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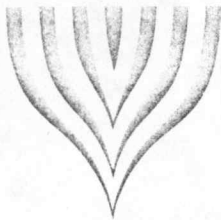
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Ethics Committee, 1988.

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Union of American Hebrew Congregations

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PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
838 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100 CABLES: UNIONUAHC

November 9, 1988

FROM: Rabbi Jack Stern, Jr.
Mr. Paul Uhlmann, Jr.

TO: UAHC COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

We are pleased to enclose reports from two of our three subcommittees for you to peruse in advance of our upcoming meeting.

We will convene at 5:00 p.m., November 21st at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Buckhead, Georgia, and will conclude no later than 3:00 p.m. on November 22nd.

Our agenda will consist of three major items:

1. A discussion of the particular topics reflected in the documents.
2. A determination as to how best to make them come alive through concrete programs.
3. A discussion of how we wish to program for the New Orleans Biennial.

We look forward to seeing you on the 21st.

789 Knapp Drive
Santa Barbara, CA 93108
October 24, 1988

Dear Rabbi Stern,

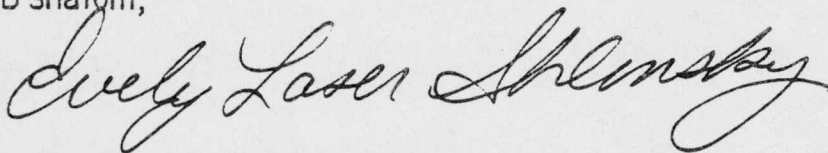
Our subcommittee on synagogue ethics has gathered twice in the past few months. Our first meeting was devoted to identifying various ethical issues which affect synagogues and selecting from these the ones on which we wished to focus. At our second meeting we scrutinized the analyses which members of our committee had developed.

Our focus areas for synagogues are 1) interpersonal relations, 2) financial matters and 3) social justice issues. We also offer a preamble to the subject of synagogue ethics and a strategy for ethical decision making which can be applied to any of our focus areas and to other ethical issues as well.

Each of our subcommittee members assumed responsibility for developing one of the analyses or statements. The group then examined, criticized and revised the statements.

We hope our material will be useful to the Ethics Committee and ultimately to synagogues and the other institutions and organizations of Reform Judaism. We certainly enjoyed the process of thinking and talking about these issues.

B'shalom,



Evelyn Laser Shlensky, Chairperson
Subcommittee on Synagogue Ethics
for

Rabbi David H. Ellenson
Rabbi Arthur Gross Schäfer
Edward London
Rabbi Peter J. Rubinstein

Preamble to Subcommittee Document on Synagogue Ethics

The Jewish people has always relished its existence as an Am Kadosh, (Holy' People) a concept firmly rooted in God's directive "You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am Holy." We have continued to pursue the personal and collective significance of Kedosha (holiness) as it applies to our lives.

At times the path to "holiness" is complicated and clouded. We cannot be sure as to what is the most ethical behavior when there appears to be conflicting demands, especially true when survival is a factor. In these difficult times the tendency is to balance the pristine sense of mission with the need to survive. We ask ourselves "Is it better to maintain absolute ethical clarity and behavior if it might result in the demise of a person, an institution, or a people?"

Our subcommittee does not presume absolute and pure ethical exactness. We do believe, however, that we must focus on those precepts which are sufficiently clear, so that their compromise would be obvious and apparent. We believe that our mission as a people demands that we heighten the ethical quality of our conduct and that we do not make ethical compromises for the sake of practical efficacy. We believe, further, that we cannot be blind to the ethical positions which are implied by institutional behavior and choices.

We offer this documents with the hope that we will be

insightful and diligent in examining the ethical positions portrayed by the behavior, actions, and policies of our institutions including synagogues, the UAHC, the HUC-JIR, and the CCAR. We hope to raise questions and to offer a means for examination so that each institution of Jewish life will incorporate into its process a continuous examination of ethical position.

-Rabbi Peter J. Rubinstein

JEWISH INSTITUTIONS AND INTERPERSONAL ETHICS

Mitzvot bein Adam l'chavero, commandments concerning the relationship between an individual and fellow persons, lie at the heart of Judaism. No Jewish community which strives for holiness can fail to be sensitive to the feelings, needs, and thoughts of those in its midst. Moreover, the community must be aware that the way in which persons treat one another within its confines provides powerful messages both to persons within the community as well as beyond about the ideal way in which human life ought to be conducted. As a result, a synagogue, or any other Jewish institution, must strive to act, as the Tradition puts it, lifnim mi'shurat hadin, "beyond the letter of the law," in the quality of interpersonal relationships that characterizes it. The following are therefore some of the considerations in this area which we think should be on ~~the agenda of~~ every Jewish community and institution's ethical agenda.

On the level of interpersonal relationships, does the community strive to be inclusive? Does it provide easy access to facilities and programs for persons who are handicapped? Does it foster programs that will promote intergenerational harmony? Does it strive to include singles, as well as families, within its programs? Does it seek to make those who might feel stigmatized (divorcees, widows, widowers, gay persons) welcome within its walls? Does it support programs that such groups designate as appropriate for themselves?

On another level of interpersonal relationships, does the community reflect an awareness of the rabbinic dictum that "life and death are in the power of the tongue?" Does gossip on either a personal or professional level play a role in the life of the community, and does such talk have invidious consequences? How does the community attempt to curtail such speech so that it does not reach the level of slander and needlessly harm individuals?

On a third level, does the community conduct itself in accord with the highest goals of Jewish moral teachings in contract negotiations between profes-

sionals and the board? Do the professionals in the community conduct themselves with fairness, impartiality, and concern to those whom they serve?

Finally, the Torah instructs us that we should be a "holy people." When our communities honor individual persons, do we take into account the nature of that person's moral behavior to determine whether it is consistent with Jewish moral values and concerns?

BASIC DEFINITIONS

Values - is a belief which guides, directs and motivates opinions, attitudes, and actions

Ethics - is the study of values, what actions are good and bad

Ethical Standards - principles of conduct, how people ought to behave in a certain situation. There are ethical standards appropriate for every Jewish Institution decision..every Jewish Institution decision has some ethical dimensions.

BASIC ETHICAL THEORIES

Absolute values - this theory believes that there are certain ethical principles that are universal and that impose an absolute duty on a person. *Kant* referred to such duties as 'categorical imperatives' because they allow for no exceptions.

Utilitarianism - this theory requires the ethical person to evaluate the likely consequences of contemplated conduct and weigh the good the act will produce against the harm it will cause. Simplified to 'the greatest good for the greatest number.'

ANALYSIS TOOLS

Stakeholder Analysis - responsible ethical decisions in a Jewish Institution involve considerations of the impact of the decision on the network of persons who have a 'stake' in the decision.

Therefore, a decision which does not take into account the way in which it will effect others is not an ethical one regardless of its actual consequences. Some of the groups to be considered include:

- decision maker
- colleagues
- Jewish Institution staff
- persons directly helped or harmed by the decision

- Jewish Institution membership
- Jewish community
- General community
- Posterity
- Keneset Israel (the Jewish People)

Representative Ethical Values and Obligations which Derive from Our Jewish Tradition

- honesty
- integrity - consistency of word, action, conviction
- brit - fulfill letter and spirit of commitments
- loyalty
- tzedek- justice and fairness
- caring - compassion, kindness
- respect for human dignity and uniqueness
- respect for law
- accountability for actions
- responsibility for decisions
- tikun o'lam - social consciousness

In addition to adhering to fundamental ethical values and obligations listed above and applicable to all persons, individuals working in Jewish Institutions have six additional ethical obligations:

- advocacy - be an ardent advocate for Jewish values
- communication - keep membership informed as to all relevant matters
- fair treatment - safeguard the ability to exercise independent judgment on all matters by avoiding undue influences and conflict of interests
- openness - avoid unnecessary secrecy or concealment of information
- confidentiality - do not use or disclose information learned in confidence
- leadership by example - safeguard the sacred trust by engaging in exemplary ethical conduct and in not engaging in conduct that might undermine confidence or be reasonably considered to be inappropriate conduct.

A SUGGESTED STRATEGY FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

- 1. DEFINE THE PROBLEM CAREFULLY AND MAKE SURE YOU HAVE GATHERED ALL THE NECESSARY FACTS**
- 2. LIST ALL THE STAKEHOLDERS THAT MAY BE AFFECTED BY THE DECISION (stakeholder analysis)**
- 3. LIST ALL THE PERSONAL AND JEWISH INSTITUTION VALUES THAT ARE INVOLVED IN THE DECISION (absolute values analysis)**
- 4. LIST ALL THE LIKELY CONSEQUENCES OF THE POTENTIAL CHOICES (utilitarian analysis)**
- 5. CHOOSE and PRIORITIZE**
 - A. Which stakeholder do you believe is the most important in this situation**
 - B. Which value do you believe to be the highest value in this situation**
 - C. Which of the likely consequences do you believe will cause the greatest good or the least harm**
 - D. Prioritize A,B,and C as to which is the most important consideration in this case**
- 6. MAKE THE DECISION BASED ON THE ABOVE FACTORS**
- 7. DEVISE A STRATEGY TO IMPLEMENT THE DECISION THAT WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE ETHICAL VALUES LISTED ABOVE AS WELL AS THE VALUE OF SHALOM BIAT, PEACE IN THE HOME.**

sources: Josephson Institute for the Advancement of Ethics, *Politics, Power and Ethics: Effective Decision Making in the Trenches*; McDonnell Douglas Corporation, *Ethical Decision Making*; Beauchamp, *Cases Studies in Business, Society and Ethics*; Valasquez, *Business Ethics: Concepts and Cases*.

SYNAGOGUE ETHICS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

In our striving to become an *am kadosh*, Judaism insists that we attend to three endeavors: *Torah*, *Avoda* and *Maasim tovim*. Our synagogues stand for Judaism. They are places where we, as a community, engage in the primary Jewish acts of study, prayer and good works. Jewish ethics are directly related to whether and how we implement *Maasim tovim* in our personal lives and in our synagogues.

While it is true that we cannot sanctify our lives absent individual holy acts, it is also likely that the people Israel cannot become an *am kadosh* unless we are willing to pursue peace and justice as a community of Jews. It is hoped that the questions that follow will aid your congregation in that pursuit.

Education: Teaching Jewish Ethics

1. Are Jewish ethics relating to social justice taught in our religious school, youth group, adult education program, from the pulpit and through the bulletin?
2. Are the ethics of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, taught by example through the activities of our synagogue, the members, the leaders and the professionals?

Social Ethics and the Synagogue

1. JUSTICE

- A. Are we concerned about the ability of poor people to meet their basic needs? How do we demonstrate that concern?
- B. Are we concerned that all people enjoy equal rights? How do we foster those rights?
- C. Do we support those in search of basic human rights?

2. TZEDAKAH

- A. Do we as a congregation and as individuals participate in alleviating poverty?

- B. Do we both teach and exemplify in institutional behavior the requirements of tzedakah?
- C. Do we attempt to include concepts of tzedakah on an ongoing basis as part of our temple programming?

3. PEACE

- A. Do we not only verbally declare our devotion to peace but do we also seek peace and pursue it?
- B. Do we join with others in promoting peace by, for example, participating in coalitions bent on peace?
- C. Do we try to understand the sources of conflict and to foster peace in Israel?

4. K'LAL YISRAEL

- A. Do we teach group responsibility?
- B. What steps do we take in furtherance of our commitment to k'lal Yisrael?

Paths of Ethical Involvement

1. Is the Board of Directors committed to peace, justice, tzedakah, and k'lal Yisrael? How does it demonstrate those commitments?
2. Are these ethical issues priorities for the professional leadership of the temple?
3. What opportunities are congregants given, as temple members, to pursue social justice?
4. Are there channels through which members can suggest ethical engagement to the temple?
5. Is there a committee which assumes responsibility for initiating education and action in the arena of social justice? Is that group active? Is it encouraged? Does the congregation support it financially and by participating in its programs and activities?

6. Does the temple have a presence in the community and among other similarly oriented groups?

Ethical Implications of Temple Practices

With regard to ethical implications, the temple might want to evaluate:

1. Its investments and its suppliers
2. The fairness of its employment practices
3. The desirability, as a congregation, of engaging in acts of social concern or protest associated with issues of social justice

In Conclusion

If the temple is not attending significantly to the ethical imperatives of Judaism, not offering the congregation a place where these ideals can be addressed and expressed, perhaps the board should conduct a special session to evaluate the purpose of Judaism, what sorts of actions might be considered holy behavior, the purpose of a Jewish religious institution, the philosophy of Reform Judaism and its commitment to social justice and ethical uprightness, and the genuineness of the messages which the temple is verbalizing.

FINANCIAL ETHICS IN THE SYNAGOGUE

INTER-PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

1. Does the synagogue provide for benefits (pension, social security, medical, etc.) for all its employees?
2. Does the synagogue counsel the professional in re future retirement matters?
3. Does the synagogue address professional contract negotiations in a timely and ethical manner?
4. Does the synagogue meet its financial obligation to all employees in an ethical manner.

RE THE RABBINATE

1. Does the Rabbi accept lavish gifts from certain members, there by clouding his/her objectivity.
2. Does the Rabbi use his/her Discretionary Funds in accordance with the rules of the CCAR?
3. Does the Rabbi use parsonage in an illegal manner?
4. Is there general adherence to Income Tax laws?

PROVIDING HONORS FOR DONORS

1. Does the synagogue provide honors for donors who have demonstrated unethical behavior (e.g. source of funds).
2. If the congregation honors those who provide financial gifts, is it done in a sensitive and egalitarian manner (honor irrespective of amount)?

MEMBERS DUES TO THE INSTITUTION

1. Is there a fair Dues Policy which addresses the financial ability of each member, even as to a complete dues remission?

Financial Ethics in the Synagogue Cont.

SYNAGOGUE ADMINISTRATION AND ITS MEMBERSHIP

1. Does the synagogue make available tax deductions which are illegal and not in the spirit of the law ?
2. Does the synagogue foster or allow gambling activities as a means of fund raising?
3. Does the Board of Trustees (or Executive Committee) view its financial oversight function as a public trust.