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אגוד הרבנים המתקדמים

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

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REFORM RABBIS TAKE A STAND ON

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE RABBINATE

(Seattle, Washington, June 25, 1990) In a major statement on Reform Jewish policy and practice, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) today formally endorsed the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Homosexuality and the Rabbinate, dealing with the homosexual rabbi. Among the issues the report considered were the admissions policy at the rabbinical training school, the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, employment placement, and membership into the CCAR.

The report was accepted without amendment by an overwhelming voice vote at the annual national convention of the CCAR, the international professional organization of Reform rabbis. The conference is currently underway in Seattle. After the vote, the over 500 rabbis in attendance gave a standing ovation to the committee members for their work in developing the report.

(more)

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CCAR President Rabbi Samuel E. Karff had this to say about passage of the report: "The committee's report is nuanced and reflective of inner struggle, of majority and minority viewpoints, and includes consensual affirmations. Essentially the report is an attempt to be both supportive of our gay and lesbian colleagues and respectful of Judaism's norm of heterosexual monogamous procreative marriage. For the majority of the committee, the critical fulcrum is the matter of choice. For some Jews the heterosexual norm is not a viable option. Such persons not only merit respect as God's children and as Jews, but should not on the basis of sexual orientation alone be denied the right to be our rabbinic colleagues."

The vote caps four years of CCAR study and discussion on the subject, anonymous personal testimony by homosexual rabbis and rabbinical students, review of scientific, religious and legal viewpoints, and consultations with leaders of other Jewish movements.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Homosexuality and the Rabbinate was composed of CCAR members plus representatives of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Hebrew-Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and the CCAR Rabbinical Placement Commission.

The complete 6-page report follows:

REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON HOMOSEXUALITY
AND
THE RABBINATE
ADOPTED BY THE
CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS
JUNE 25, 1990

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

Chair: Selig Salkowitz, Norman J. Cohen, A. Stanley Dreyfus (RPC), Joseph B. Glaser (CCAR), Walter Jacob, Yoel H. Kahn, Samuel E. Karff, Peter S. Knobel, Joseph Levine, Jack Stern, Richard S. Sternberger (UAHC), Ronald B. Sobel (RPC), Elliot L. Stevens (CCAR), Harvey M. Tattelbaum, Albert Vorspan (UAHC), Margaret M. Wenig, Gary Zola (HUC-JIR)

ORIGIN OF THE COMMITTEE

The committee was formed in response to a resolution proposed by Margaret Holub (then student Rabbi) and Margaret Wenig for the June, 1986, convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in Snowmass, Colorado. The proposed resolution dealt with the admissions policies of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and with the placement policy of the Rabbinical Placement Commission. The matter was referred for further study.

Given the seriousness of the issues and the broad implications for the Reform rabbinate and for the entire Movement, President Jack Stern appointed a broadly representative ad hoc committee and named Selig Salkowitz as its chair. The committee's first meeting took place in the Fall of 1986. Following that meeting, in order to insure adequate institutional participation, the committee invited the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and the Rabbinical Placement Commission to appoint official representatives. The committee has met regularly during the past four years. Through extensive study and discussion, the committee has sought to arrive at a unified position on homosexuality and the rabbinate. From the outset, the committee was keenly aware of both the controversial nature and the complexity of the issues. The committee's deliberations have been characterized by vigorous debate carried on in a spirit of warm collegiality. All members found themselves profoundly moved. However, the committee did not achieve consensus on every issue, and recognized that there are legitimate differences of opinion. The committee calls upon members of the Conference to be sensitive to and accepting of those whose positions differ from their own.

The committee undertook a comprehensive investigation of the subject. Its members read studies on the origin and nature of sexual identity, and of homosexuality specifically, and reviewed some of the contemporary legal literature, and studied documents prepared by Christian groups grappling with the status of homosexuals and homosexuality within their own denominations with a specific focus on the question of ordination. Yoel H. Kahn prepared an extensive anthology of articles on Judaism and homosexuality which cut across denominational lines. The committee

commissioned Eugene B. Borowitz, Yoel H. Kahn, Robert S. Kirschner and Peter S. Knobel to prepare working papers.¹ Consultations were held with leaders of other Jewish streams. The committee solicited and received anonymous personal testimony from gay and lesbian rabbis and rabbinic students. It reviewed the admissions policies of the College-Institute and the Central Conference of American Rabbis as well as the placement policy of the Rabbinical Placement Commission. It read previous resolutions of the UAHC Biennial Conventions and the CCAR conventions, and related Reform Responsa. The work of previous committees was also reviewed. It convened a late night information session at the Tarpon Springs Convention of 1987; submitted a draft resolution to the CCAR Executive Board in 1988 (which was sent back to the committee for further consideration); sponsored a plenary session at the Centennial Convention in Cincinnati in 1989 at which Leonard S. Kravitz and Yoel H. Kahn presented papers² followed by workshops; held consultations at each of the regional CCAR Kallot and with MaRaM; requested that the UAHC sponsor workshops at upcoming regional biennials.

This document is meant to summarize the results of our deliberations, to indicate areas of agreement and disagreement and to encourage further discussion and understanding. It represents four years of struggle and growth. We hope that it will serve as a model for those who take up these matters upon which we have diligently and painstakingly deliberated.

CONCERN FOR GAY AND LESBIAN COLLEAGUES

The committee is acutely aware that the inability of most gay and lesbian rabbis to live openly as homosexuals is deeply painful. Therefore, the committee wishes to avoid any action which will cause greater distress to our colleagues. As a result, The committee has determined that a comprehensive report is in the best interest of our Conference and the Reform Movement as a whole.

Publicly acknowledging one's homosexuality is a personal

¹ Homosexuality, the Rabbinate, and Liberal Judaism: Papers prepared for the Ad-Hoc Committee on Homosexuality and the Rabbinate. Selig Salkowitz, Chair. Halakhah and Homosexuality: A Reappraisal by Robert Kirschner. On Homosexuality and the Rabbinate, a Covenantal Response by Eugene B. Borowitz; Judaism and Homosexuality by Yoel H. Kahn. Homosexuality: A Liberal Jewish Theological and Ethical Reflection by Peter S. Knobel.

Copies of these were distributed to the entire Central Conference of American Rabbis prior to the June, 1989 convention in Cincinnati. These papers should be consulted for a description of the range of positions considered by the Committee.

² Homosexuality and the Rabbinate. Yoel H. Kahn, The Kedusha of Homosexual Relationships and Leonard S. Kravitz, Address. The papers were distributed to the members of the Conference through the regional presidents as material for discussion at the regional kallot. They should be consulted for an understanding of the two different approaches to the subject of the religious status of homosexual relationships.

decision which can have grave professional consequences. Therefore, in the light of the limited ability of the Placement Commission or the Central Conference of American Rabbis to guarantee the tenure of the gay or lesbian rabbis who "come out of the closet," the committee does not want to encourage colleagues to put their careers at risk. Regrettably, a decision to declare oneself publicly can have potentially negative effects on a person's ability to serve a given community effectively. In addition, the committee is anxious to avoid a situation in which pulpit selection committees will request information on the sexual orientation of candidates. The Committee urges that all rabbis, regardless of sexual orientation, be accorded the opportunity to fulfill the sacred vocation which they have chosen.

CIVIL RIGHTS FOR GAYS AND LESBIANS

All human beings are created betselem elohim ("in the divine image"). Their personhood must therefore be accorded full dignity. Sexual orientation is irrelevant to the human worth of a person. Therefore, the Reform Movement has supported vigorously all efforts to eliminate discrimination in housing and employment³. The Committee unequivocally condemns verbal and physical abuse against gay men and lesbian women or those perceived to be gay or lesbian. We reject any implication that AIDS can be understood as God's punishment of homosexuals. We applaud the fine work of the gay and lesbian outreach synagogues, and we, along with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, call upon rabbis and congregations to treat with respect and to integrate fully all Jews into the life of the community regardless of sexual orientation.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF SEXUAL IDENTITY

The committee's task was made particularly difficult because the specific origin of sexual identity and its etiology are still imperfectly understood.

Scholars are not likely to come to an agreement anytime soon about the causes of sexual orientation, or its nature. Various disciplines look at sexuality in different ways and rarely confront each other's ideas....Short of definitive evidence, which no theory has thus far received, the disagreement is likely to continue. Cognitive and normative pluralism will persist for the indefinite future.⁴

The lack of unanimity in the scientific community and the unanimous condemnation of homosexual behavior by Jewish tradition added to the complexity. It is clear, however, that for many people sexual orientation is not a matter of conscious choice but constitutional and therefore not subject to change. It is also true that for some, sexual orientation may be a matter of conscious

³ CCAR resolution 1977. UAHC resolutions 1975, 1985, 1987, 1989

⁴ David Greenberg, The Construction of Homosexuality (Chicago, 1988) pp.480-481.

choice. The committee devoted considerable time in its discussion to the significance of conscious choice as a criterion for formulating a position on the religious status of homosexuality. The majority of the committee believes that the issue of choice is crucial. For some on the committee the issue of choice is not significant.

In Jewish tradition heterosexual, monogamous, procreative marriage is the ideal human relationship for the perpetuation of species, covenantal fulfillment and the preservation of the Jewish people. While acknowledging that there are other human relationships which possess ethical and spiritual value and that there are some people for whom heterosexual, monogamous, procreative marriage is not a viable option or possibility,⁵ the majority of the committee reaffirms unequivocally the centrality of this ideal and its special status as kiddushin. To the extent that sexual orientation is a matter of choice, the majority of the committee affirms that heterosexuality is the only appropriate Jewish choice for fulfilling one's covenantal obligations.

A minority of the committee dissents, affirming the equal possibility of covenantal fulfillment in homosexual and heterosexual relationships. The relationship, not the gender, should determine its Jewish value - kiddushin.

The committee strongly endorses the view that all Jews are religiously equal regardless of their sexual orientation. We are aware of loving and committed relationships between people of the same sex. Issues such as the religious status of these relationships as well as the creation of special ceremonies are matters of continuing discussion and differences of opinion.

SEXUAL MORALITY AND THE RABBI

The general subject of sexual morality is important. The committee, in various stages of its deliberations, sought to discuss homosexuality within that larger framework. However, it concluded that while a comprehensive statement on sexuality and sexual morality was a desideratum, it was beyond the mandate of the committee.

Nevertheless, rabbis are both role models and exemplars. Therefore, the Committee calls upon all rabbis -- without regard to sexual orientation -- to conduct their private lives with discretion and with full regard for the mores and sensibilities of their communities, and in consonance with the preamble to the Central Conference of American Rabbis' Code of Ethics:

As teachers of Judaism, rabbis are expected to abide by the highest moral values of our religion: the virtues of family life, integrity and honorable social relationships. In their personal lives they are called upon to set an example of the ideals

⁵ Cf. Gates of Mitzvah, p. 11, note at bottom of page.

they proclaim.

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO KELAL YISRAEL AND THE NON-JEWISH COMMUNITY

The committee devoted considerable discussion to the effect of any statement on our relationship to Kelal Yisrael. The committee expressed deep concern about the reactions of the other Jewish movements and strongly urges that the dialogue continue with them on this issue. Nevertheless, it concluded that our decision should be governed by the principles and practices of Reform Judaism. Similarly the committee considered and discussed with the members of MaRaM the possible effects of a statement on Reform Judaism in Israel. Again, it concluded that while sensitivity was in order, the committee could only address the North American situation. In addition, the committee attempted to assess how various stands would affect our relationship with non-Jewish groups. Again, the committee was concerned but felt that it had to make its decision independent of that consideration.

CONGREGATIONAL ISSUES

The acceptance by our congregations of gay and lesbian Jews as rabbis was a topic of discussion. We know that the majority of Reform Jews strongly support civil rights for gays and lesbians, but the unique position of the rabbi as spiritual leader and Judaic role model make the acceptance of gay or lesbian rabbis an intensely emotional and potentially divisive issue. While we acknowledge that there are gay and lesbian rabbis who are serving their communities effectively, with dignity, compassion and integrity, we believe that there is a great need for education and dialogue in our congregations.

ADMISSIONS POLICY OF THE COLLEGE-INSTITUTE

One of the original issues which brought the committee into existence was a concern about the admissions policy of the College-Institute. President Alfred Gottschalk has recently set forth the admissions policy of HUC-JIR. The written guidelines state that the College-Institute considers sexual orientation of an applicant only within the context of a candidate's overall suitability for the rabbinate, his or her qualifications to serve the Jewish community effectively, and his or her capacity to find personal fulfillment within the rabbinate. The Committee agrees with this admissions policy of our College- Institute.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

The Central Conference of American Rabbis has always accepted into membership upon application all rabbinic graduates of the College-Institute.

The committee re-affirms this policy to admit upon application rabbinic graduates of the College - Institute.

PLACEMENT

Since its inception, the Rabbinical Placement Commission has

provided placement services to all members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in good standing, in accordance with its rules.

The committee agrees with this policy of the Rabbinical Placement Commission which provides placement services to all members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in good standing, in accordance with the Commission's established rules.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair: Selig Salkowitz, Norman J. Cohen, A. Stanley Dreyfus (RPC), Joseph B. Glaser (CCAR), Walter Jacob, Yoel H. Kahn, Samuel E. Karff, Peter S. Knobel, Joseph Levine, Jack Stern, Richard S. Sternberger (UAHC), Ronald B. Sobel (RPC), Elliot L. Stevens (CCAR), Harvey M. Tattelbaum, Albert Vorspan (UAHC), Margaret M. Wenig, Gary Zola (HUC-JIR).

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES
COMMITTEE ENDORSEMENT

The committee expresses its sincere appreciation to the many members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis who communicated with it in writing and orally. We urge all rabbis to study and reflect on these critical issues in order to lead their congregations and other members of the Jewish community toward greater awareness and sensitivity through education and dialogue. The committee unanimously endorses this report as a fair reflection of four years of deliberation and urges its adoption.

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May 1990

RESOLUTION ON GAY AND LESBIAN JEWS

Whereas Judaism affirms that the divine image reflected by every human being must always be cherished and affirmed, and

Whereas Jews have always been sensitive to the impact of official and unofficial prejudice and discrimination, wherever directed, and

Whereas gay and lesbian Jews have experienced not only the constant threats of physical violence and homophobic rejection, but also the pains of anti-Semitism known to all Jews and, additionally, a sense of painful alienation from our own religious institutions, and

Whereas the extended families of gay and lesbian Jews are often members of our congregations who live with concern for the safety, health and well-being of their children, and

Whereas the AIDS crisis has deeply exacerbated the anxiety and suffering of this community of Jews who need in their lives the compassionate concern and support mandated by Jewish tradition,

Therefore Be It Resolved that we, the Rabbinical Assembly,

- 1) Support full civil equality for gays and lesbians in our national life, and
- 2) Deplore the violence against gays and lesbians in our society, and
- 3) Reiterate that, as are all Jews, gay men and lesbians are welcome as members in our congregations, and
- 4) Call upon our synagogues and the arms of our Movement to increase our awareness, understanding and concern for our fellow Jews who are gay and lesbian.

From the desk of . . .

3/17/86 *Marc Tanenbaum*

HASKELL LAZERE



I am sure you will be interested in the attached.

New York Chapter
The American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, New York 10022
(212) PL 1-4000

JEWISH GAYS

703

A PARADOX: AN IMPOSSIBLE CONTRADICTION

A JEW CANNOT BE A GAY; A GAY IS NOT A JEW. A GAY IS A RUINED AND LOST SOUL, A HATED ABOMINATION, AN UNNATURAL MONSTROSITY DETESTED BY THE CREATOR.

TURN BACK

BREAK THE FILTHY HABIT: TEAR LOOSE FROM THIS DISGUSTING SLAVERY AND COME BACK TO YOUR G-D AND YOUR PEOPLE: (A GAY SYNAGOGUE IS LIKE YOM KIPPUR IN A WHOREHOUSE)

RETURN TO DECENT NORMALCY BEFORE YOU BECOME HOPELESSLY ILL PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY.

YOUR BROTHERS WILL WELCOME YOU BACK:

- *LUBAVITCH, 770 Eastern Parkway. Brooklyn New York 11213
- *YOUNG ISRAEL, 3 West 16 St. NEW YORK CITY
- *AGUDATH ISRAEL, 5 BEEKMAN ST. NEW YORK CITY
- *N.C.S.Y. 116 EAST 27 St. NEW YORK CITY
- *HINENI 155 EAST 38 St. NEW YORK CITY 10016

DO NOT POSTPONE:

EVERY DAY IS A LIVING DEATH, GOING DEEPER INTO HELL.

FLEE FROM THE ROTTEN ENVIROMENT LIKE ONE FLEES FROM A FIRE.

YOU HAVE BUT ONE LIFE TO LIVE:

HURRY TO SAVE IT:

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS THAT NEED ANSWERS, DROP US A LINE.

MAYBE WE CAN HELP.

Conference of Presidents
of Major American Jewish Activist Organizations





DIGEST

The newsletter of the World Congress of Gay & Lesbian Jewish Organizations
Post Office Box 881272, San Francisco, California 94188 U.S.A.

Volume 6 Number 2

Spring 1987

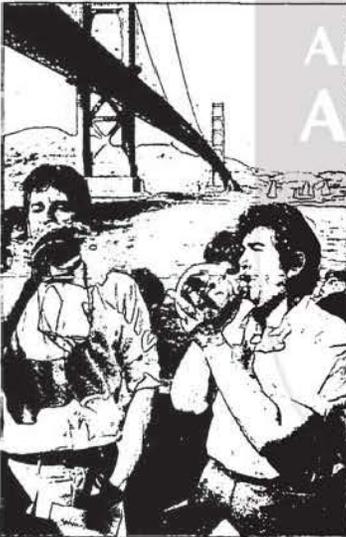
D.C. Jews raise \$20,000 for AIDS programs

"Risk groups are not dying, people are dying."

These are the words of Sunnye Sherman, a Jewish woman with AIDS whose final months of life were devoted to bringing AIDS to the attention of the media.

Last November, 200 friends of the National Jewish AIDS Project (NJAP) gathered in Washington, D.C. to honor Ina and Murray Sherman, Sunnye's parents, and to raise over \$20,000 to assist Jewish persons with AIDS.

It was the first Jewish community event to benefit persons with AIDS.



With the Golden Gate Bridge overhead, members of Sha'ar Zahav (San Francisco) sound the shofar each year as part of Rosh Hashanah's Tashlich service. The magnificent setting draws a large number of congregants for the ritual casting away of sins.

In presenting the first Sunnye Sherman Memorial Award to the Shermans, Washington, D.C. newscaster Dave Marash praised the honorees for supporting their daughter's decision to publicize her illness. "The moment Sunnye made the decision to stand up, she did a revolutionary thing," said Marash. "Obviously Sunnye couldn't have done that if she weren't surrounded by an extraordinary family."

Another newscaster, Connie Chung, whose NBC-TV program "1986" featured Sunnye and her family a year ago, appeared in a videotaped presentation to honor the Shermans. Covering the story of Sunnye and her family affected her deeply, Chung said. Chung noted that Sunnye's decision to go public will give others a better chance.

"Sunnye's family was too strong and loving to be torn apart by AIDS," Chung explained.

Daniel Najjar, president of the NJAP, noted that "Sunnye's voice offered hope to persons with AIDS, offered a higher standard of response for the entire community, and taught the uneducated how to confront and console those in need."

Najjar called on every rabbi and educator in the Washington community "to join us in a community-wide education program, not only to improve the treatment of patients, but to eliminate the further transmission of AIDS."

Rabbi Roy Furman joins Chicago's Or Chadash

Rabbi Roy Furman was recently named the rabbi of Or Chadash, one of two gay-outreach congregations in the Chicago area.

A 1971 graduate of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Rabbi Furman comes to Chicago following five years in Portland, Oregon with Havurah Shalom, an alternative congregation affiliated with the Reform movement.

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Najjar read a telegram from Leonard Bernstein, one of the earliest celebrities publicly involved in AIDS fundraising, congratulating the Shermans on their "work in AIDS education."

Funds from the November reception will provide direct financial and other assistance to persons with AIDS. Assistance will be administered by the Jewish Social Service Agency of Metropolitan Washington and the Whitman-Walker Clinic AIDS Foundation.

For more information about the work of the National Jewish AIDS Project, write to: 2025 I Street, N.W. Suite 721, Washington, D.C. 20006.

UAHC voices "outrage," challenges AIDS ruling

(The following article is from the November 1986 issue of The Jewish Gaily Forward, the newsletter of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, San Francisco.)

Last summer the United States Justice Department issued a ruling that would allow employers to fire people with AIDS if the employer merely suspected they might be contagious, despite all medical evidence to the contrary. Members of Sha'ar Zahav subsequently asked the leadership of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) to intervene with Attorney General Edwin Meese, to encourage him to rescind the ruling. The UAHC response was quick and decisive.

In a forceful letter to Meese, the UAHC expressed "outrage and dismay" over the Justice Department's policy statement and urged that it be replaced with one "that reflects current medical information about AIDS."

The letter was signed by UAHC president Rabbi Alexander Schindler and Dr. Boris O'Mansky, chair of the UAHC's Committee on AIDS.

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International newsbits

In its coverage of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) regional biennial convention last November in Tampa, Florida, Metropolitan Community Synagogue's (Miami) newsletter reported that the director of the UAHC Task Force for the Jewish Family, Rabbi Sanford Seltzer, urged recognition and support for Jewish gay or lesbian couples who choose adoption or alternative insemination as a way of raising Jewish children. Rabbi Seltzer's address was entitled "The Jewish Family: Myths, Realities and Prospects."

The Jewish community's vigil outside the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D.C. has continued unbroken for the past 13 years. When Bet Mishpachah's scheduled staffing of the vigil last October conflicted with the holiday of Sukkot, three local gay and lesbian non-Jewish groups stood in for Bet Mishpachah as a gesture

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Amsterdam conference set for July 2

Excitement is building for the Tenth International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews, to be held in Amsterdam from July 2-5, 1987.

Hosted by *Sjalhomo*, the Netherlands' Jewish lesbian and gay organization, the conference will take place at the Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky, one of Amsterdam's premier and historic hotels.

The 3½ days of social, educational, and religious activities will officially begin on Thursday night, July 2, with an Opening Ceremony and Party featuring welcoming remarks from Amsterdam's Jewish mayor. Prominent members of the Dutch gay, lesbian and Jewish communities will join conferees at this kick-off event.

Extensive world-wide publicity is being undertaken for this first gay/lesbian Jewish conference to be held outside the United States since the 1979 gathering in Israel. Over 250 registrants from most European

nations, Israel, the United States and Canada are expected to attend, although publicity to Africa, Asia and Latin America may result in an even broader participation.

Special tours are included in the \$120 conference registration fee, including visits to Amsterdam's Historical Jewish Museum, the Jewish district, the Holocaust monument, and an evening boat ride through the city's picturesque canals.

Charter airfare arrangements to Amsterdam departing from both New York and California, as well as a group tour to Israel following the conference, have been made in conjunction with the World Congress. For conference and travel information, write to the World Congress, P.O. Box 881272, San Francisco, CA 94188. In Europe or Israel, write to *Sjalhomo*, P.O. Box 2536, 1000 CM Amsterdam.

Agudah carries the banner proudly for over 200,000 gay, lesbian Israelis

The challenge facing gay men and women in confronting anti-gay fear and bigotry is perhaps nowhere greater than in Israel, where for over ten years the *Agudah* (Society for the Protection of Personal Rights) has faced that challenge singlehandedly.

Unlike other countries, in which a variety of gay groups share a multiplicity of social service projects and tasks, Israel has only the *Agudah* to provide gay affirmative education, administer social services, monitor civil rights violations, and create social opportunities for gay men and women.

The *Agudah's* latest effort to increase its own visibility among the estimated 200,000 to 400,000 Israeli homosexuals brings new meaning to the word "grassroots."

Beginning last summer, *Agudah* board members and volunteers brought their information tables, flyers, and friendly faces to Tel Aviv's Independence Park, where they invited passers-by to learn about the organization, its activities and its purposes.

From the success of that first effort, the *Agudah* expanded the activity into Haifa, with plans for similar outreach in Jerusalem and Beersheba.

Because there is for many a feeling of little privacy in a country so small, with anti-gay sentiment so pervasive, most homosexuals have been reluctant to risk the consequences of being identified as gay or lesbian. As a result, Israel has not witnessed the proliferation of gay gathering places and organizations such as are found throughout Europe and North America. Social life for Israeli gay men and lesbians is largely private, home-centered, and oriented towards close friendship circles. Reaching this "invisible" population isn't easy.

International newsbits

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- of solidarity: Metropolitan Community Church (Protestant), Dignity (Catholic) and Gay Quakers.
- Ahavat Shalom* (San Francisco) recently established an aid fund to provide financial assistance to the Neve Shalom Synagogue in Istanbul, site of last summer's tragic Sabbath terrorist attack.
- Repeating its successful AIDS fundraiser of the previous year, *Beth El Binah* (Dallas) once again hosted a gala New Year's Eve bash at the Dallas Hilton to benefit AIDS service organizations in Texas.
- The needs of the Twin Cities' lesbian and gay Jews were discussed last fall when members of *Beyt G'vurah* (Minneapolis) participated in a meeting at the Minneapolis Jewish Federation.
- Trendwatchers with an eye on California note that both *Beth Chayim Chadashim* (Los Angeles) and *Sha'ar Zahav* (San Francisco) have created programs for congregants with children. BCC's "Parents' Support Group" and *Sha'ar Zahav's* "Family Havurah" reflect the growing number of gay and lesbian Jews having children.
- Members of *Mishpachah Am* (Phoenix) last fall were invited to celebrate Sukkot with congregants from Temple Beth Israel, Phoenix' leading Reform congregation. A moonlit night illuminated gay and non-gay Jews under the Sukkah, sharing song, food, and ritual observance together.

Last summer, *Agudah's* Jerusalem women organized a women's picnic in the Jerusalem forest. Some 80 women from all regions of the country participated. As a result of that event, the women agreed to use the *Agudah* as a communications link for the various women's groups in Israel.

In other project areas, the *Agudah* has maintained a dialogue with different municipal police agencies in an effort to stem random police harassment of gay people. A similar approach has been undertaken with the personnel division of the Israel Defense Forces, in order to monitor anti-gay harassment in the military.

Modeled after similar programs in the United States, the *Agudah's* Committee for the War Against AIDS has trained a corps of volunteers to serve as "buddies" for AIDS patients who receive little or no support from families or friends.

The "Kav Halavan" (white phone) is the *Agudah's* five-year-old hotline which each year receives hundreds of calls—from gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, families and friends. Fifteen phone volunteers—all have completed a six-week training program—currently staff the anonymous "help line" offering information and referral, counseling and crisis intervention, or simply an understanding ear.

The challenge facing the *Agudah* is certainly enormous, while social and political support remains minimal. Since the fear of disclosure keeps most gay Israelis from affiliating with the *Agudah*, the organization cannot sustain itself solely on the financial contributions of its relatively small membership. As a result, the board of directors of the World Congress last summer passed a resolution encouraging each member organization to raise funds within its group to support the important work that the *Agudah* undertakes on behalf of gay and lesbian Israelis.

Individuals can earmark contributions to the *Agudah* through the New Israel Fund, a charitable agency which supports progressive, grassroots Israeli groups who typically are passed over by traditional funding sources.

The *Agudah* invites lesbians and gay men planning to visit Israel to utilize "Israel Hospitality," a visitor outreach service. For information about places to go and things to see, write to the *Agudah* before your visit (P.O. Box 16151 Tel Aviv 61161) or telephone direct (03-230-752).

World Congress

ADATH RAYOOT

c/o Gay Comm. Ctr.
P.O. Box 14
Baltimore, MD 21203

AGUDAH (SOC. FOR THE PROTECTION OF PERSONAL RIGHTS)
P.O. Box 1951
6151 Tel Aviv
Israel

AHAVAT SHALOM
P.O. Box 42454
San Francisco, CA 94142

AHAVAT TZION
2300 G St. #3
Sacramento, CA 95816

AM TIKVA
P.O. Box 11
Cambridge, MA 02238

AYTZ CHAYIM
5800 Lumberdale Rd. #2
Houston, TX 77092

BET HAVERIM
P.O. Box 95055
Atlanta, GA 30347

BET MISHPACHAH
P.O. Box 1410
Washington, D.C. 20013

BETH ANAVAH
P.O. Box 758
Philadelphia, PA 19101

BETH EL BINAH

P.O. Box 64460
Dallas, TX 75206

BETH CHAIM
P.O. Box 451
Farmingdale, NY 11735

BETH CHAYIM CHADASHIM
6300 W. Pine Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90035

BETH SIMCHAT TORAH
P.O. Box 1270 GPO
New York, NY 10116

BEYT G'VURAH
P.O. Box 8503
Minneapolis, MN 55408

CHEVREI TIKVA
P.O. Box 19320
Cleveland, OH 44119

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Chicago, IL 60614

JEWISH GAY GROUP
5M 399
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Rabbi Furman

continued from side 1

Previously he was the Hillel director at the University of Southern California, as well as a staff social worker with Los Angeles' Jewish Family Service.

Or Chadash plans to emphasize the development of both educational and counseling programs under Rabbi Furman's leadership.

Congregants welcomed Rabbi Furman and his wife, Frida, an assistant professor of religious studies at Chicago's DePaul University, following the rabbi's first Sabbath service with *Or Chadash* on December 12.

Or Chadash is now the fourth gay-outreach synagogue within the World Congress to enjoy the services of a rabbi. *Beth Chayim Chadashim* (Los Angeles) hired Rabbi Janet Ross Marder in 1983, and *Sha'ar Zahav* (San Francisco) hired Rabbi Yoel Kahn in 1985. Rabbi Linda Holtzman has been with *Beth Ahavah* (Philadelphia) since 1985.

UAHC on AIDS

continued from side 1

In its memorandum, the Justice Department essentially held that because of fear that AIDS is contagious, employers who fire workers suffering from AIDS or AIDS-related conditions would not be considered guilty of disability discrimination under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

In its letter to the Attorney General, the UAHC cited a statement by the Department of Health and Human Services that there is no medical or scientific evidence that the AIDS virus is spread through casual contact.

"This statement has been reiterated by the director of the Centers for Disease Control, as well as by the American Medical Association," the UAHC leaders wrote, adding:

"Allowing employers to discriminate irrationally against AIDS sufferers does violence to the fundamental Congressional purpose of protecting the handicapped in the numerous historical occasions on which they have been subject to fear, prejudice and stereotyping.

"In an open society, free access to information precludes the possibility of basing legal decisions on irrational fears. We, as Jews, are exceptionally aware of the moral danger implicit in such prejudicial decision-making. Acknowledging this, we expect of our government protections similar to those that are demanded of employers generally—that all decisions be rational and reasonably enforced.

"We call upon the Justice Department to withdraw this opinion and reissue a statement that reflects current medical information about AIDS."

YES! I am proud to become a "Friend of the World Congress." My contribution entitles me to a one-year subscription to the World Congress Digest, and helps support programs of public education in the fight against prejudice, sexism, and homophobia throughout the world.

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We're your sons and daughters, your friends and relatives, your colleagues, employees and neighbors.

We're Jews.

We're also lesbians and gay men.

Someone close to you – a Jewish friend or family member – is a lesbian or gay man.

And you probably don't know it.

You also may not know about the pain, the fear, and the discrimination that so many lesbians and gay men encounter.

We want you to know.



AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

Antigay prejudice today

As anti-semitism has been the source of Jewish oppression throughout history, so has homophobia (the hatred and fear of homosexuals) been the basis for the suffering of gay and lesbian people.

And, like anti-semitism, homophobia persists today.

It persists in the forms of family and societal ostracism, physical violence, employment and housing discrimination, *unequal* protection under the law, and the fear and shame which keep many lesbian and gay people "in the closet," hiding behind the masks which society tells them they must wear.

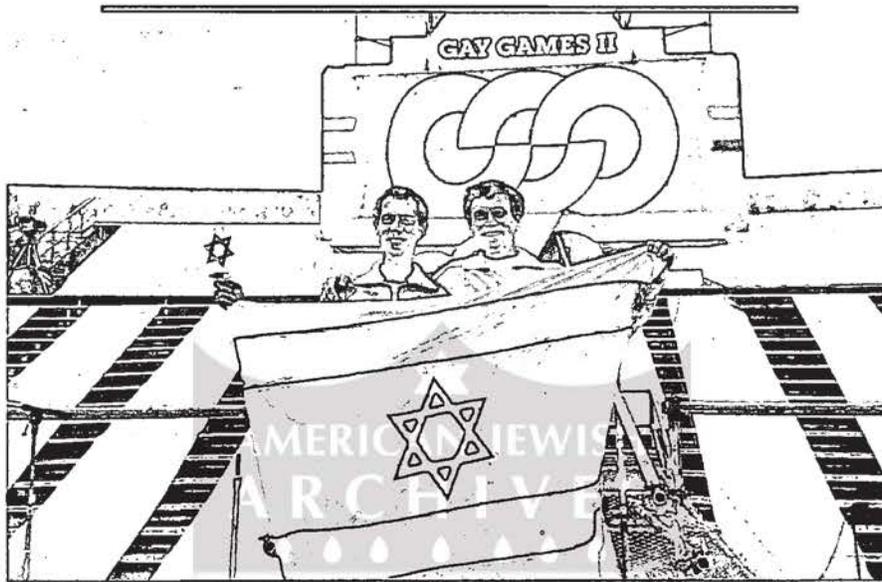
Many gay and lesbian Jews are shunned by their families. Some parents live in fear that relatives or friends will "find out." Gay men and women often worry about the loss of their jobs if anti-gay bosses learn of their sexual orientation.

In a 1980 study in the New York City area, over 20% of gay men and women reported that they had suffered discrimination because of their homosexuality in such areas of employment as hiring, promotion, or work evaluation, or had experienced harassment on the job by superiors, co-workers or subordinates.

Lesbians and gay men are five times more likely than the rest of the population to be the victims of physical violence: muggings or taunts in the street.

It happens to *all* gay men and lesbians, regardless of age, regardless of occupation or economic background.

Jewish lesbians and gay men are no exception.



Gay Games, the olympics-style athletic competition held every four years in the gay and lesbian community, provides an opportunity for two Jewish athletes, Jonathan and Ron, to renew their acquaintance as they represent Tel Aviv and San Francisco, respectively.



Are there really homosexual Jews?

Among Jews, there are gay and lesbian rabbis, counselors, teachers, lawyers, doctors, athletes, artists, bankers, and taxi drivers.

There are nieces and nephews, grandchildren and uncles, parents and cousins, housewives, bachelors, neighbors and friends.

You probably don't realize how many Jewish gay men and lesbians you know, because they haven't told you about this part of themselves. They may be afraid to share this fact with you.

Maybe they haven't told anyone.

Gay men and lesbians are accustomed to running up against prejudice and hostility just about everywhere they turn. They may fear that the widespread homophobia in our society has influenced your attitudes as well. *They worry that you still believe the tired, old myths.*

MYTH 1

Gay men and lesbians are mentally ill.

FACT

Homosexuality is NOT an illness of any kind. In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association ruled that "homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability or general social or vocational capabilities." The American Psychological Association and the American Medical Association likewise do not consider homosexuality an illness. In the past two decades, many scientific studies have shown that gay men and lesbians have NO greater incidence of mental illness than heterosexuals. *To the extent that gay men and women experience emotional difficulties, it is often the result of homophobia.* Homophobia destroys friendships, divides families, and poisons work environments. It makes a person fear and hate other human beings simply because they are homosexual.

MYTH 2

Homosexuality is unnatural.

FACT

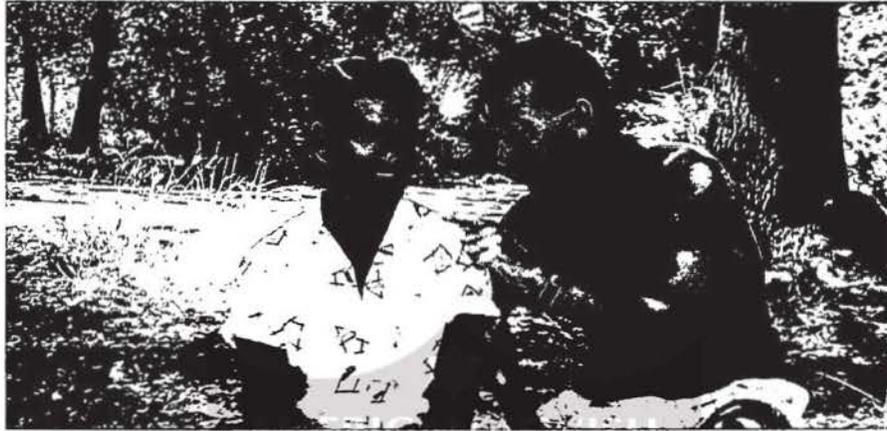
Homosexuality has been documented since the beginning of recorded history in all cultures and societies, among people of all ethnic, age, occupational, educational, and socio-economic backgrounds. Homosexuality occurs, too, in most mammal groups.

MYTH 3

Homosexuality is a *choice* that people make.

FACT

Studies of thousands of gay (and non-gay) people have found that sexual orientation develops "naturally" and at a very early age. The overwhelming number of gay men and lesbians feel that their homosexuality is deep-seated, not something they chose to be or not to be. The "choice" that gay people must make is whether to accept their sexual orientation, or to deny it, keep it a secret from others, and hate themselves for what they naturally were made to be. Researchers investigating the "theories of homosexuality" which were once espoused, including the overprotective mother-weak father syndrome, have *never been able to find evidence to support those now discarded beliefs.*



Enjoying the rustic campground setting during a weekend conference of gay and lesbian Jews are lovers Andy and Bruce.



Eighteen-month-old Joshua takes much of Jill's attention these days. Jill, with her lover Annie, are among the growing numbers of lesbians choosing to have children.

MYTH 4

Gay men are child molesters.

FACT

According to the FBI and the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, over 95% of all child sexual assaults are committed by heterosexual men with female children. Gay men and women have never been found to be characteristically child molesters.

MYTH 5

It's easy to tell a homosexual - the men are effeminate, the women are tough.

FACT

That some gay men act or appear effeminate often makes them visible and "recognized" as being gay. The same holds true for so-called "masculine" women. However, not all effeminate men are gay, nor are all "masculine" women lesbians. *Most gay men and women look, speak, and act no differently than heterosexual members of society*, which is why it's so easy for most of them to keep their sexual orientation a secret.

Many people continue to hold the mistaken belief that homosexual men and women are unhappy being the gender that they are, and secretly wish they were a member of the opposite sex. This, too, is a myth, based on the frequent confusion of homosexuals with transvestites (people who enjoy dressing in the clothes of the opposite sex). In fact, transvestites are usually heterosexual males.

MYTH 6

Homosexuality causes AIDS and threatens society.

FACT

AIDS is caused by a virus, not by any form of sexual activity. While it does affect many gay men, AIDS affects other groups as well. The high incidence of AIDS in Africa is found primarily within the heterosexual population. AIDS is not highly contagious. Scientific evidence has shown that it is not transmitted through the air, through sweat or saliva, or by casual contact.

Jewish life and ritual contribute an important element to Betty and Marion's life together. Here they participate with other members of their synagogue in prayers under the Sukkah.



MYTH 7

Homosexuals are anti-family.

FACT

Gay men and women are as interested in close, loving relationships as any other group in society. As members of families, many enjoy warm, caring ties with their parents, their siblings, their children, and their extended family. When this isn't true, it is usually homophobia which poisons the hearts and minds of family members, causing them to feel suspicion, dislike, and fear towards the gay or lesbian member.

Most gay men and lesbians seek to establish for themselves a supportive, close family unit through a committed primary relationship of their own. The negative stereotype of the "promiscuous homosexual" makes it easy to overlook the vast numbers of gay men and lesbians who enjoy warm, loving relationships.

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES



Enriching the beauty of Sabbath and festival services through their choral performances is how these lesbians and gay men contribute to the life of their synagogue.

MYTH 8

There are no Jewish homosexuals.

FACT

There are perhaps as many as one million gay and lesbian Jews in the world. They come from family backgrounds ranging from the ultra-Orthodox to the modern Reform. They come from families rich and poor, happy and unhappy, families of divorce and families of enduring marriage.

Since the early days of the "gay rights movement" in the seventies, gay men and lesbians in cities around the world have been forming religious, social, cultural, and political groups of their own. In 1980, 16 of these groups founded the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations (WGLJO). The WGLJO strives primarily to challenge homophobia and sexism, particularly within the Jewish community, and to coordinate and support the organized movement of gay and lesbian Jews. Its biennial international conferences draw hundreds of participants from around the world.

Today, the WGLJO includes nearly 30 member organizations from the United States, England, The Netherlands, Israel, and Canada. Some of these groups are synagogues (four are members of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Reform synagogue movement in the United States). Other groups emphasize political, social, or cultural objectives. Four of the gay-outreach synagogues employ fully-ordained rabbis. *These are organizations of people who cherish their Judaism and contribute in a variety of ways to the Jewish (and secular) communities in which they reside.*



f not now, when?

As member groups of the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations, we believe it's time we spoke to your organization, your synagogue, your chapter – to tell you more about ourselves, our hopes and dreams, and our place in the Jewish community. We believe that by creating new avenues for dialogue, we can learn from and about one another, and strengthen the bonds that enable us to strive together towards the Jewish purpose of *tikkun olam* – the betterment of the world.

The WGLJO offers a lively and interesting Speakers' Bureau which will tailor an educational program to the interests and needs of your organization. Don't remain misinformed about a segment of our Jewish People that numbers almost a million strong. Contact us today for more information. We're the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations, Post Office Box 881272, San Francisco, California 94188.