ex-officio



But there are other concerns.

Some APRJ members of more "classic" persuasion look with dismay on the re-introduction of traditional rites and ceremonies.

Some regard the use of words like Halachah as a prologue to authoritarian policies.

Some disapprove of "entangling alliances" with other Jewish groups. These are labeled "appeasement," and threats to autonomy.

Some are temperamentally opposed to any and every establishment, and what they call "vested interests".

Some are ill at ease with Zionism.

These, as I analyse it, are the attitudes and the apprehensions which have brought together those of our colleagues who have formed and joined the APRJ. In responding to them, I shall try to avoid vituperative attacks, ad hominem arguments, or the ascription of personal motivation or hidden agenda, for these would only strengthen the fears that have been expressed.

## II.

The APRJ leadership has repeatedly represented the organization as being a caucus within the CCAR. Its stated purpose is not secession; it is to "work within the Conference and other organizations of Reform Judaism to effectuate its program." Therefore, it has not accepted membership applications from laymen "since we have, at present, limited the Association to members of the CCAR. We welcome, however, . . . their (laymen's) interest and support."

Now no one can question the rights of CCAR members to organize a caucus and strive by democratic means to influence the policies of the Conference. This has taken place before informally. During its entire history, the Conference has been the arena of continuing debate on the principles and policies of Reform Judaism. Caucusses have been formed and dissolved, minorities have sometimes become majorities, prevailing views have changed.

But this very fact seems to me to make the APRJ caucus, whose right to organize is unquestioned, unnecessary. The first six goals it has announced are completely unexceptionable. They call for the support and the advancement of the values of freedom, creativity, autonomy, dynamic vitality, and self-determination in Reform Judaism.

But there already is an organization devoted to freedom, creativity, autonomy and dynamic vitality--the Central Conference of American Rabbis. When, in our long history, has freedom been abridged? When have sanctions been invoked against those who disagree? We have been so zealous for individual freedom that we have always leaned over backwards not to interfere with our colleagues' liberty. When sharp issues have divided us, we have drawn up the most democratic procedures to guide our debates. In a profoundly democratic process, the Conference has always sought to express the convictions of a current majority without ever abridging the freedom of a current minority. It is a longstanding principle of the Conference that the majority has no right to coerce the conscience nor behavior of the minority, but then neither does the minority have a right to coerce a majority into silence.



This dedication to personal freedom was demonstrated in the very resolution which activated the formation of the APRJ. While expressing the view of the majority, that resolution also spelled out in plain language the right of Conference members to dissent from the majority interpretation of tradition. How can any one take the position that this is a restriction on freedom? The APRJ, it seems to me, sees dangers that do not exist.

Similarly, the Association raises a spectre when it speaks of "appeasement" of Conservative and Orthodox establishments. The facts controvert this claim.

For example, in Jerusalem last March, at the urging of our Israeli colleagues who persuaded me that it would be very helpful in their struggle to gain their rights and also be a counter-move to the proposed change in the Law of Return, I suggested to the Conference that we consider a more traditional rite of conversion. The reaction of the Executive Board of the Conference was overwhelmingly negative. It seems obvious that the Conference, while willing to cooperate in behalf of K'lal Yisrael, will not sacrifice its autonomy nor self-determination.

Therefore, while I repeat that the APRJ has the right to be a caucus, I question its need even within the Conference.

### III.

And I even more strongly question its need outside the Conference. In the Association's statements of principle and program, there is a potential danger--the development of an anti-Rabbinic movement among laymen.

This potential shows in several ways.

The seventh goal of the APRJ reads: "To strengthen the role of laymen in the decision-making process of Reform Judaism as regards education, liturgy, ritual and the like."

It is implicit in the statement of concern which accuses Reform organizations of neglecting "the problems and concerns of the Reform constituency: The men and women who have been instructed and confirmed in the Reform Temple." And it emerges in the statement of the President that membership is not available to laymen "at present".

There are potential dangers in this repeated reference to involving laymen in the APRJ program. History warns us. Thirty years ago, ninety Rabbis, dissidents from a Conference resolution, brought together a group of Rabbis and laymen. Within a few years, almost all of those ninety Rabbis had resigned from the organization that they had helped found, and some even denounced it. But the laymen went on without them to do great mischief in Jewish life. While this may not be the intention of all the founders and members of the APRJ, I admonish them, "Sages, be heedful of your words."

### IV.

Reform Judaism came into being to hold Jews to Judaism by meeting their spiritual needs in a changing world. We, too, live in a time of great change. The ideas and practices of yesterday have come under question. The spectrum of theological and ideological distribution is wider today than any of us can remember. And we must seek, as did our fathers, to meet the spiritual needs of our people in this changing world.

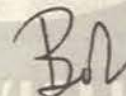


All of us are grappling with the problem in sincerity and in truth. It will take much discussion and debate to find our way.

It is vitally important, therefore, that our disagreements not be disagreeable, that our divisions not be destructive. Elu v'elu is something of a cliché these days. But even a cliché can convey an important truth. "These and these will be the words of the living God" only if we and we, each of us and all of us, conduct our debate with integrity, mutual respect and shalom.

Best personal wishes.

Sincerely yours,



Rabbi Robert I. Kahn





ASSOC

# PROPOSED RESOLUTION TO THE CCAR EXECUTIVE BOARD

MARAM, the Council of Progressive Rabbis in Israel, views with concern certain tendencies within a portion of the American Reform Rabbinate to regress to anti-Zionist and anti-traditionalist positions of the nineteenth century.

While the Association for a Progressive Reform Judaism has adopted general principles which on the surface appear to be acceptable, the program behind them, as revealed by accompanying literature, presents a syndrome of opposition to the re-introduction of traditional ceremonies, to "entangling alliances" with and "appeasement" of Conservative and Orthodox Judaism by Reform's renewed interest in confronting and modernizing Halacha, and to Zionism and American Jewry's support of Israel.

We believe that the critical re-introduction of traditional rites, which Classical Reform of the 19th century abandoned, conforms to the spirit of Reform Judaism which sees itself continually in the process of reform and change. Reform Judaism has had the courage to correct its mistakes, when it recognized them. If the 19th century rationalist approach to tradition does not fit the spiritual and emotional needs of the Jew of the late 20th century, then it is our duty to change this approach. We should not do so by blindly accepting Orthodox ritual, but rather by a thorough and critical investigation of "tasmei ha-mitzvot" to see whether traditional ceremonies can serve as a means of helping the Liberal Jew to find a meaningful Jewish religious way of life.

We believe that co-operation in issues of common interest with our Conservative and Orthodox colleagues has been erroneously termed "appeasement". If we wish to explore together areas of possible co-operation for the benefit of "Klal Yisrael" while retaining autonomy, such action certainly cannot be described as "entangling alliances."

We believe that the spirit of the Halacha in its historical context has to a great extent been progressive, and should be explored to discover its possibilities for Progressive Judaism today. This should not be done by blindly accepting the authority of texts, but rather through a confrontation of the eternal of our tradition with the changing needs and conditions of our day. We Rabbis, who have fought an entrenched and reactionary Orthodox establishment in Israel, are convinced that Progressive Judaism should not forfeit our stake in Halacha to ~~usurp~~ them.

We view with alarm the renewed tendency toward anti-Zionism or non-Zionism ~~as~~ among certain groups of our colleagues, under the guise of an interest in the plight of the Palestinians. This complicated issue has no simple solution. The true nature of the so-called moderate PLO has been revealed in its recent murderous attack in Tel Aviv. A Jewish State in ~~stage~~ <sup>stage</sup> with so many enemies throughout the world deserves the full support of American Jewry in its efforts to find a just peace.

We support the freedom of expression and action of our colleagues, but we must all remember that freedom is always restricted by the boundaries of responsibility. We must always keep in perspective our responsibility to historical Judaism, to Israel and to our people, as we labor in the vineyard of the Lord.

written by Moshe Zemer 9.3.75



ASSOCIATION FOR A PROGRESSIVE REFORM JUDAISM

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SCHEUER CHAPEL



Re'ay vetalmiday moray verabotay

My friends and my students, my teachers and my masters.

I rise to speak torn in mind and spirit. The occasion is zeman simchateinu, a time for joy; yet I at this moment feel myself standing yet under siman yamim hannora'im, the sign of the Days of Awe. I feel the weight of aim'ta detsibura, the awe-filled respect due such a congregation as this, even as I own bidchilu urechimu [in love compounded with fear] responsibility to an Authority which transcends time and place. In full awareness that I am setting a bad example, I shall dispense with the form of the classical sermon. For this I ask your pardon. In the interest of brevity I shall forego a text. Not for lack of ingenuity -- but lest I seem to impose on your time and tolerance in the manner of that maggid [itinerant preacher] whose sermonic repertory consisted of parshat Korah [Korah's rebellion, Numbers 16]. Above all I ask your forgiveness if like the ghost at the feast I disturb the cheer of this day. Anomalous though it may appear, it is a fact that we of the faculty -- ordained though we may be -- are rarely given reshut haddibbur [the speaker's prerogative] to the degree and in the manner of our colleagues in the pulpit. I speak as one of you -- and as a rabbi. If in matter or manner I excite you to disagreement or opposition, I propose this amends: Avail yourselves of this rostrum on occasions near and soon. Let us begin a Great Debate. It is long past due in this seminary -- heart of Reform Judaism.



I shall raise three issues -- sensitive, tension-fraught and momentous. Though they impinge upon one another I shall try to separate them out and speak on them my mind and heart. They are: Reform Judaism and its relation to Tradition; the American Jewish Community (or, if you will, the Diaspora) and the State of Israel; the question of Reform's unity with Klal Yisrael and unity within Reform itself.

In regard to the first. It is obvious that Reform except in the context of Tradition is an absurdity. For Reform is a refashioning, a modification, a refinement, often a return to pristine precedent -- and not a nihilistic repudiation. And so long as we refuse to add the ed to Reform which would turn the verbal noun into a past participle, Reform is committed to an ever-continuing re-examination of the changes it has adopted, of the tradition it has reshaped and of the tradition it has itself become. But what if in the name of reforming Reform we should be swept up on a wave of nostalgia and -- in apologetic guilt -- question our very authenticity as Jews. Then, I submit, we should find ourselves where so many of us already are: caught up in the principle of the rejection of the rejection. On issues great and small, portentuous or trivial, we rush to embrace whatever we have abandoned: kashrut and gittin [halakhic divorce procedures], Hasidism and nationalism, yarmulkes and taleisim:



I am opposed to none of these in principle. I cannot accede to the elevation of any of these to the status of a principle. If hasidism, yes!-- in the name of what the people can or cannot bear, in the temper which rejects halakhic hair-splitting and that worship of the word which is death to the spirit. The Promethean love of a Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev and the questing, challenging chutzpah klapey shemaya [audacity towards Heaven] of a Menahem Mendel of Kutsk. But not the degenerate tsadikism which brought a Graetz to revulsion, nor even the shulchan-aruch-bound pietism of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Lord be praised for the anti-Zionism of the Satmar Rebbe -- else some of us would even now be paying court to Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum [the present incumbent of this dynasty]. Ah but how in our heart of hearts we envy him the spontaneity of his shuckle [swaying-rocking motion]!

Let us grant with our gift of hindsight -- and for the sake of argument-- that early Reform's rejection of Jewish nationalism was predicated on a naive Hegelian faith in an ever-accelerating progress towards the consummation of loftiest ideals; let us even grant that it was motivated by a contemptible yearning to be accepted as full-fledged nationals of a non-Christian faith: Are we really ready for an unequivocal Jewish nationalism while we condemn that very ideology for the regressive foreign policy of the United States? The State of Israel is. The State of Israel is an existential necessity. But it was sad necessity which brought it into being. Sad necessity? No--brutal,



tragic necessity. It arose out of the ashes of a martyred people. And unless it is preserved . . . well, humanity itself may not survive the attempt to impose a second martyrdom in a half-century.

But surely the universalism of a prophetic faith should keep us from the pendulum-swings from triumphalism to despair. Golda Meir weeps when her Air Force is goaded into a pre-emptive strike. But 'amkha [the Jewish commonalty, hoi polloi] watching "Tora, Tora" in a Jerusalem cinema howls with glee over the Japanese onslaught on Pearl Harbor. Bediyuk kemo she'asinu la-aravim! "Just what we did to the Arabs!" But we who hear ourselves addressed by a reassuring God as "thou worm Jacob" [Isaiah 41: 14] -- for us there must always be the haunt of Esau's heartbroken cry, "Have you only that one blessing, father? Bless me, me too, father mine" [Genesis 27: 38]

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And now to the Jewish community in America and its relation to Israel.

We hear much talk about the centrality of Israel, especially from the Zionist ba'aley teshuvah [penitents] in the Reform movement who feel they must still atone for their predecessors' sins. And the centrality of Israel is something which I, for one, would not care to deny. My question, however is this: Does the centrality of Israel, with its two and one-half million Jews, mean something less than centrality for Diaspora Jewry with its more than five times that number? Is there any future and any validity for our



Jewishness and our Judaism except insofar as we are candidates for aliyah? And must our commitment to our embattled brothers and sisters so impress us with a prideful sense of our philanthropy as to lead us to scant our own national institutions? Given their substantial Judaica departments, do the secular universities in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and Beersheba command a priority over Hebrew Union, JTS and Yeshiva or Chicago's Hebrew Theological? In the past seven years seven of my colleagues have made aliyah to Israel to take up professorships in Bible, Near Eastern Studies and Jewish law. All born, raised and educated in America; three of them ordained at JTS, one ordained here in Cincinnati; I do not count our own Rabbi Spicehandler or Dr. Klein. And the fact that I and many of my colleagues are still here in Cincinnati is not for lack of invitations to Israel. I am not raising the spectre of a Jewish brain-drain. I point rather with pride to one indication of the cultural accomplishment of American Jewry. My question is whether the libraries and faculties which nurtured these and other scholars are deserving of commensurate support on this continent, or whether we should not move them lock, stock and barrel to the land of Israel. Such a suggestion has already been proposed for more than one rabbinical school. As for the teachers to man our religious schools here -- never worry -- like the Egyptians who export teachers to the far-flung lands of Islam -- Israel will send us rabbis, shlichim and pedagogues properly nourished at the fons et origo.



I am not clowning nor am I engaged in caricature. Israel as the merkaz ruchani [spiritual center] and the Diaspora centers as Israel's cultural fiefdoms can be turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy by the myopic nature of Diaspora philanthropy. One depreciated deflated copper penny per day per Jewish capita in this country will cover the total budgets of the College-Institute, the Jewish Theological Seminary and any number of yeshivot ... yet only a year ago this school's Board of Governors had been constrained to mandate a Task Force to study the efficiency and the fiscal feasibility of three schools of higher learning. And yes, this campus was on the block -- with its century of history, with its superb library so superbly housed; this school with its critical mass of faculty, its concentration of Jewish scholars in depth and breadth almost without peer -- for its size certainly without peer -- in all the world. Where are Reform's givers? Turned off? By whose fault? Pre-empted by JWF and UJA?? Hoy laddor vehoy lemanhigav! Alas for the generation, alack for its leaders!

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Ah, the leaders ... that's us -- rabbis and teachers of Judaism -- members of that proud, and justly proud, synod: the Central Conference of American Rabbis. What are we up to when we are not castigating our flocks for their Jewish illiteracy and their lack of commitment while we raise the banner of Jews in Israel speaking the tongue of the prophets? What are we up to when we, who have rejected the rebuilding of Zion's temple, are



not contesting the Western (retaining) Wall with Meah Shearim's pious bigots?

Read in the 1973 CCAR Yearbook the debate on the Report of the Committee on Mixed Marriage... My sense of Jewish peoplehood, my understanding of kiddushin and of the formula kedat Moshe veYisrael have never permitted me to officiate at a mixed marriage. (And how often have I been tried and tempted!) But to call on my colleague to yield his precious freedom to follow the dictates of his conscience? In the name of freeing myself from the importunities and pressures of laymen? Incredible. But wait -- in the name of unity of Klal Yisrael! Read in the remarks of Rabbi Moses Weiler the threat of his successor, "the distinguished Chief Minister in Johannesburg," not to recognize any member of an American Reform Congregation or any convert made by any American Reform Rabbi. But the cream of this melancholy jest will point up the distortions rendered inevitable by any attempt to come to terms with Israeli definitions of who and what constitutes a Jew. Weiler quotes from a letter from Rabbi Moshe Zemer, who -- he claims -- "you sent to pioneer in Tel Aviv."

"I am very fearful of what may be coming out of the CCAR meeting as far as the Israeli press is concerned. You may tell our colleagues that any approval of Rabbi's officiating at mixed marriages will be interpreted by Israeli's and possibly by the Israeli Government as proof of the Nineteenth-Century assimilationist character of Reform Judaism which we have been trying to fight against here."

From this pulpit I have the temerity to ask, "Who gives a damn?" And should we give even a fig? What would then remain for us but merely to cloister the agunah [a woman whose husband's death cannot be conclusively established], to screen our congregants for mamzerim and, perhaps, reinvoke the ban against lechem 'akum [idolaters' bread].

A word more: I have not yet resigned from the CCAR. I shall do so when and if it emulates the World Union for Progressive Judaism which this past summer -- on the urging of leaders of the CCAR, the UAHC and HUC-JIR -- voted to affiliate with the World Zionist Organization. Is this also necessary to prove that we are not nineteenth-century assimilationists? I need submit no credentials as a Chovev Tsiyon [Lover of Zion] nor for my stake in Israel. My mother is buried there -- as are my grandparents going back six generations. My father lives there -- he and ninety-eight out of a hundred uncles, aunts and first cousins. But I will not as a Reform rabbi be emboiled by a rabbinic association in the factional politics and pressure ploys of an organization which is a fossilized obsolescence.

I end as I began, with an apology and an apologia. If I have trod on any of your sensibilities I am sorry. But if you are inclined to view me now as a disrupter of the peace, an 'okher Yisrael, a splintering and divisive factor disrupting the unity of Israel, think back to the time when the Chaldean siege rams were battering Jerusalem's walls: Which of us would be wearing Jeremiah's sandals and which the boots of the loyal Establishment. How can you ever throb again with sympathy to the words of that prophet?

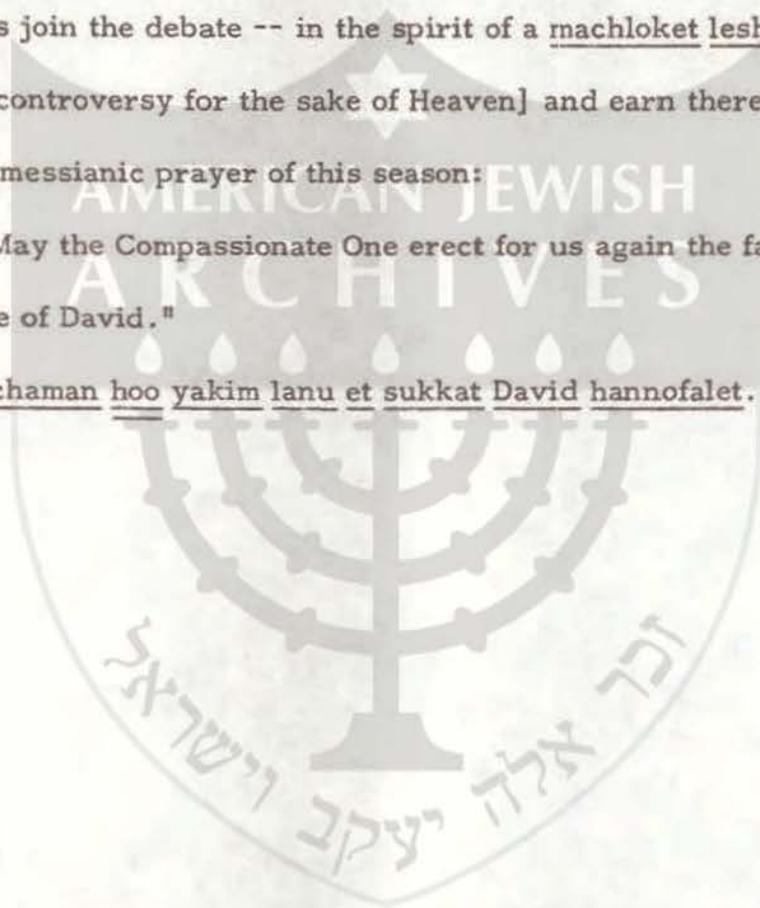


"Small and great alike -- everyone seeks an advantage. Every one of them -- from prophet to priest -- is on a false track. And so lightly do they plaster over my splintered people, saying, 'All's well, all's peaceful' -- when its nothing of the sort." Shalom, shalom -- ve'ein shalom!

Let us join the debate -- in the spirit of a machloket lesheim shamayim [controversy for the sake of Heaven] and earn thereby the right to utter the messianic prayer of this season:

"May the Compassionate One erect for us again the fallen tabernacle of David."

Harachaman hoo yakim lanu et sukkat David hannofalet.



ASSOCIATION FOR A PROGRESSIVE REFORM JUDAISM

3974 Clifton Avenue  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45220  
Phone: (513) 221-2039

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 13, 1974

The ASSOCIATION FOR A PROGRESSIVE REFORM JUDAISM held its national conference in St. Louis on September 10 and 11, 1974. In attendance were Reform Rabbis from throughout the United States.

The ASSOCIATION consists of over 100 Reform Rabbis who have formally affiliated with the group. Many other Reform Rabbis, members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, are understood to subscribe to its principles and goals.

The organization was formed on June 21, 1973 in Atlanta, Georgia as the CONCERNED MEMBERS OF THE CCAR. At its conference in St. Louis, the name ASSOCIATION FOR A PROGRESSIVE REFORM JUDAISM was adopted.

The ASSOCIATION unanimously elected Dr. Eugene Mihaly, Professor of Rabbinic Literature at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, as President of the organization.

The Conference adopted the following principles as expressing the goals of the organization:

1. To support and advance the freedom and creativity inherent in the genius of American Reform Judaism.
2. To preserve and enhance the autonomy and self-determination of American Reform Judaism.
3. To bring the fruits of the American Reform Jewish experience to world Jewry.
4. To maintain American Judaism as a dynamic and vital force in the world Jewish community.
5. To uphold the religious freedom of Jews everywhere in the world.
6. To uphold the freedom of Reform Jewish religious expression within Jewish communities everywhere.
7. To strengthen the role of laymen in the decision-making process of Reform Judaism as regards education, liturgy, ritual, and the like.

The hosts for the Conference were: Rabbis Alvan Rubin of Temple Israel, Jeffrey Stiffman of Temple Shaarey Emeth and Joseph Rosenbloom of Temple Emanuel, all of St. Louis.

(more)

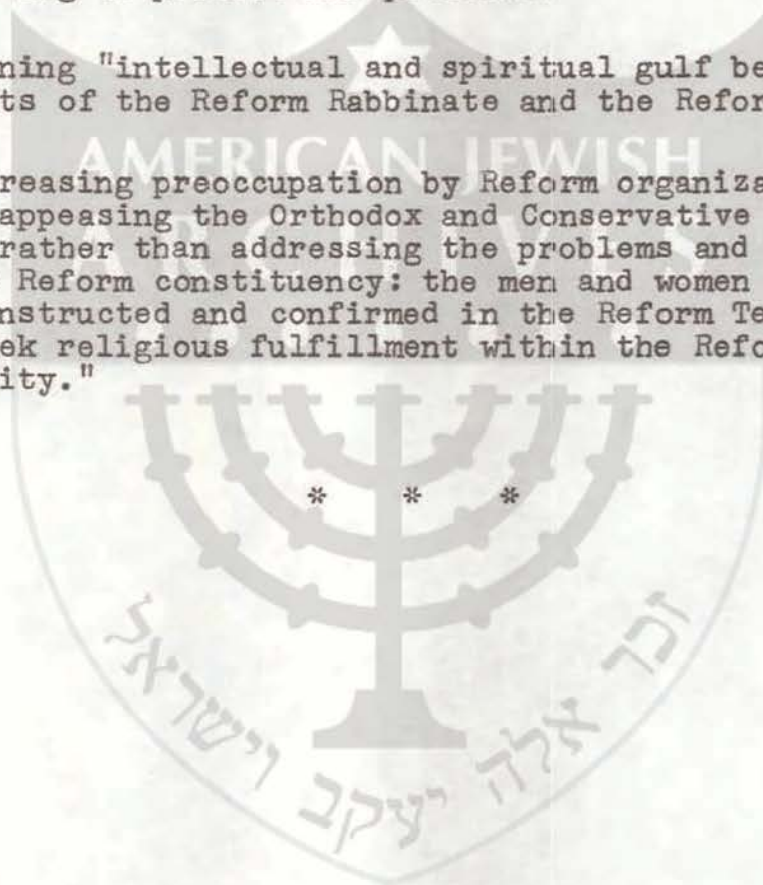


A group of Reform Rabbis founded the ASSOCIATION in response to widely shared concerns:

The tendency in some organizations of Reform Judaism to "restrict the freedom which Reform Judaism came into being to promote and preserve."

A widening "intellectual and spiritual gulf between segments of the Reform Rabbinate and the Reform laity."

An increasing preoccupation by Reform organizations "with appeasing the Orthodox and Conservative establishments rather than addressing the problems and concerns of the Reform constituency: the men and women who have been instructed and confirmed in the Reform Temple and who seek religious fulfillment within the Reform community."





ASSOCIATION FOR A PROGRESSIVE REFORM JUDAISM

3101 Clifton Avenue  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45220

בע"ה

FROM : Eugene Mihaly

TO : My Colleagues and Friends

The response from the Reform Community, Rabbis and laymen, to the attached News Release, which has been given wide coverage by the Press, has been overwhelming. We have been inundated by hundreds and hundreds of phone calls, telegrams and letters from all segments of the Reform constituency expressing gratitude for and enthusiastic support of "a long overdue," "sorely needed," and "ardently hoped for" development within Reform Judaism.

We are persuaded that our concerns and our goals (as stated in our Release - the only authorized statement by the ASSOCIATION) reflect the preponderant view of Reform Jews. The courageous, free, creative and innovative Reform Judaism, which has contributed immeasurably to the emergence of what is the greatest Jewish community in our entire history, requires no apology. We, we serious and committed Reform Jews - not the idolatrous literalists of whatever shading - are authentic representatives and interpreters of Judaism in the twentieth century.

One hundred and ten Reform Rabbis, representing a wide spectrum of theologic belief and practice characteristic of a free Reform Judaism, have already affiliated with the ASSOCIATION. If you share our concerns and our goals as formulated and adopted at our meeting in St. Louis (see attached News Release), you are cordially invited to join us. Please fill out the enclosed membership application and mail to the APRJ without delay. Please do so whether you have previously affiliated or not, so that we may have an exact, up to date record of our membership.

Shortly after we receive your signed membership application, we shall send you the agenda for the forthcoming conference of the ASSOCIATION which will probably be held, as we tentatively decided in St. Louis, in the latter part of November. We shall also send our members the preliminary reports of our various organizing committees, our prospectus for a Newsletter and Magazine and our plans for a variety of other projects. If you decide to join us, please do so now so that we may plan with your active participation.

I am also enclosing an address by our colleague and member of the APRJ, my dear friend, Professor Herbert Brichto, Dean of H.U.C.-J.I.R., Cincinnati. I was deeply moved when I heard him give the address and want to share that experience with you. He expresses, I believe, with wonderful honesty much of what the ASSOCIATION is all about.

ברכה שלום וכל טוב

"If a man says: 'What's the trouble or the weariness of the Congregation to me!' or 'What do I care about their laws and customs!' or 'I have no interest in listening to their problems and needs;'...such a man destroys the world." Tanhuma, Mishpatim II.

Enclosures: News Release  
Membership Application  
Address by Professor Brichto