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Union of American Hebrew Congregations

SERVING REFORM JUDAISM IN NORTH AMERICA

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PACIFIC SOUTHWEST COUNCIL

Rabbi Lennard R. Thal
Director

Rabbi Janet Ross Marder
Associate Director

July 20, 1990

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: REGIONAL DIRECTORS

FROM: JANET MARDER

"The Union of American Hebrew Congregations resolves to...embark upon a movement-wide program of heightened awareness and education to achieve the fuller acceptance of gay and lesbian Jews."
(Adopted by the General Assembly of the UAHC, November 1989)

I imagine that all of us, in our own way, are trying to fulfill this mandate to educate our constituents about the gay and lesbian Jews among us. The CCAR's recent decision regarding the ordination of homosexuals makes our task all the more essential and, at the same time, more problematic. As the CCAR report states, "There is a great need for education and dialogue in our congregations."

You may remember from our meeting at the Nevele that I have been asked to provide some resources to facilitate that process. Here are some materials which I hope will prove helpful. Enclosed you'll find:

1. A list of speakers, organized by region, who have agreed to participate in this educational effort. They include straight colleagues who have special expertise in doing outreach to the gay community; gay and lesbian colleagues (rabbis and one cantor); gay and lesbian Jews, some active in Reform synagogues, some not; and Jewish parents of homosexuals, some, but not all, involved in a synagogue.

It was much easier to locate speakers in some regions than in others. I apologize to those of you whose regions are under-represented on my list. I had many painful conversations with colleagues, parents and lesbian and gay Jews who strongly believed in the importance of this project but felt unable to "go public" at this time. I was also struck by the degree of alienation from the Jewish community that many homosexuals and parents expressed.

Note: Please look over the entire list, not only those speakers from your own region. Several speakers prefer to speak outside their own region, feeling that this will better protect their privacy. In addition, there are a few speakers on this list who offer such a unique and valuable perspective that it may be worth the expense to bring them in, even from another region.

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2. Copies of the UAHC resolutions on this topic from 1977, 1987 and 1989
3. Two sample sermons (by Yoel Kahn and Margaret Wenig) dealing with the obligation of "mainstream" synagogues to reach out to gay and lesbian Jews
4. Robert Kirschner's important article on "Halacha and Homosexuality," which provides a valuable overview of the Jewish textual materials as well as the latest psychological data. He also offers a rather appealing argument for departing from the traditional Jewish view of homosexuality.
5. A short piece on the Nazis' persecution of homosexuals, written by Richard Plant, author of Pink Triangle: The Nazi War on Homosexuals. Jews are often stunned by what they learn about this topic, and it provides a common bond between our two communities. I also include information about a film ("Pink Triangles") dealing with the general topic of homophobia.
6. A useful checklist, prepared by Maggie Wenig, which congregations can use to evaluate their ability to welcome gay and lesbian Jews. I also include an article from her temple newsletter describing a resolution in support of gay and lesbian Jews which was passed by the board of directors in the wake of our last Biennial. Finally, I include her temple's membership brochure, which is distinguished by its effort to be inclusive and welcoming. The outreach efforts undertaken by this congregation, which when Maggie arrived consisted mostly of retirees and widows, are truly remarkable. I hope you'll help to give them the attention they deserve.
7. Sample programs, sponsored by the PSW Council and Stephen Wise Temple in New York, which you might use as models for an educational forum
8. A powerful and moving essay by a lesbian rabbi that will surely inspire much reflection and discussion. The essay comes from Twice Blessed: Lesbian, Gay and Jewish, ed. Christine Balka and Andy Rose (Beacon Press, 1989). This is a fine anthology which I'd encourage you to have on sale at your biennial. Contact Andy Rose at (301)366-7327 to arrange for a display.

In addition to the enclosed resource materials, I'd recommend the following:

1. "Why Is My Child Gay?"
Brochure published by Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), Inc. P.O. Box 27605, Washington, D.C. 20038. It's a helpful short survey of scientific opinion about homosexuality in easy-to-understand language, and also includes a bibliography.
2. Griffin, Carolyn Welch; Wirth, Marian J. and Wirth, Arthur G. Beyond Acceptance. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1986). An excellent discussion by parents of lesbians and gays.
3. Two videotapes:
"Listening, Loving and Learning" --interview with several parents who have struggled to accept their children's homosexuality. Professionally done and quite moving. 38 min; cost--\$15, plus \$2.00 mailing charge. Available from: PFLAG, P.O. Box 145, Farmington, MI. 48332

"Parents Come Out"--Features discussions with parents who describe what it's like to have a gay or lesbian child. 30 min. For information regarding

sale or rental contact PFLAG, P.O. Box 27605, Washington, D.C. 20038 or call Adele Starr at (213)472-4804.

I hope you will use these materials to develop study sessions for your regional board, congregational forums and seminars at your biennials. Possible topics include:

- a. "Reaching Out to Gay and Lesbian Jews"--focusing on why, and how, congregations should attempt to become more inclusive. If there is a "gay synagogue" in the community, congregations may feel that this lets them off the hook, freeing them from the necessity of doing any outreach. You might want to cover this topic in a general workshop on membership acquisition. One presenter could advocate outreach to lesbian and gay Jews as a membership-building technique.
- b. "Gays and Lesbians as Leaders in the Jewish Community"--This seminar would convey the message that gay and lesbian rabbis, cantors and educators can serve congregations successfully. If your region hasn't done much programming on homosexuality, you may want to stay away from this topic for a while.
- c. "Helping Synagogues Serve the Changing Jewish Family"--A speaker discussing gay and lesbian couples, with or without children, could be part of this panel, which might also describe other underserved constituencies (singles, the elderly, etc.) The overall goal of the program would be to promote the acceptance of diverse family configurations.
- d. "Teaching Jewish Kids About Sexuality and Family Life"--Could include a speaker (rabbi, educator or therapist) who can discuss the pain experienced by gay and lesbian young people, and about the need for our religious schools to teach about homosexuality (and sexuality in general) with sensitivity and fairness. I have a whole packet of materials on the subject of gay and lesbian youth; let me know if you're interested.

Our next biennial will feature a seminar entitled "The Challenge of Welcoming Gays and Lesbians in All Our Congregations."

It's particularly helpful to connect with any gay/lesbian Jewish groups in your region. You might try to set up dialogue sessions linking them with one or more mainstream congregations. These could be formal panel discussions or informal parlor meetings in someone's home. The important thing is to bring gay and straight Jews together so they begin to discard stereotypes and see one another as human beings. You might want to consider an approach the New York Federation has taken--namely, forming a regional task force to educate congregations about homosexuality. Allen Kaplan can give you details on this.

I know that several of you have been doing some excellent work in this area. Please share with me news of any programs you organize, and I'll distribute it so we can learn from one another.

Thanks for giving this subject your thoughtful consideration.

P.S. Watch for the Winter issue of Reform Judaism. It will feature an article by Yoel Kahn offering his personal perspective as a gay rabbi, and one by me analyzing the implications of the CCAR decision in Seattle.

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).

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.

Hanserke

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 2, 1990
FROM: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
TO: Rabbi Janet Marder

Thank you for sending me the packet directed to Regional Directors in an effort to fulfill the mandate of their resolution which was adopted by our Biennial. I am deeply grateful for what you are doing. As always, you are thorough in your approach.

I hope our colleagues will avail themselves of those resources which you provided. Would it not be a good idea if you were to call around to make certain that they do. I would hate to have this buried beneath a pile on their desk and not acted on. In other words, you ought to take an active role in seeing that every region does at least something in this area.

Why don't you send a copy of your packet to Allan Goldman with a covering memo indicating how it is that we are fulfilling the resolution which was adopted in this realm.

Again, my heartfelt thanks.

SOUTHWEST COUNCIL

1. Dr. Arnold Drake
1303 Calais Rd.
Memphis, TN. 38120
(901) 761-1444

Dr. Drake is very involved in Temple Beth Shalom (Conservative) and also knows Rabbi Harry Danziger well. He grew up in the Reform movement. A good speaker, parent of a gay son and active in PFLAG.

MIDWEST COUNCIL

1. Fred Jacobs
642 S.2nd St. Apt.1004
Louisville, KY. 40202
(502) 583-0528

Fred is a gay man, the father of three daughters, and a member of The Temple in Louisville. He has been an active member of the Jewish community all his life (youth group, etc.), and is very articulate.

2. Ted Ruskin
4517 W.Ponds Circle
Littleton, CO. 80123
(303)798-6566

Ted is an active member of Temple Sinai of Denver (serves on the board) and openly gay. He is affable, articulate and a committed Reform Jew. He attended the Biennial in New Orleans as part of the Sinai delegation.

3. Rabbi Marc Blumenthal
Director, Community Chaplain Program
Rose Medical Center
4567 East Ninth Ave.
Denver, CO. 80220
(303)320-2121

Marc is the rabbi who "came out" to his colleagues at the most recent MWARR convention. He is a fine, thoughtful speaker (he spoke on a panel at our last Sub-Regional convention) and makes an excellent impression.

4. Debora Gordon
1127 W.6th St.
Bloomington, IN. 47404
(812)331-2708

Debora is a lesbian who works as High Holy Days hazzanit and Bar/Bat Mitzva tutor at Congregation Beth Shalom in Bloomington, Indiana. She also works for the Indianapolis BJE. She is interested in applying to rabbinic school at HUC. She grew up in the Reform movement, attended UAHC camps, and her grandfather was a Reform rabbi. She's a bright, thoughtful speaker.

NORTHEAST LAKES COUNCIL

1. Merry Silber
(313)642-4371

Lives in the Detroit area. Parent of a gay child, an experienced speaker but not affiliated with a temple.

2. Harriet and Morris Arnowitz
3250 Kenosha
Oak Park, MI. 48237
(313)545-1151

The Arnowitz's are parents of a gay child, members of PFLAG and experienced speakers. They are members of Congregation Beth Shalom (Conservative).

3. Jane Daroff
14260 Larchmere
Shaker Heights, OH. 44120
(216)321-7413

First cousin of Allan B. Goldman. Jane is not a temple member, but "very Jewish." She is an articulate, active member of PFLAG.

4. Helen Binder
(313)642-1960

Lives in the Detroit area. Helen is an unaffiliated mother of a gay son. I know her son, who is a member of Beth Chayim Chadashim in Los Angeles. She is a warm and experienced speaker who can discuss the stigma attached to being the parent of a homosexual in the Jewish community.

5. Dr. Trudy Baron
7 Berkshire St.
Rochester, N.Y. 14607
(716)442-3363

Trudy is a psychologist who has led many workshops on homosexuality--an outstanding, warm and eloquent speaker. She is a lesbian and a mother; she and her companion are both active members of B'rith Kodesh in Rochester. In her talks, Dr. Baron stresses the notion that gay and straight people "are more alike than different," and explains the desire of gay and lesbian Jews to live a full Jewish life.

6. Scott Cohen
Until October 15: 117 Hart Rd.
Cherry Hills, N.J. 08034
(609)779-9198

After October 15: 10 Manhattan Square, Apt. 5
Rochester, N.Y. 14607
(617)546-1381

Scott is a gay man, an active member of B'rith Kodesh and a founder of Naim, a group of lesbian and gay Jews in Rochester. He is a very eloquent speaker. Incidentally, he is thinking about applying to rabbinic school.

7. Dr. Howard Epstein
23897 Wimbleton Rd.
Shaker Heights, OH. 44122
(216)991-2612

cont.

NORTHEAST LAKES cont.

Howard is a physician at a university hospital in Cleveland. He grew up at Tiferet Israel and is now an active member of Hevrei Tikvah, Cleveland's gay/lesbian synagogue. He is a very committed Jew and an excellent speaker.

8. Greg (doesn't want last name used)
(216)991-9304

Greg is Howard's partner. He teaches religious school in a Conservative congregation and is highly closeted at work (in a large corporation). Describes himself as traditionally-oriented Jew, but with a growing respect for Reform Judaism.

9. Rabbis Judea Miller and Judy Cohen-Rosenberg
B'rith Kodesh , 2131 Elmwood Ave.
Rochester, N.Y. 14618
(716)244-7060

This congregation has made some remarkable steps at outreach to the gay/lesbian community. Both rabbis are happy to speak about their efforts in this direction. Judy is probably more outspoken on the subject; Judea would offer the perspective of someone whose views have altered gradually.

MID-ATLANTIC COUNCIL

1. Marcia (pronounced Mar-SEE-a) Solomon
2417 Elkwood Circle
Charlotte, NC. 28205
(704)537-8001

Marcia has a gay son, is a member of PFLAG and is active in a Conservative synagogue. She's a very enthusiastic and articulate speaker.

2. Paulette Goodman
911 Buckingham Dr.
Silver Springs, MD. 20901
(301)434-6309

National president of PFLAG and an experienced speaker. Describes herself as non-affiliated "but very Jewish." Lived through the Holocaust in Nazi-occupied France, and can speak powerfully about how the oppression she experienced as a Jew there helped her understand the pain of homosexuals living in the closet.

3. Andy Rose
3106 Abell Ave.
Baltimore, MD. 21218
(301)366-7327

Gay man, an HUC-trained social worker and a marvelous, sensitive and very experienced speaker and workshop leader. Co-editor of Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian, Gay and Jewish.

NEW YORK FEDERATION

1. Elaine and Lester Sharlach
592 Haviland Rd.
Stamford, CT. 06903
(203)322-5380

Parents of a gay son, active in PFLAG. They are members of a traditional synagogue, but describe themselves as being "not very religious." Their straight son is active in a Reform congregation in Connecticut (but they said he wouldn't be interested in speaking). Both are excellent, experienced speakers.

2. John Hirsch
95 Windsor Gate Dr.
North Hills, N.Y. 11040
(516)365-7445

John chairs the NYFRS's "Gay and Lesbian Jews Resource Committee," which provides speakers to all congregations in the region and also does outreach in the gay/lesbian community in order to bring Jews into mainstream congregations. He and Rabbi Margaret Wenig led a well-attended workshop at the region's annual Assembly of Delegates. A board member of Temple Beth-El in Great Neck, John and his partner were honored at Shabbat services on their 20th anniversary. He does a very eloquent and moving presentation. Incidentally, John designed the UAHC AIDS Committee's beautiful quilt panel in memory of all Jews lost to AIDS.

3. Rabbi Margaret Wenig
Beth Am-The People's Temple
178 Bennett Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10040
(212)927-2230

Maggie can speak about the extraordinary efforts her congregation has made to reach out to the gay/lesbian community. She has excellent ideas and materials to share with other congregations; I have included several examples in this packet. She is married and the mother of two daughters.

NEW JERSEY FEDERATION

1. Jeff (prefers that his last name not be used) is a gay man active in Monmouth Reform Temple, who says he'd prefer to speak outside his own region. He knows Dan Freeland, so you might call Dan for more information about his effectiveness as a speaker. Jeff's home phone number is (201)583-2256.
2. Scott Cohen--will be in New Jersey until October 15 and would be a very effective speaker. See Northeast Lakes, #6 for information about him.

SOUTHEAST COUNCIL

1. Judy Colbs

684 Elmwood Dr. NE
Atlanta, GA. 30306
(404)875-9440

Has a lesbian daughter. Judy was raised as a Conservative Jew in a religious home; she is now unaffiliated, but knows Rabbi Sue Ann Wasserman well. She expresses herself well and is retired, so travel is not a problem. Her husband, Marvin, is also willing to speak.

2. Zena Silverman

10405 Sunrise Lake Bl.
Sunrise, Florida 33322
(305)741-3648

Has a gay son. She is unaffiliated, a very warm and genuine speaker, but rather inexperienced. Would prefer to speak together with Michael Greenspan (see below).

3. Michael Greenspan

2113 W. Davie Blvd. Apt. 246
H (305)583-9477

Former president of Etz Hayim, Miami's congregation with special outreach to gay and lesbian Jews. Has served on the UAHC Regional Board and knows Frank Sundheim. Experienced speaker.

PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL

1. Dr. Lisa Schwartz
1219 W. Wynnewood Rd., #515
Wynnewood, PA. 19096
(215)896-8494 -H

Lisa has done extensive research on gay and lesbian youth, and can speak well about homophobia and the general topic of teaching young people about sexuality. Her dissertation deals with the attitudes and behavior of young homosexuals on the East Coast. As far as I know, she is straight. Lisa serves on the UAHC's AIDS Committee and belongs to Temple Shalom in Broomall.

2. Laura Gottfried
Jewish Family and Children's Services
1610 Spruce St.
Phila, PA. 19103

Laura is a social worker at Jewish Family and Children's Services in Philadelphia, where she has led support groups for Jewish lesbians and bisexual women through their "Womenreach" program. She is not affiliated with a temple, but can speak effectively about issues of gay and lesbian involvement in the Jewish community.

3. Dr. Richard Friend
2405 Grays Ferry Ave.
Philadelphia, PA. 19146
(215)735-0476

Gay unaffiliated Jew on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania in the human sexuality program. Richard is a very experienced speaker and educator who has led training programs for the Philadelphia school system and the police department, designed to reduce homophobia. He says he was raised "very much as a Jew" and can speak effectively about his personal story of growing up gay and Jewish. He's a friend of Lisa Schwartz.

4. Ms. Ruth Gland
1006 Afton Apt. 12
Philadelphia, PA. 19111
(215)725-4836

Ruth lost her son to AIDS not long ago. Dan Freeland did the funeral and she is extremely fond of him (ask Dan about her effectiveness as a speaker). She is active in PFLAG and has done a good deal of speaking on their behalf. She is not a synagogue member, but expressed the wish of finding a supportive Jewish community.

GREAT LAKES COUNCIL/CHICAGO FEDERATION

1. Walter and Ina Hill
1000 Deerfield Rd. Apt. 201
Highland Park, IL. 60035
(708)432-5605

The Hills have a gay son. They are members of Temple Beth Israel in Skokie and are experienced speakers, active in PFLAG.

2. Vivian and Mayer Channon
4133 Greenwood
Skokie, IL. 60076
(708)674-4664

The Channons are active in Niles Township Congregation (Reconstructionist). They are active in PFLAG and have spoken on national television and radio. They are parents of a homosexual--I don't remember whether it's a son or daughter.

3. Dr. Floyd and Toby Mittleman
2005 Techny
Northbrook, IL. 60062
(708)564-2496

Parents of a homosexual and members of PFLAG, active in Temple Bnai Chai of Northbrook.

4. Rabbi Stacy Offner
Congregation Shir Tikvah
345 St. Peter St., Suite 800
St. Paul, MN. 55102
(612)642-0952

One of the few openly lesbian rabbis in the country and an energetic, eloquent and effective speaker. Stacy's experience is unique in that she serves a congregation which is not primarily homosexual and yet she is able to be open about her own orientation.

5. Lisa Schlesinger
1489 Lincoln Ave.
St. Paul, MN. 55105
(612)690-4482

Lisa is the immediate past president of Congregation Shir Tikvah (served by Rabbi Offner); she is married and the mother of three. A very fine and articulate speaker offering a valuable, unique perspective: a straight congregant's impression of what it's like to have an openly homosexual rabbi.

PACIFIC SOUTHWEST COUNCIL

1. Agnes Herman
1537 El Paseo Dr.
Lake San Marcos, CA. 92069
(619)744-6878

Ag is the mother of a gay son and an experienced, extremely effective speaker. Her status as wife of a rabbi and former UAHC Regional Director helps make the whole subject respectable, and encourages other parents to "come out of the closet."

2. Adele Starr
(213)472-4804

Founder and past national president of PFLAG. Has 5 children, one of whom is gay. She is a powerful, very experienced speaker and a member of University Synagogue in Los Angeles.

3. Elizabeth Savage
1133 S. Wooster St. #201 (213)278-6556
Los Angeles, CA. 90035

A Jew by Choice and an active member of Leo Baeck Temple. She and her partner were the first openly lesbian couple to apply for membership in the congregation. A thoughtful and articulate speaker. She is helping to coordinate Leo Baeck's involvement in the UAHC-sponsored AIDS Brunch program at County Hospital.

4. Bonnie Brown
3650 First Ave. Apt. 301
San Diego, CA. 92103
W (619)543-6397
H (619)260-1349

Bonnie is medical records supervisor at UCSD Medical Center. She has worked extensively with people with AIDS, and initiated Temple Emanu-El's outreach effort to gays and lesbians, organizing a social action dinner together with Yachad, San Diego's group for gay and lesbian Jews. Attended the "Justice and Judaism" seminar we held at Temple Emanu-El and serves on the temple's social action committee.

6. Rabbi Denise Eger
Beth Chayim Chadashim
6000 W. Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA. 90035
(213)931-7023

Rabbi of Los Angeles' gay/lesbian synagogue for the past two years, Denise recently became the first lesbian rabbi to "go public" with an article in the Los Angeles Times. She is a warm and dynamic speaker.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST COUNCIL

1. Cantor David Serkin
Temple B'nai Torah
6195 92nd Ave. SE
Mercer Island, WA. 98040
(206)232-7243

David is one of the only openly gay cantors in a Reform synagogue. He has an interesting story to tell and tells it extremely well. His presentation would provide reassuring evidence that a congregation can look to a gay religious leader as a mensch and a role model.

2. Rabbi James Mirel
same address and phone #

Jim can share the interesting and unusual experience of having guided his congregation through the difficult time of Cantor Serkin's "coming out." Ultimately the congregation proved very supportive of the cantor, and Jim's leadership was invaluable. Jim would prefer to speak outside his own region.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA COUNCIL

1. Ann and Dr. Julian Davidson
963 Mears Court
Stanford, CA. 94305
(415)493-0997

Parents of a gay son. Are unaffiliated, but proudly identify as Jews. Husband is professor of physiology at Stanford, specializing in human sexuality, hormones and reproduction. They are experienced speakers, active in PFLAG.

2. Rabbi Eric Weiss
Bureau of Jewish Education
639 14th Ave.
San Francisco, CA. 94115
(415)751-6983

Eric was openly gay during his days at HUC and continues to be in his present position as Judaic Studies Consultant for the BJE. He is a warm, low-key and very likable speaker.

3. Rabbi Yoel Kahn
Congregation Sha'ar Zahav
220 Danvers
San Francisco, CA. 94114
(415)861-6932

An excellent speaker, willing to do a few jobs outside his own region. He has a piece soon to be published in Reform Judaism giving his personal perspective as a gay rabbi. As you know if you've read his speech to the CCAR last year, he can also speak effectively on the subject of kiddushin for same-sex couples.

CANADIAN COUNCIL

1. Marlene Meyerson
Temple Emanu-El
120 Old Colony Road
Willowdale, Ontario
M2L 2K2 Canada
(416)449-3880

I was not able to contact Marlene about being on this list, but I think she would be a fine speaker. She is a member of the UAHC AIDS Committee, and has spoken movingly at our meetings about how her view of homosexuality was changed when a colleague "came out" to her.

2. Rabbi John Moskowitz

Holy Blossom Temple

I was unable to make contact with John, but I've been informed that Holy Blossom has organized a support group for Jewish parents of gays and lesbians.

NORTHEAST COUNCIL

1. Hope Abramson
49 Rogers Ave.
Somerville, MA. 02144
(617)625-0855

Lesbian active in Temple Bnai Brith of Somerville (Conservative). She has a partner and is a thoughtful, committed Jew.

2. Felice Yezkel
433 Warren Wright Rd.
Belchertown, MA. 01007
(413)256-1868

Felice is a lesbian active in a mainstream non-affiliated synagogue. She is very experienced at teaching and leading workshops on homophobia in the Jewish community. She'd be interested in training congregants who want to become part of an "internal change team" that would work to diminish homophobia in their congregation. She works with Diversityworks, a consultant firm devoted to helping organizations reduce racism, sexism and homophobia within their ranks. Felice would expect a fee for personal consulting with a congregation, but would speak for free at a UAHC workshop.

3. Warren J. Blumenfeld
136 Hancock St.
Cambridge, MA. 02139
(617)492-4639

Warren is co-author of Looking at Gay and Lesbian Life, a 416 page general reader on gay and lesbian experience; co-producer of the documentary film "Pink Triangles," which examines prejudice against lesbians and gay males, an instructor at the Cambridge Center for Adult Education and coordinator of the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Speakers Bureau of Boston. He holds dual Masters Degrees from Boston College. He is unaffiliated, but "very Jewish," (goes to services on the High Holy Days), and is comfortable telling his personal story of growing up Jewish and gay.



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

August 1, 1990
10 Av 5750

Handwritten signature

Rabbi Samuel Silver
Temple Sinai
2475 West Atlantic Avenue
Delray Beach, FL 33445

Dear Sam:

Thank you for sending me Mr. Rosen's letter. Unhappily, I cannot agree with him. The truth of the matter is that both you and I know that there are scores of homosexual rabbis in the Reform rabbinate even now - that is equally true for the Conservatives and the Orthodox rabbinate, I am certain.

Be that as it may, there has not been one untoward incident affecting any of them. Quite to the contrary, men like Hillel Fine and Bob Goldberg served with honor and there has not been even the slightest hint or suspicion that the fact that they were homosexuals impaired their functioning as exemplary role models. As a matter of fact, I must say those of our colleagues whom I know to be homosexuals are exceptionally sensitive.

To all of this, I only want to add that the several congregations with Outreach to the homosexual community which we have accepted into our family of congregations have created meaningful and exciting programs. My daughter who lives in San Francisco, tells me that Yoel Kahn's is just about the best in the city. It is the most active, the most spiritual, the most effective.

Alas, at least in terms of the rabbinate, not the same thing can always be said of our heterosexual colleagues. Here, too, both you and I know that we have had plenty of problems along that line.

What I am really trying to say is that sexual preference should not be a factor in determining a rabbi's effectiveness and the many Reform Jews who happen to be gay or lesbian ought not to feel that there are limits to their spiritual aspirations.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Harold J. Rosen
3700 Red Maple Circle
Delray Beach, Florida 33445

7/15/90

DEAR RABBI SILVER,

I FEEL THAT THE DECISION TO ACCEPT "GAY MEN" AS ORDAINED RABBIS IN REFORM JUDAISM IS A TERRIBLE MISTAKE.

IT IS AS EXTREEM AT ONE END OF THE SPECTRUM, AS GIVING THE REINS OF ISRAEL TO THE ULTRA ORTHODOX FANATICS WOULD BE AT THE OTHER END OF THE SPECTRUM.

I HAVE KNOWN AND WORKED (IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY) WITH HOMOSEXUAL MEN MOST OF MY ADULT LIFE. YES, AS IN ALL GROUPS YOU WILL FIND GOOD, BAD AND EXCEPTIONAL INDIVIDUALS. HOWEVER, THE ONE COMMON THREAD OF SEXUAL DISORIENTATION DISQUALIFIES THEIR ACCEPTABILITY AS RABBIS. THEIR SEXUALITY, WHILE NOT ALWAYS APPARENT, IS ALMOST AN OBSESSION THAT NEGATES ANY CHANCE OF THEM BECOMING ROLL MODEL, OBJECTIVE THINKING RABBIS. I CANNOT CONCEIVE OF ANY HETEROSEXUAL CHILD, YOUNG PERSON, ADULT, OR COUPLE DEALING COMFORTABLY WITH A GAY RABBI IN TERMS OF COUNCIL AND ADVICE ON PERSONAL PROBLEMS. NOR COULD THESE SAME PEOPLE

Harold J. Rosen
3700 Red Maple Circle
Delray Beach, Florida 33445

ACCEPT SUCH RABBIS AS TEACHERS AND
SPIRITUAL LEADERS OF TEMPLES AND CONGREGATIONS.
IT IS DIFFICULT ENOUGH FOR A RABBI TO BE
A "Solomon" WITHOUT THE ADDITIONAL
EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS OF DEALING WITH HIS OWN
HOMOSEXUALITY.

I SUBMIT THAT A MAJOR ERROR HAS
BEEN MADE AND I HOPE THAT IT IS REVERSABLE.

I HONESTLY DOUBT IF I WANT TO REMAIN
A PART OF THIS FINAL OUTCAST OF ORGANIZED
JUDAISM IF THIS DECISION IS NOT RESCINDED.

THE STANDARDS WE SET FOR OURSELVES
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF REFORM FLEXIBILITY
MUST BE BASED ON "SACHEL". BLIND LIBERALISM,
FOR ITS OWN SAKE, HAS NO PART IN ANY RELIGION.

THE FEAR THAT ANY ANTI-SEMITIC GROUP
COULD HAVE WITH THIS ISSUE, WHILE IMPORTANT,
DID NOT INFLUENCE MY DECISION.

VERY TRULY YOURS


Temple Sinai

Of Palm Beach County

2475 West Atlantic Avenue, Delray Beach, Florida 33445
Telephone: 407-276-6161



A Reform Congregation
member U.A.H.C.

#3

7/26/96

Dear ALEX

MR. ROSEN

ASKED ME TO

FORWARD THIS

LETTER TO YOU AS

THE EXPRESSION OF

A CONCERNED LAYMAN.

MY BEST!

Yours

Sam Selig

COPY



November 15, 1990
27 Heshvan 5751

Ms Sheila Wells
7033 Stewart & Gray Road #6
Downey, CA 90241

Dear Sheila:

Thank you so much for taking the time to write to share your thoughts concerning lesbian and gay rabbis. I want you to know that I agree with you fully and your stance is one which has long been that of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

We are on record for equality in employment opportunities and all phases of life for all, without concern for sexual preference.

Once again, thank you for writing as you did. With every good wish and kindest greetings, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Sheila Wells

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

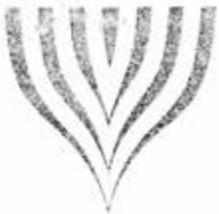
I agree with you fully + that has been the union's stance

I am so disturbed by the article about "Gay" Rabbis that I had to sit down + immediately write you.

We have Rabbis who are liars, cheats, uncaring, dishonest - I can go on indefinitely - Rabbis are "Human Beings" with all our vices + virtues. It is really no one's business what a Rabbi's sexual preference is or even anyone's sexual preference. Some of most famous people may do "interesting" things in their bedroom - Who cares.

As Jews it is our responsibility to accept people as they are. We are not judges + jurors! A good person / Rabbi is a good person - Time for us to be able to accept our likenesses + differences. I hope someday, somewhere we will "Love our neighbor"

Sincerely sent,
Sheila Wells
Temple Ner Tamid



תּוֹרָה
מִשְׁמַרְרֵנוּ
תְּשׁוּבָה
מִתְּפִלָּתֵנוּ

Handwritten signature

cc ABG, MM.
Sol Fried

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

SERVING REFORM JUDAISM IN NORTH AMERICA

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
6300 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD, SUITE 1475, LOS ANGELES, CA. 90048 (213) 653-9962 FAX (213) 653-9236

PACIFIC SOUTHWEST COUNCIL

Rabbi Lennard R. Thal
Director

Rabbi Janet Ross Marder
Associate Director

September 24, 1990

Editor
The Jewish Week
1457 Broadway
New York, N.Y. 10036

To the Editor:

Dennis Prager is correct (August 10, 1990): the Reform movement's recent decision to ordain homosexuals is "not about sympathy and compassion for homosexuals." It is, rather, about providing support and recognition for our gay and lesbian colleagues who are already serving in the rabbinate.

Anyone who knows these colleagues knows that they serve the Jewish people honorably and faithfully, and that they strive to conduct their public and private lives according to the highest ethical standards. To suggest otherwise is to slander some of the most gifted rabbis I know. I might add that gay rabbis serve in all four branches of Judaism, though nearly all, of course, are forced to keep their sexual orientation a secret.

Prager's lament over the Reform movement's "dropping the heterosexual ideal" seems motivated by a curious fear that the ordination of homosexuals will somehow unleash sexual anarchy in the world, leading to the disintegration of marriage, the family, and Western civilization. I'd like to allay his fears in two ways. First of all, no one will rush out and become a homosexual as a result of the CCAR vote. While Prager apparently has little regard for the intrinsic joys of heterosexual love and marriage, believing that men must be "taught to confine their erotic love to women, specifically to their wives," it seems abundantly clear that 20 years of the gay liberation movement have made heterosexuality and marriage no less popular. It is still only a small fraction of human beings (10% or less) who discover that their nature is homosexual.

Secondly, it should reassure Prager to know that HUC-JIR, the Reform seminary, holds all candidates for the rabbinate to the same rigorous standards. Homosexual or heterosexual, married or single, with or without children, rabbis must first and foremost be *mentshn*--people of honor and integrity, decent, caring and responsible human beings. Sexual libertines of any stripe, abusive, promiscuous or exploitative men and women are not acceptable candidates for the rabbinate.

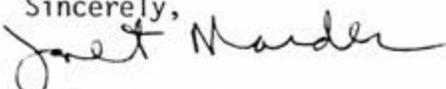
This latest vote of the Reform rabbinate, thus, reflects no abandonment of the Jewish ideals of monogamy or family life--for anyone who

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knows lesbian or gay couples knows they are capable of establishing faithful lifetime commitments and rearing children in stable, loving families.

I fail to see how acknowledging the human dignity and rabbinic competence of a homosexual endangers the family or undermines Western civilization. In fact, I view this decision as a step forward in the civilizing process, and look forward to the day when the fears, ignorance and bigotry expressed in Prager's article will be laid to rest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet Marder". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Rabbi Janet R. Marder
Associate Director

FOCUS

Comment/Opinion/Insight

Will the Reform ruling on gay rabbis stand?

By DENNIS PRAGER

THE RECENT DECISION of the Reform rabbinate to ordain declared homosexuals will be rescinded one day, and all those who care deeply about Reform Judaism must hope that it will do so before that decision harms the Reform movement.

Not since classical Reform Judaism's decision to declare the Jews a religion and not a people, which led to its early anti-Zionism, has Reform Judaism done something so antithetical to a foundation of Judaism. That is why, just as it later reversed itself and affirmed Jewish peoplehood, Reform Judaism will eventually reverse itself and reaffirm man-woman love, marriage and family.

For these are what this issue is all about. The issue is not about sympathy and compassion for homosexuals. Every decent person has compassion for homosexuals who are oppressed. And every one of us who knows the joy and profundity of loving and marrying feels compassion for people who feel incapable of making love to the opposite sex.

But compassion for the homosexual who has no choice is one thing, and dropping Judaism's heterosexual ideal is quite another.

The decision challenges one of the handful of truly essential values of Judaism and Western civilization. For three millennia, Judaism has fought to channel human sexuality into marriage. Do we continue this fight, or do we accept the notion that all non-coercive sexual activity is equally desirable?

I have spent a good part of the last half year researching and writing a 15,000-word manuscript, "Judaism, Homosexuality and Civilization," published this month in my quarterly journal, *Ultimate Issues*. In a lifetime of studying, writing and lecturing about Judaism I had never been so aware of the magnitude of Judaism's uniqueness. Except for its introduction of a universal, moral, supernatural God, nothing Judaism introduced into the world was as radically different, as unnatural and as anti-social as its prohibition of homosexuality.

My research opened my eyes to the incredible truth that historically it was not homosexuality but Judaism's prohibition of it that was truly deviant.

Man-boy love has been an accepted, even lauded feature of most civilizations. It dominated Greece, and has been an accepted norm in the Arab-Moslem world until the present century. Sir Richard Burton reported that the Chinese love of homosexuality was only equaled by their love of bestiality. Torah's prohibition of non-marital sex made the cre- of Western civilization possible. Societies that did not boundaries around sexuality remained undeveloped. Subsequent ascendancy of the Western world can, to a ant extent, be attributed to the sexual revolution initi- Judaism and later carried forward by Christianity.

WHEN JUDAISM SAID that the sexual instinct must be channeled into marriage, it literally changed history. When not channeled into marriage, sex domi- ciated and religion. Before Judaism, sex even domi- ciated religious life. Throughout the world, the gods all had sex her gods and engaged in both heterosexual and homo- relations with mortal men and women. Both homosex- heterosexual relations were religious rituals in most of old's religions until influenced by Western — that is, Christian — civilization.

of the most important consequences of Judaism's prohibition of homosexuality was the elevation of women. Wherever homosexuality was widely accepted, the position of women remained particularly low. Ancient Greece, Rome and all the classical scholars I read, held women in an inferior position, very much related to its celebration

Dennis Prager is coauthor of "The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism" and "The Reason for Anti-Semitism." A frequent commentator on KABC Radio in Los Angeles, he writes and lectures a quarterly journal on Judaism and society, *Ultimate Issues*. An expanded essay on "Judaism, Homosexuality and Civilization" appears in the latest issue. For information concerning it, write to *Ultimate Issues*, 6020 Washington Boulevard, Culver City, CA 90232.

A radical break with Jewish morality

By PINCHAS STOLPER

THE DECISION OF the Reform rabbinate to accept active homosexuals as rabbis has sent shock waves through the Jewish community. It represents a radical and irresponsible departure from Jewish morality and tradition, and will further exacerbate relationships between the Jewish community and the Reform movement.

This tragic move represents a radical tear in the fabric of the consensus of Jewishness, a propellant to further assimilation, a weak-kneed surrender to the basest and most destructive elements in American society. The inability of the Reform movement to resist the pressures of sexual libertarians manifests a lack of backbone and principle. The Reform compromise with homosexuality represents a break with Jewish tradition, placing Reform on an even steeper, more slippery slope that will lead to further dissolution and disintegration. The Torah's pronouncement, "Thou shalt not lie with a man as one lies with a woman: it is abomination," (Lev 18:22) has not and cannot be changed or abrogated.

It is the Torah that is the source of morality; it defines what is moral. The same Torah that forbids homosexuality also forbids adultery and perjury and advocates philanthropy, equal justice and respect for parents. If one accepts Judaism's moral law and intellectual honesty, then consistency requires acceptance of its more

Pinchas Stolper is executive vice president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America.

of male-male love. In Greece, as in much of the world, women were for procreation and boys were for sexual love. It was Judaism that initiated marital eroticism, and thereby singlehandedly made marriage more than a baby-producing arrangement.

That many feminists identify with gay liberation can only be explained by their lack of awareness as to how much women have suffered when men are not taught to control their erotic love to women, specifically to their wives. It is no coincidence that until the present era, the particularly low level of

Compassion for the homosexual is one thing. Dropping Judaism's heterosexual ideal is quite another.

women in the Arab and Moslem worlds has been accompanied by these cultures' widespread acceptance of male homosexuality.

So, too, it was Judaism that made the family the basic structure of society — and that is only possible when men and women are taught to confine their sexual behavior to their spouses. Marital sex is a Jewish ideal that made Western civilization possible, and family life has been one of the glories of Jewish history. It is sad beyond words that a normative Jewish movement has, with good intentions certainly, joined with those who no longer hold the marital sexual ideal.

The argument that homosexuals have no choice may be true in some cases: we simply do not know, as there is no evidence whatsoever that homosexuality is genetic. But even if a homosexual feels that he or she has no choice — and I honor that individual's feeling — the issue is irrelevant to the question of what ideal Judaism must uphold. Indeed, it is a Reform rabbi, Eugene Borowitz, who has stated it best: "To be a rabbi is not a Jewish right but a title bestowed as a special Jewish honor. [Rabbis] ought to set an example of Jewish ideals."

To cite a simple analogy, some overeaters have no choice

and less popular aspects alike.

The Reform movement long ago abandoned Halacha, the system of Jewish law based on the Torah that is the bedrock and foundation of Jewish life. They claimed that in place of the law, they would abide by "prophetic Judaism." But nothing is more basic to the message of the Prophets than the overarching values of family and sexual morality.

The Torah and the Prophets are filled with incidents and pronouncements, all of which instruct and sensitize to the repugnance with which the homosexual abomination is regarded. Anyone who purports to teach Judaism and be its spokesman and representative is obligated to uphold its standards, not publicly tear them down by flaunting their own immoral activity in the presence of the innocent.

The new Reform departure reflects moral bankruptcy and represents a betrayal of both the letter and spirit of Jewish tradition and morality. Its consequence will be to create a deeper rift between the Reform movement and all other Jews. It is one thing to be tolerant of a sinner in the hope that he will change his ways, but to set up role models, teachers and authorities who are themselves public violators of everything being Jewish stands for is a serious desecration.

Homosexual rabbis are a contradiction, an oxymoron. Such an individual and the movement that endorses him disregards principle and the eternal values Jews have regarded as sacred from time immemorial.

We know that Reform Jews want to be Jews. But being Jewish is more than a label — it calls for substance, responsibility, commitment and discipline.

but overeating, and we therefore certainly owe them our sympathy. But we do not need to hold that overeating is as good as eating healthfully. In the same way, we owe sympathy to homosexuals who have no choice (and this, too, I learned, is much more complex than generally believed — the majority of gay men and women have had sex with the opposite sex, and the many homosexuals who are bisexual obviously exercise sexual choice).

But we do not owe them agreement. Judaism has standards, and the moment you have standards some individuals will suffer. "Thou shalt not commit adultery" causes innumerable people who cannot have sex with their spouses to suffer. Shall we, then, drop the commandment against adultery? I have no desire to blame or attack these people who feel they have no choice but to engage in extramarital sex any more than I wish to blame or attack homosexuals who feel they have no choice. But in both instances I do want to retain Judaism's ideals.

And what will happen when a homosexual Reform rabbi brings his or her lover to temple on Shabbat? What will parents worshipping there tell their children when the children ask who that person is? Will the parents tell the truth? And, if so, aren't they then telling their children that Judaism finds homosexuality and sexual life outside of marriage perfectly ideal — ideal enough to be the way in which the rabbi acts? Or will the parents lie, and, if so, how can a movement ordain rabbis about whose lifestyles its members are ashamed to report to their children?

And what about incest? If loving sex between adults of the same sex is now Jewishly valid, why not loving sex between adult brothers and sisters? Once the heterosexual marital door is officially opened, where will it close?

With all good intentions, the Reform rabbinate voted to bestow the highest title in Judaism to Jews who publicly claim that same-sex love is as Jewish an ideal as man-woman love and marriage. That is, as many Reform rabbis who disagree with this decision have told me, the one great departure from Judaism in Reform life. It is not comparable to Reform Judaism's decision on patrilineal descent — that was a break with

(Continued on Page 35)



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

Alexander M. Schindler

September 13, 1990
23 Elul 5750

Mrs. A. A. Friedman
3040 Bransford Road
Augusta GA 30909

Dear Mrs. Friedman:

It was good of you to share your concerns regarding gay and lesbian rabbis with me. While this was initially passed by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, our lead rabbinic organization, I must note that it is an issue and resolution with which I fully concur.

The headlines in the news and the report of the discussion really do not convey the heartfelt and extended study which went into this report and resolution. I am enclosing herewith a copy of the full report to the CCAR. I believe a careful reading will help you to understand the position taken by the Reform rabbinate. I do not know if this will change your mind, but I am certain that it will provide new insights into the thinking which went into this matter.

With kindest greetings and every good wish for the New Year, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Mrs. A. A. Friedman
3040 Bransford Rd.
Augusta, Georgia 30909

*Edie -
Get copies
of CCAH Report
re: res. issue -
(Get a few extra
copies for future
use)*

August 30, 1996

Union of American Hebrew Congregations
Attn: Rabbi Alexander Schindler, as President
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

*Send back
one of
covering note*

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

I have learned that there is a trend toward letting homosexuals who pass the required registration become rabbis. I am very strongly opposed to this trend.

*Best
the
CCA handled*

A rabbi must be a leader and a spiritual guide. I, for one, cannot accept leadership from someone for whom I have no respect, and I have no respect for anyone who is a homosexual.

*the issue
although I
fully con-
cur with
it.*

The Torah says that those whom we now-a-days know as homosexuals are to be cast out of the congregation. Certainly God did not intend for such people to become congregational leaders. God's word is constant -- it is the same now as in biblical times.

*While to
read report in
core to
under-
stand*

From various conversations, I feel a majority of Southeastern Jews, perhaps of American Jews, think as I do.

*position
submitted
to the*

Sincerely,

(Mrs. A.A.) Betty Friedman

HEF/sgt



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

Alexander M. Schindler

August 20, 1990
29 Av 5750

State of Minnesota
Governor's Task Force on Gay and Lesbian Minnesotans
500 Bremer Tower
7th Place and Minnesota St.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

Dear Task Force Members:

In response to your letter of August 15, I am pleased to enclose herewith two resolutions passed by a General Assembly of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The first was passed in 1987, the second in 1989. I trust these will be of assistance to you.

In addition, I am enclosing herewith a copy of a speech which I delivered at a service for families and friends of people suffering from AIDS. I believe my words may be of interest to your group.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

encls.



STATE OF MINNESOTA

GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON GAY AND LESBIAN MINNESOTANS

ST PAUL 55101

August 15, 1990

Geraldine Sell, Chair.
Aids Task Force Mpls Schools

Rev. Leo Treadway, Vice Chair
Wingspan Ministry

Julie Andrzejewski, PhD.
St. Cloud State University

Willie Bridges
Hennepin County Attorney's Office

Stephen W. Cooper
MN Department of Human Rights

Fr. Edward Flahaven
Ramsey County Correctional Center

Mary M. Lofy
Lofy Associates

Jane McWilliams
MN League of Women Voters

Susan Mackay
US West Communications

Frank S. Rhame, MD
University of MN Hospitals & Clinic

Brian Rusche
Joint Religious Legislative Coalition

Honorable Allan H. Spear
MN State Senate

Lee Staples
American Indian Services, Inc.

Dear Leader of the Religious Community,

As members of the Religious Community Subcommittee of Governor Rudy Perpich's Task Force on Gay and Lesbian Minnesotans, we are writing to you because we are aware of your organization's past supportive statements regarding Human Rights Legislation for Gay and Lesbian individuals or other sexual minorities.

In an effort to update our record of religious community support on this matter, it would help us greatly if you could send us any statements/resolutions/printed materials that you and/or your organization might have issued on this subject since 1983. Copies of the last known effort to gather such position statements in Minnesota are enclosed.

Many developments have occurred in the lives of Gay and Lesbian Minnesotans in the last seven years. We welcome all statements that relate to human rights, sodomy law repeal, domestic partners protection, custody and visitation rights, adoption rights, or any other topic pertinent to the lives of Gay and Lesbian Minnesotans.

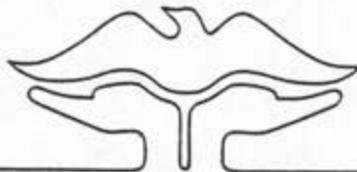
In order to complete our mandate on schedule, we would need to hear from you by September 15. Thank you so much for your quick response. Your collective statements will go a long way in helping us assess the true needs of Gays and Lesbians in the Religious Community.

Sincerely,

Task Force Members: The Reverend Cathy Ann Beaty, The Reverend Edward Flahaven, William C. Hunt, Richard Angukcuaq LaFortune, Susan Mackay, Jane McWilliams, Rabbi Stacy Offner, and Brian Rusche.

Enclosures (2)

Handwritten notes: 87 + 89, Reso., your la, spec?, Pastor?, OK, Staples



Wingspan

A Ministry With and On Behalf of Gay and Lesbian People.

ENDORSEMENTS FOR "HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION" FROM THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY REGARDING GAY and LESBIAN INDIVIDUALS:

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH:

- (1) National Federation of Priests' Councils (1974)
- (2) National Assembly of Religious Brothers (1977)
- (3) National Coalition of American Nuns (1974)
- (4) National Assembly of Women Religious (1978)
- (5) National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1975)
- (6) Archbishop John R. Roach, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (1978)
- (7) Priests' Senate of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (1978)

LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA (LCA):

- (1) Lutheran Church in America, Social Statement: "Sex, Marriage, and Family" (1970)
- (2) Bishop Herbert W. Chilstrom, Minnesota Synod, LCA, Pastoral Letter (1978)
- (3) Minnesota Synod Convention Resolutions (1978) and (1983)
- (4) Committee on Ministry To/With Gay and Lesbian Persons of the Minnesota Synod, LCA (1983)
- (5) Bishop Harold R. Lohr, Red River Valley Synod, LCA, Pastoral Letter (1983)

AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH (ALC):

- (1) Bishop Elmo Agrimson, Southeastern Minnesota District, ALC, Pastoral Letters (1978) and (1983)
- (2) American Lutheran Church, Statement of Comment and Counsel: "Human Sexuality and Sexual Behavior" (1980)

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MINNESOTA:

- (1) The Episcopal Church (1976)
- (2) Bishop Robert M. Anderson, Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota, Pastoral Letter (1978)
- (3) Bishop Robert P. Varley, Assistant Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota, (1981)
- (4) Commission on Social Action and Advocacy, Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota (1981)
- (5) Diocesan Sexuality Task Force, Final Report, Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota (1982)

MINNESOTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH:

- (1) Social Principles Statement, The United Methodist Church (1976)
- (2) Bishop Wayne K. Clymer, (previous bishop) Minnesota Annual Conference, Pastoral Letter (1978)
- (3) Bishop Emerson Colaw, (current bishop) Minnesota Annual Conference, Radio Interview, "Point of View," (1983)

MINNESOTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH (continued):

- (4) Statement by "Concerned United Methodist Clergy of Saint Paul" (1978)

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST:

- (1) Statement, 11th General Synod (1977)
- (2) Statement, 10th General Synod (1975)
- (3) Rev. Francis X. Pirazzina, (previous conference minister) Minnesota Conference, UCC, Pastoral Letter (1978)
- (4) Rev. Murdale C. Leysath (present conference minister) Minnesota Conference, UCC (1983)

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A.:

- (1) 190th General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA (1978)
- (2) Rev. Donald R. White (previous vice-moderator), Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area (1978)

THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHERN:

- (1) Study Document (1980)

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST):

- (1) General Assembly, Division of Homeland Ministries Resolution (1977)

THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA:

- (1) Study Document (1978)

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS):

- (1) Yearly Meeting Minutes (1973) and (1974)
- (2) Minneapolis Friends Meeting, Society of Friends (1978) and (1983)

ASSOCIATED UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST MINISTERS OF MINNESOTA:

- (1) Statement (1978)
- (2) Individual Statements (1983)

THE UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS (UAHC):

- (1) 54th Assembly (1977)
- (2) Individual Statements (1983)

AMERICAN BAPTISTS:

- (1) Rev. Wiley A. Kehrl, Field Minister, Regional Office, American Baptist Churches (1983)

Religious Community Endorsements

(Human Rights Legislation re: Gay and Lesbian Individuals)

NON-DENOMINATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

- (1) Minnesota Fellowship of Reconciliation (1978)
- (2) Minnesota Clergy and Laity Concerned (1978) and (1982)

GEOGRAPHICALLY IDENTIFIED RELIGIOUS BODIES/COUNCILS:

- (1) The National Council of the Churches of Christ (undated copy)
- (2) The Minnesota Council of Churches (1982)
- (3) The Social Justice Division, Greater Minneapolis Area Council of Churches (1983)

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS:

- (1) The Saint Paul Human Rights Commission (1983)
- (2) The Minneapolis Human Rights Commission (1983)
- (3) The Twin Cities Area Human Rights Coalition (1983)

GAY and LESBIAN RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS:

- (1) The Lesbian and Gay Interfaith Alliance, (a North American coalition), (1982)
- (2) The Lesbian and Gay Interfaith Council of Minnesota (1983)
- (3) Lutherans Concerned/North America, (national office) (1983)
- (4) Lutherans Concerned/Twin Cities Chapter (1983)
- (5) Integrity, Inc. (national office), (1983)
- (6) United Theological Seminary Gay and Lesbian Caucus (1983)
- (7) Wingspan: A Ministry With and On Behalf of Gay and Lesbian People (St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church) (1983)

GAY and LESBIAN RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS (ACTING IN SUPPORT THROUGH THE INTERFAITH ALLIANCE):National Organizations

- (1) Dignity, Inc. (1982) (Roman Catholic)
- (2) The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (1982)
- (3) The Unitarian Universalist Lesbian and Gay Caucus (1982)
- (4) The United Church of Christ Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (1982)
- (5) The World Congress of Jews (1982)
- (6) Heverim (Independent Jewish Congregation) (1982)
- (7) The Unitarian Universalist Office of Lesbian/Gay Concerns (1982)
- (8) Affirmation (United Methodists) (1982)
- (9) New Ways Ministry (Roman Catholic) (1982)
- (10) Axios (Eastern and Orthodox Christians) (1982)
- (11) Pentecostal Coalition for Human Rights (1982)
- (12) Seventh Day Adventists: Kinship (1982)
- (13) Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (Quakers) (1982)

LOCAL GAY and LESBIAN RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS (ACTING IN SUPPORT THROUGH THE INTERFAITH COUNCIL OF MINNESOTA):

- (1) Affirmation (United Methodists) (1983)
- (2) All God's Children Metropolitan Community Church (1983)
- (3) Beyt G-Vurah (1983)
- (4) Friends for Gay and Lesbian Concerns (Quakers) (1983)
- (5) Integrity, Inc. / Twin Cities Chapter (1983)
- (6) Presbyterians for Gay and Lesbian Concerns (1983)
- (7) Additional local gay/lesbian sensitive organizations:
 - (a) The United Christian Campus Center (Mankato, Minnesota) (1983)
 - (b) The Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities (Roman Catholic) (1983)

Prepared and updated by:

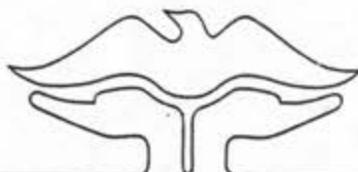
Leo Treadway,

Ministry Associate

St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church

(Wingspan Ministry)

December 1983



Wingspan

A Ministry With and On Behalf of Gay and Lesbian People.

ENDORSEMENT EXCERPTS FOR "HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION" FROM THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY REGARDING GAY and LESBIAN INDIVIDUALS:

(1) National Federation of Priests' Councils (March 1974):

"Whereas a significant minority in this country is homosexual in orientation and/or behavior; and whereas gay persons have been the target of severe discrimination by society and in particular by the legal branch and other arms of government. . . BE IT RESOLVED that the National Federation of Priests' Councils. . . express its opposition to homosexuality as such being the basis of discrimination in employment, governmental service, housing and child rearing involving natural or adoptive parents."

(2) National Assembly of Religious Brothers (June 1977):

"BE IT RESOLVED that the National Assembly of Religious Brothers (NARB) support gay men and women in their struggle for human rights and dignity."

(3) National Coalition of American Nuns (1974):

(Resolution) "It is immoral and should be illegal to discriminate against any person because of his or her sexual preference."

(4) National Assembly of Women Religious (August 1978):

"Whereas: Members of NAWR identify with those struggling for human rights and for the recognition of the dignity of all persons; Homosexual men and women are being subjected to persecution and oppression at this time in the United States; Church teaching has been interpreted many times to support this oppression.

"BE IT RESOLVED: NAWR members, as persons of the Church, are resolved to commit ourselves to the struggle of people in sexual minorities who are discriminated against by society and alienated from the Church.

"IMPLEMENTATION: . . . (2) SUPPORT--We will endorse the efforts of groups working for their gay civil rights. . . through direct communication with their leadership."

(5) National Conference of Catholic Bishops (November 1975):

"TO LIVE IN CHRIST JESUS" Some persons find themselves through no fault of their own

to have a homosexual orientation.

Homosexuals, like everyone else, should not suffer from prejudice against their basic human rights. They have the right to respect, friendship and justice. They should have an active role in the Christian community. Homosexual activity, however, as distinguished from homosexual orientation, is morally wrong."

(6) Archbishop John R. Roach, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (February 1978):

". . .The Catholic Community Recognizes and affirms the human dignity and worth of homosexuals as persons, and accordingly calls for the protection of their basic human rights. . . Both the Christian Tradition and our American nation are committed to the inviolable dignity of the human person. Some persons find themselves to be homosexual in orientation through no fault of their own. It is a matter of injustice when, due to prejudice, they must suffer violation of their basic human rights. Like all persons they have a right to human respect, stable friendships, economic security, and social equality. Social isolation, ridicule and economic deprivation of homosexual behavior is not compatible with basic social justice. Consequently, both religious and civic leaders must seek ways to assure homosexuals every human and civil right which is their due as persons. . ."

(7) Bishop Paul F. Anderson, Diocese of Duluth (April 1980):

"To deny basic human rights to any individual is contrary to what our system stands for. No human being should be excluded from protection of human rights. . .It is in the spirit of the Gospel and in the tradition of the social teaching of the Catholic Church that I urge you to express concern for people who experience life on the forgotten fringes of society, and to pass this ordinance so that basic human rights will not be denied any citizen in Duluth."

(8) Priests' Senate of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (1978):

"BE IT RESOLVED that we, the Priests' Senate of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, go on record as endorsing and supporting the present Human Rights Ordinance of St. Paul and supporting human and civil rights for all persons, regardless of affectional and sexual preference.

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we, the Priests' Senate of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, call upon our brother priests and all Catholics in the archdiocese, especially those in St. Paul, to support the present Human Rights Ordinance of St. Paul."

(9) Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland, Archdiocese of Milwaukee (March 1981):

". . .in good conscience support this legislation insofar as it bans discrimination because of sexual orientation in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations. . .it has also been consistent with Catholic teaching that homosexuals should not be deprived of their basic human rights. . ."

(10) The Lutheran Church in America; Social Statement. . . "Sex, Marriage, and Family" (June 1970):

"However, they (homosexuals) are often the special and undeserving victims of prejudice and discrimination in law, law enforcement, cultural mores, and congregational life. In relation to this area of concern, the sexual behavior of freely consenting adults in private is not an appropriate subject for legislation or police action. It is essential to see such persons as entitled to understanding and justice in church and community."

"The Lutheran Church in America calls upon the church, both as a corporate body and as individual members, to witness to the civic community in behalf of just laws and policies affecting sex, marriage, and family, and in behalf of legislation that will improve the economic and social conditions which influence the lifestyles of people."

(11) Bishop Herbert W. Chilstrom, Minnesota Synod of The Lutheran Church in America (February 1978):

". . . I believe that we must be in the forefront of those who speak for the rights of every citizen of the community, regardless of their personal relationship with the organized Church."

"The issue is the civil rights of homosexuals. It must be clearly established that we are not dealing with the question of homosexuality, but with the basic rights of some people who are homosexuals. I would encourage you to support the maintenance of a strong civil rights law which gives equal rights to homosexuals. This is consistent with the support of our Church for the basic rights of all people."

". . . The Lutheran Church in America shares the opinion of most major denominations in expressing pastoral care and understanding for homosexuals. A part of that care should include a concern for their basic human rights."

(12) Bishop Harold R. Lohr, Red River Valley Synod of The Lutheran Church in America (April 1983):

". . . we are talking about justice and freedom, not about approval or disapproval of a lifestyle. Our nation is one that was formed with the intention that people should have equal rights before the law. As you well know, we have some frightening examples of how such idealism has been violated in practice."

"I support legislation that acts against discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, familial status, or affectional or sexual orientation. I am equally affirmative about legislation that will provide sanctions against people who exercise violence against others in any of these categories."

(13) Minnesota Synod Convention, The Lutheran Church in America (June 1978):

"Therefore, BE IT RESOLVED: that the Minnesota Synod publicly declares the injustice done by the recent repeals of civil rights ordinances as related to homosexual people; and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call for the responsible use of all the scripture in the discussion of human rights; and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the church call upon city and state governments to take measures to assure that the human rights of all people are protected. . ."

(14) Minnesota Synod Convention, The Lutheran Church in America (June 1983):

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Minnesota Synod wishes to reaffirm its support for such legislation and to add its collective voice to those of other religious bodies and leaders advocating that such legislation be adopted which specifically; (a) adds lesbian women and gay men to the list of protected classes in the Minnesota State Human Rights Statute; (b) repeals statutes which impose criminal constraints upon the private sexual behavior of freely-consenting adults, thereby eliminating arbitrary enforcement and entrapment procedures encouraged by such statutes; and (c) increases protection for lesbian women, gay men and other minorities from harassment, threats, and assaults by increasing the penalties against criminal action in those areas."

(15) Bishop Robert S. Wilch, Wisconsin-Upper Michigan Synod, The Lutheran Church in America (April 1981):

". . . Along with the Bishops and leaders of other denominations I put my name on the following statement:

"We support equal protection of the law for all people, including full civil rights for persons of homosexual orientation. We support the recently passed Milwaukee ordinance banning discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation because it is consistent with such full legal protection and full civil rights for all people. As pastoral leaders in the community we ask for our constituencies to join us in this effort."

(16) The American Lutheran Church; A Statement on: "Human Sexuality and Sexual Behavior" (1980):

". . . Laws express society's recognition that sexual behavior affects not only the participants but also the health, strength, and survival of the society itself. Christians must beware, however, of equating sin with crime. . . Their concern must be for laws that foster justice, mercy, equality of opportunity, and the protection of basic human rights."

"Truth, mercy, and justice should impel members of congregations of The American Lutheran Church to review their attitudes, words, and actions regarding homosexuality. Christians need to be more understanding and more sensitive to life as experienced by those who are homosexual. They need to take leadership roles in changing public opinion, civil laws, and prevailing practices that deny justice and opportunity to any persons, homosexual or heterosexual. We all need recognition and acceptance as human beings known to and loved by God."

(17) Bishop Elmo Agrimson, Minnesota Southeastern District, The American Lutheran Church (February 1978):

". . . I think the ordinance as it now stands is a good one. It well defines what have long been held in America as central, basic human rights. . . I do not think that we should impose the complexities of religious and moral interpretation upon the issue of homosexuality in guaranteeing day to day human rights for a person seeking housing, employment, education and public accommodations. Amending the ordinance could become repressive, unloving and haphazard

in application. . .The American Lutheran Church has been specific in a commitment to uphold the rights of individuals regardless of the religious preference or lifestyle."

(18) Bishop A.C. Schumacher, Southern Wisconsin District, The American Lutheran Church (April 1981):

" . . .you may use the following which is the statement which Wisconsin Conference of Churches asked jurisdictions which care to support the Bill to so authorize. Our District Council concurs and asked me to indicate such support:

'Our District Council has authorized me to indicate support for Assembly Bill #70 (which grants human rights protection to lesbians and gay men--clarification added).'"

(19) The Episcopal Church, General Convention (1976):

" . . .homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection of the laws with all other citizens" and the Convention further called upon "our society to see that such protection is provided in actuality."

"It is the sense of this General Convention that homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church."

(20) Bishop Robert M. Anderson, Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota (March 1978):

"As your Bishop, with the advice and counsel of other clergy and lay people, I want to add my voice with other church leaders and make a clear public commitment to uphold the present Ordinance. The Ordinance is a good one and defines well the basic human rights that we all cherish as American citizens." (made in reference to the maintenance of the Saint Paul Human Rights Ordinance which included lesbians and gay men as one of the protected classes).

" . . .In any case, this is a highly emotional issue that tends to create heated controversy and deep misunderstanding and hurt on all sides. There will be the tendency to confuse the human rights issue with moral and theological issues. . .it seemed proper to me that I take a firm stand for the civil rights of all our citizens."

(21) Bishop Robert P. Varley, Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota (November 1981):

" . . .the area of Gay Rights is a pressing issue. . .with legislation pending for 1982 there is a real need for input to support this legislation on the part of Church leaders."

(22) Commission on Social Action and Advocacy, Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota (February 1981):

The Study Group on Homosexuality issued a report to the full Commission urging their support for (a) the inclusion of lesbians and gay men in the Minnesota Human Rights Act as a

protected class; and (b) the repeal of existing Minnesota Statutes relating to sodomy, fornication, and adultery. Both recommendations were APPROVED by the Commission at their meeting on 19 February 1981.

(23) Sexuality Task Force, Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota (February 1982):

From the Final Report of the Sexuality Task Force: "There remain several matters of injustice in the lives of homosexual persons, ranging from the abuse of civil rights to Minnesota Statutes (e.g. #609.293) which are grossly unfair. We recommend that the Commission on Social Action and Advocacy be charged to convey such issues to all Episcopalians, and that this diocese publicly do whatever is possible to support equal justice for all."

(24) Bishop Charles T. Gaskell, The Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee (February 1981):

"Our position on matters of non-discrimination because of sexual orientation reflects the traditional moral theology of this branch of Christendom, known as the Episcopal Church. And in our own Diocesan Councils in recent years we have affirmed the principle of non-discrimination in resolutions passed with regard to the pastoral approach to our brethren of this orientation. Please know that this bill has the fullest support, both of the Bishop of the Diocese and its constituency."

(25) Bishop William C. Wantland, The Episcopal Diocese of Eau Claire (March 1981):

". . .the Church calls on all of us to protect the civil rights of all persons, regardless of sexual orientation. . .quoting the House of Bishops in their 1977 statement: 'With dismay and with shock we note the deprivation of civil rights and the development of mass hysteria in parts of the country directed against people known as homosexuals. The same Gospel which persuades us that homosexuality is not an acceptable practice for Christians also compels us to treat every person of any sexual orientation as a child of God, entitled to our pastoral concern and guaranteed his or her civil rights.'"

"In the light of this clear moral imperative, we urge your support. . .as a proper statement of Gospel teaching, consonant with the moral theology of Our Lord's Church, and acceptable to the proclaimed doctrine of the Church."

(26) The United Methodist Church; from The Book of Discipline (1976):

"Homosexuals no less than heterosexuals are persons of sacred worth, who need the ministry and guidance of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship which enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. Further, we insist that all persons are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured."

(27) Bishop Wayne K. Clymer, the Annual Conference of Minnesota, the United Methodist Church (February 1978):

" . . . I think that it is not necessary for me to reiterate the position of The United Methodist Church on this issue. The practice of homosexuality is rejected as normative sexual relations. But that is not at issue. It is exceedingly dangerous procedure to deny the civil rights of persons on the grounds that we disapprove of their manners. This is not only a violation of democracy; it is an affront to Christian respect for persons."

(28) Bishop Emerson Colaw, the Annual Conference of Minnesota, the United Methodist Church (1983):

"In most facets of society, they (homosexuals) have been persecuted. . . attacks on homosexuals have been used for fundraising appeals. I believe, however, that the Church must work to protect their legal and civil rights, because no group has more rights than those assured to the least minority. And if society can take away the rights of the gay and lesbian, they can take away your rights and mine. We do assure them (homosexuals) of our commitment to their civil rights, and an openness to dialogue as we search for the mind of Christ as revealed by the Holy Spirit."

(29) Statement by "Concerned United Methodist Clergy of Saint Paul" (April 1978):

"You are not being asked to vote on whether or not you support a homosexual life style. The present ordinance does not condemn or promote the homosexual viewpoint. The issue before you is Civil Rights. The question you will be asked to decide is whether or not persons who are qualified for jobs or education or housing shall be discriminated against on the basis of "affectional or sexual preference".

(30) Bishop Marjorie S. Matthews, The United Methodist Church, Wisconsin Area (April 1981):

" . . . as an elected Bishop assigned to the Wisconsin Conference of the United Methodist Church, I personally support the proposed legislation (which would extend human rights protection to lesbians and gay men), and urge its consideration by members of the Wisconsin State Legislature."

(31) The United Church of Christ; A Statement (1977) Reaffirming an earlier Statement (1975):

"There is, in the United States, a significant minority of persons whose civil liberties, and whose right to equal protection under the law, are systematically and routinely violated. Discrimination related to affectional or sexual preference in employment, housing, public accommodations, and other civil liberties, has inflicted an incalculable burden of fear into the lives of persons in society and in the church whose affectional or sexual preference is towards persons of the same gender."

"Public revelation of even a single experience often results in the presumption that a person is same-gender-oriented and thus subject to social sanctions including violations of her or his civil liberties. Even the civil liberties of persons whose affectional or sexual preference is a well-guarded secret is vulnerable."

"In faithfulness to that biblical and historic mandate, we hold that, as a child of God, every person is endowed with worth and dignity that human judgment cannot set aside. Denial and violation of the civil liberties of the individual and her or his right to equal protection under the law defames that worth and dignity and is, therefore, morally wrong. Our Christian faith requires that we respond to the injustice in our society manifested in the denial and violation of the civil liberties of persons whose affectional or sexual preference is toward persons of the same gender."

". . . recognizing that a person's affectional or sexual preference is not legitimate grounds on which to deny her or his civil liberties, the Tenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ proclaims the Christian conviction that all persons are entitled to full civil liberties and equal protection under the law."

"Further, the Tenth General Synod declares its support for the enactment of legislation at the federal, state, and local levels of government that would guarantee the civil liberties of all persons without discrimination related to affectional or sexual preference."

"Further, the Tenth General Synod calls upon the congregations, Associations, Conferences, and Instrumentalities of the United Church of Christ to work for the enactment of such legislation at the federal, state, and local levels of government, and authorize the Secretary of the United Church of Christ to commend this Pronouncement to the Conferences for distribution by them to their respective state legislators and representatives in the Congress of the United States."

(32) Rev. Francis X. Pirazzini, Conference Minister, Minnesota Conference, The United Church of Christ (February 1978):

". . . the issue at stake in St. Paul is not the nature of homosexuality. . . the issue is one of civil rights and the recognition that the denial of the civil rights of homosexuals is rooted in prejudice. Quite apart from the Christian belief in the inestimable value of every person, there either is justice for all or there is justice for none. The preservation of democracy demands the defense of the basic human rights for all persons. . . It is never easy to stand for love and justice when fear and ignorance motivate persons to take unloving and unjust positions."

(33) Rev. Murdale C. Leysath, Conference Minister, Minnesota Conference, The United Church of Christ (March 1983):

"National level agencies in the U.C.C. have been consistent in their support of civil rights for all persons, including homosexuals. We are on record by those bodies in regard to employment opportunity "forbidding discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, or disabilities." "As a member of the United Church of Christ I support these actions and urge the Minnesota Legislature to pass the current legislation being considered on civil rights for gay and lesbian persons."

(34) Rev. Ralph P. Ley, Conference Minister, Wisconsin Conference of The United Church of Christ (April 1981):

"While we may not condone or support some of the activities of certain sexual preferences of lifestyles, we do firmly insist on civil liberties and equal protection under the law for all citizens."

"The Commission of Social Concerns of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ has reaffirmed this stance of our denomination and urges the enactment of legislation that provides this civil liberty and equal protection under the law for all citizens of Wisconsin."

(35) United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America; 190th General Assembly (1978):

"Therefore, the 190th General Assembly (1978) of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America offers the presbyteries the following directive guidance:

'13. Calls upon United Presbyterians to work for the passage of laws that prohibit discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations based on the sexual orientation of a person.'"

(36) Rev. Donald R. White, Vice-moderator of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (April 1978):

"Whatever may be the moral position of any Christian, Jew, or non church participant on homosexuality as a lifestyle, the issue before you is simply human rights. There are two basic moral principles that have been handed down to us by our national forebears: (a) No religious or moral point of view ought to be established and required of us all. (b) Each and every citizen ought to be accorded equal protection under law."

"It seems certain to me as a Christian minister and as an American citizen that the civil rights of homosexuals must be protected and that the St. Paul Human Rights ordinance, prohibiting discrimination in many ways, including and in this case especially affectional or sexual preference, must be continued. Too many have sacrificed too much in our national history to permit the rights of homosexuals to be abrogated by either our inaction or our confusion about the issue. . ."

(37) Rev. Carl R. Simon, Executive Presbyter, The Presbytery of Milwaukee, The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (March 1981):

"Vigilance must be exercised to oppose federal, state, and local legislation that discriminates against persons on the basis of sexual orientation and to initiate and support federal, state, and local legislation that prohibits discrimination against persons on the basis of sexual orientation in employment, housing, and public accommodations."

(38) Rev. Verne E. Sindlinger, Executive Presbyter, The Winnebago Presbytery, The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (August 1981):

" . . . the national judicatory of my denomination has taken the strong stand in support of legislation which would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation of individuals in the areas of employment, housing and public accommodations. "

"In addition to expressing the position of the United Presbyterian Church, I am expressing my own personal support for this legislation and requesting that you support it with your voice and your vote. "

(39) The Church of The Brethern; Study Document (1980):

"Likewise, homophobia (irrational fear of or condemnation of homosexuals) is destructive of persons whom Gods loves. Homosexuals are human beings. Each of them is unique. They ought not to be stigmatized as a group and attacked en masse. Hostile attitudes in society and in the church create irrational fears, contempt, injustice and discrimination. Homosexuals are entitled to jobs, housing and other human rights. "

(40) The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), General Assembly (October 1977):

"Therefore BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, October 21-26, 1977, while neither approving of nor condemning homosexuality, urge the passage of legislation on local, state and national levels which will end the denial of civil rights and the violation of civil liberties for reasons of sexual orientation or preference, and calls upon its members to advocate and support the passage and maintenance of such legislation. "

(41) The Reformed Church in America; Study Document (1978):

"Approval of the homosexual orientation or acts is not a prerequisite to firm support of basic civil rights for homosexual persons. While we cannot affirm homosexual behavior, at the same time we are convinced that the denial of human and civil rights to homosexuals is inconsistent with the biblical witness and Reformed theology. "

(42) The Society of Friends (Quakers); Yearly Meeting Minutes:

" . . . wishes to minute its deep sense of outrage at the injustice being perpetrated against homophiles and homophile establishments. " (1973 - Pacific)

"We urge Friends to put new energy into the struggle to end the oppression, often unconscious, that is imposed on people because of their sex or their sexual orientation. . . The myths about bisexuality and homosexuality, the myths that perpetuate deep rooted discrimination, need to be dispelled. . . " (1973 - Baltimore)

"Although we neither approve nor disapprove of homosexuality, the same standards under

the law which are applied to heterosexual activities should also be applied to homosexual activities."

"Since persons who engage in homosexual activities suffer serious discrimination in employment, housing, and the right to worship, we believe that civil rights laws should protect them. In particular we advocate the revision of all legislation imposing disabilities and penalties upon homosexual activities." (1973 - Philadelphia)

"Homosexual and bisexual people in this society are subject to serious discrimination in many areas. . . Civil rights should be extended to protect homosexuals and bisexual people just as they now protect other groups which suffer discrimination. We urge Friends and Friendly organizations to work for appropriate legislation." (1974 - Illinois)

"Three and one half years ago, the City of Saint Paul went on public record in support of human rights for all people, regardless of affectional or sexual preference. . . This ordinance has served as a deterrent against discrimination. . . Because of our belief in that of God in every person, Friends have historically affirmed the basic worth of all people, and have strived to achieve human rights for everyone. We believe that the current human rights ordinance reflects St. Paul's commitment to human rights, should be continued, and that its repeal would have a divisive effect on the entire Twin Cities community." (Minneapolis - 1978)

(43) Unitarian Universalist Association:

"The Associated Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Minnesota affirm the democratic principle of equal rights for all persons. We oppose repeal of any portion of St. Paul's Human Rights Ordinance. This ordinance forbids discrimination in employment, public accommodations and services, education, and housing, on the grounds of race, creed, religion, color, sex, national origin or ancestry, affectional or sexual preference, age, or disability. We hold that such discrimination is unconstitutional, immoral, and destructive of inherent human rights and dignity." (Minnesota - 1978)

"We as Unitarian Universalist ministers in the Milwaukee area, affirm our support for legislation that would ban discrimination in housing, employment, and public funding on the basis of sexual or affectional orientation." (Milwaukee - 1981)

(44) The Union of American Hebrew Congregations (November 1977):

"BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection of the law. We oppose discrimination against homosexuals in areas of opportunity, including employment and housing. We call upon our society to see that such protection is provided in actuality."

"Be it further resolved that we affirm our belief that private sexual acts between consenting adults are not the proper province of government and law enforcement agencies."

(45) Rabbi Leigh Lemer, Mount Zion Temple, Saint Paul (March 1983):

"I favor legislation which would make it a criminal act to discriminate against persons

on the basis of sexual preference. This is a logical and necessary extension of civil rights which our society must undertake to do today."

(46) Rabbi Norman M. Cohen, Temple Bet Shalom, St. Louis Park (March 1983):

"As a rabbi and religious leader, I feel compelled to lend my support to those who are making serious efforts to help effect legislative action in favor of human rights, against violence, and to protect the personal privacy of every individual."

"My tradition, Judaism, exhorts all human beings to do whatever is humanly possible to protect the dignity and value and quality of human life. Appropriate legislation can do more toward that end than many other vehicles combined."

(47) The National Council of Churches of Christ:

"Therefore every person is entitled to equal protection under the law. For this reason the National Council of the Churches of Christ has endeavored to insure for all persons regardless of race, class, sex, creed, or place of national origin their full civil rights. To this list the Governing Board now adds affectional or sexual preference. Discrimination based on any of those criteria is morally wrong. Many persons, including some of the members and pastors of some of our churches, have been and are being deprived of their civil rights and full and equal protection of the law because of their affectional or sexual preference."

"THEREFORE:

- (1) The Governing Board reiterates the Christian conviction that all persons are entitled to full civil rights and equal protection and to the pastoral concern of the church.
- (2) The Governing Board urges its member churches and their constituencies to work to ensure the enactment of legislation at the national, state, and local levels that would guarantee the civil rights of all persons without regard to their affectional or sexual preferences."

(48) The Minnesota Council of Churches: "Statement on Ministry To and With Gay and Lesbian Persons (September 1982):

"BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The Minnesota Council of Churches publicly go on record urging that legislation be introduced into the Minnesota State Legislature which would provide human rights protection for lesbians and gay men in all the categories in which protection currently exists for other groups, and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT: The Minnesota Council of Churches utilize available channels and vehicles to encourage the adoption of such legislation, and the placement of such legislation on the agenda for the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition and Minnesota IMPACT."





RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

September 24, 1990
5 Tishri 5751

Solomon H. Friend
Friend, Marks & Schlusel
1010 Northern Boulevard
Great Neck, NY 11021

Dear Sol:

I appreciate your lengthy response of September 14th.

I am afraid that this is an issue on which we will have to disagree agreeably.

As I told you, I wasn't at the Rabbinic Conference and so did not participate in its deliberations. Nor did I serve on the committee which had studied the matter over the past four years and whose report was finally accepted. I suspect though, had I been there I would have voted with what was the preponderant majority of our colleagues present.

To add just a few grains for the grist of your thought processes, not in the hope of changing your mind, but to help you understand me better.

1. With respect to the men and women who served on the committee and who grappled with this issue over the years. It was not a "stacked" committee by any manner or means. Many of its members began the process from a position not unlike yours and were ultimately swayed by what they learned. Their moral authority is something which sways me too.

2. I reject the notion that homosexuality is volitional and therefore I reject the idea that children can be persuaded to follow a homosexual lifestyle. Why is it that most of the children adopted by homosexual partners, be they male or female, turn out to be heterosexual in their orientation?

September 24, 1990

3. The view of rabbis as a role model is perforce narrow. No rabbi can represent in his being everything that we wish to convey to others. You say that Judaism stands for heterosexual relationships in which reproduction of the species is possible. True! But that leaves many rabbis who are not homosexuals also out of the model role. Single rabbis, divorced rabbis or rabbis whose wives are barren. Should they be excluded from consideration?

4. The forthcoming issue of Reform Judaism will carry an article by Janet Marder who attended the Conference session. It is an objective piece which will present precisely what transpired there. I urge you to read it with care.

Be all this as it may, I agree with your declaration that the ultimate test of friendship is that it can weather a divergence of views. You know of course that I, too, respect you, have always regarded you as a friend, and I am proud of the fact that you regard me as such.

Fondly,

Alexander M. Schindler

Handwritten signature



July 3, 1990
10 Tammuz 5750

Mr. Mark Leggett
2240 C Rome Drive
Indianapolis, IN 46208

Dear Mr. Leggett:

Thank you for your words of appreciation for the recent resolution passed by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. It was good of you to share your thoughts with me in this connection.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

2240 L Rome Dr.
Indianapolis, IN
46208

President
Union of American
Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Ave.
NY, NY 10021

6/29/90

Dear Friend-

I would like to applaud your group's recent decision to admit practicing homosexuals to the rabbinate. How refreshingly judicious and nurturing. I hope my Christian brethren will learn from you.

Peace,

Mark Leggett
Mark Leggett

Hanson

July 9, 1990
16 Tammuz 5750

Mr. Lionel Friedman
Bayt Hazon
Kfar Hanoach, Israel

Dear Mr. Friedman:

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with me.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Bayt Hazon: Kfar Haroch
Israel
June 25, 1990

My dear Dr. Schindler,

I had always believed that the 1's-nicks were hidden from mortal sight - until you discovered Mandela.

Henry Siegman, et al., rushed off ^{the} pre-conditions your hero, but failed despite Siegman's intense Gemorrah' background.

Marc Tannenbaum, with somewhat less Talmudic study, may yet nominate the Pope for #2 'cause he, too, kissed Arafat.

I had understood that Reform stressed social action over ritual but who has probed his (Mandel's) heart to find out why he openly supports those who help the A.N.C. despite their appalling human rights records. This is social justice? I acknowledge his heroic struggle + almost martyr dom for his people; but what about my people?

A neighbor asked me how you discovered the secret of the 1's. After all, reformers are for evolution - not revelation.

On the radio 'SEN is learned each day: ^{9:20} was learned the day radio reported your church address...

20:25 IT is a snare for a man rashly to say.

Holy

And afterwards commitments to make inquiry

Sadly,
Lionel Friedman

Handwritten signature

June 14, 1990
21 Sivan 5750

Rabbi Frank Stern
2625 North Tustin Avenue
Santa Ana, CA 92705

Dear Frank:

I have your letter of June 5th. Unfortunately, I will not be in Seattle. I have to be in Israel attending the meetings of the Jewish Agency. Its grants for the movement in Israel are at stake, and as a consequences it is my prior obligation.

You ought to know, however, that I fully support the report of the CCAR Committee. It represents the culmination of four years of labor from people coming from disparate backgrounds, each of them anguishing over the problem, and I think that their position is fair and merits support.

This does not at all mean that it will be divisive. As a matter of fact, I raised this issue, at least marginally, in terms of congregations at our regional Biennial. I do not know if you were there or not, but I enclose a copy of my Presidential Address, and you might want to read my comments on this score.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

encl.

bu top

RABBI FRANK STERN
2625 N. TUSTIN AVENUE
SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA 92705

June 5, 1990

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 5th Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

I am sending you the enclosed letter from one of the members of my congregation.

Making the issue of homosexuality in the rabbinate public has engendered considerable debate at Temple Beth Sholom. Most congregants respond negatively to the possibility that the homosexual should be regarded just like all other persons and should be ordained as rabbis.

I look forward to seeing you in Seattle. Perhaps we will find a way to deal with this issue in a fashion that is not so divisive.

Cordially,



Rabbi Frank Stern

RFS/zk

Encl.

Frederick Herzig
700 North Rexford Drive
Beverly Hills, California 90210
May 26, 1990

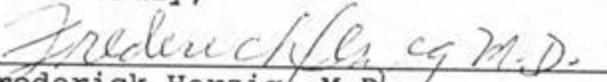
Rabbi Frank Stern, Ph.D.
Temple Beth Sholom
2625 Tustin Avenue
Santa Ana, Ca. 92705

Dear Rabbi:

I was shocked to read that the Reform Movement is suggesting that homosexuals could be ordained as rabbis! The torah forbids this! Please use your influence among your colleagues to see that this is defeated. I sincerely feel this could greatly harm the reform movement.

I have enjoyed our past friendship, and hope this finds you well.

Yours truly,


Frederick Herzig, M.D.

Leviticus

Achre Mot: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind; it is an abomination."

P.S.: If Rabbi Alexander Schindler is still the head of the Reform Movement, and you think it would do any good, would you send him a copy of this letter?

Amos

June 5, 1990
12 Sivan 5750

Donald M. Pomeranz, D.D.S.
Doctors Park
Weymouth Rhymer Highway
St. Thomas, VI 00802

Dear Dr. Pomeranz:

As Rabbi Schindler is out of the city for an extended period of time, I am responding to your letter of June 1. I know Rabbi Schindler will be grateful for your gracious comments concerning his address at the AIDS service held at Leo Baeck Temple some months ago. And, of course, he will certainly understand the inner struggle you are having in regard to the Ordination of homosexuals.

Your letter, however, should have been directed to the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the rabbinic arm of the Reform movement. The recent press report dealt with the work of a committee of the CCAR, not the UAHC. Thus, I am taking the liberty of forwarding your letter to the Executive Vice President of the Conference, Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser, so he is apprised of your concerns.

With kindest greetings and every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Edith J. Miller
Assistant to the President

cc: Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser



Doctors Park

Donald M. Dameranz, D.D. & P.C.
Doctors Park Weymouth Rhymer Highway St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands 00802

Kenneth J. Kliever, D.D. &
Telephone (809) 775-1826

June 1, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

I write to you today with a problem and a heavy heart because I am in turmoil. I read in the newspaper recently about the Reform movement's consideration of allowing homosexuals to be in the Rabbinate.

It may sound trite but many people I know and enjoy as acquaintances and professionally, even members of my immediate family, are homosexual. These people have made a choice, and for some I imagine a painful choice in the beginning, to conduct their life as they wish. It is their life and their decision. I respect that.

Every person must draw their own lines and come to conclusions about what he or she thinks is right and wrong, morally, ethically, and professionally. I read your address at the Leo Baeck Temple for the service of remembrance for the people who died from AIDS or related complications. I was moved to tears and feel as you do that we should never give up hope and that we must "maintain a struggle for the integrity of selfhood."

I am deeply troubled by my negative reaction to the consideration before the committee of the UAHC. I am troubled because of my negativism. My initial gut reaction after reading the newspaper article then and now is a most definitive "no". This must not be allowed to happen.

I have had to finally draw my own line. Quite frankly I've never had to draw the line about homosexuality before. My terms for deciding this way are simplistic. I have always learned that a rabbi is a teacher. The rabbi is more than a teacher of Judaism but a teacher about life itself.

Defining normal is almost impossible. It does seem to me, however, that it is part of God's design, surely a design of

evolution that heterosexuality is the way life is intended to be. I think that a Rabbi must be heterosexual to be able to honestly teach our children what I consider to be normal sexual behavior. I know, "who am I to say what is normal sexual behavior?"

Our world is troubled enough. I do not think that we should show the world that homosexual preference should be allowed at the Rabbinic level of Reform Judaism. There are many other ways to fulfill one's life that a gifted, sensitive, intelligent Jewish person can dedicate his or her life to. I must agree with our Conservative and Orthodox brethren that the Rabbinate is not the position for the homosexual person to be in.

I urge you and your colleagues to consider as deeply as possible that there are probably a good number of Reform Jews who would not welcome a change in the Rabbinate. This letter has been difficult to write because many of my friends and family would be deeply hurt by my remarks. I feel, however, that this is the wrong direction for the Reform Movement to take. I have felt strongly enough about this to have taken pen in hand in spite of my conflict and let you know how I feel.

Sincerely,

Donald M. Pomeranz

VALLEY PEDIATRIC ASSOCIATES, P.A.

file (on this
issue)

9199 Reisterstown Road
Owings Mills, Maryland 21117
(301) 363-6380

M. Larrie Blue, M.D.
Boris L. O'Mansky, M.D.
Michael D. Blum, M.D.
Kirk D. Cylus, M.D.

Homosexual

May 12, 1990

Dear David,

It has been several weeks since Rabbi Schindler sent me the copy of the letter you sent him concerning the resolution on gay and lesbian Jews. I am sorry that it has taken me so long to respond, but I wanted to check a number of resources. The delay also allows me to respond to the correspondence between you and Mike Rankin. I was not involved in writing the resolution, but I did agree with the statistics when they were quoted to Rabbi Schindler at an earlier time.

I have done a literature search through the library at Sinai Hospital; contacted the National Institutes of Mental Health, The American Medical Association, The American Academy of Pediatrics, and The Gay and Lesbian National Task Force; and spoken to a number of people in, among other fields, psychology and adolescent medicine, and to Dr. John Money at Johns Hopkins Hospital, a highly respected physician in the field of human sexuality.

As you may imagine, statistics on the incidence of homosexuality are difficult to come by. Almost everyone approached uses a figure of ten percent for males and five percent for females and refers back to the work of Kinsey, published in 1948. Even though Kinsey's survey of more than 6,000 adolescents and adults was very carefully done, it is easy to understand that any error would be in under reporting of homosexuality.

Kinsey's data does reveal a figure of four percent of white males exclusively homosexual throughout their lives. It further states that eight percent of males are exclusively homosexual for at least three years between sixteen and fifty-five, and ten percent of males are more or less exclusively homosexual for at least three years between sixteen and fifty-five. Two other findings are of interest. Twenty-five percent of males have more than incidental homosexual experiences or reactions for at least three years between sixteen and fifty-five, and thirty-seven percent of males have at least some overt homosexual experience to the point of orgasm between adolescence and old age.

The ten percent figure for male homosexuality is probably low. Dr. Money states that he considers all bisexual men predominately homosexual. This is probably why those in the field give the ten percent figure. In our calculations, we used a figure of seven and a half percent, reflecting an incidence of ten percent for males and five

percent for females. We estimated the number of Reform Jews as one and one half million. The number of gay and lesbian Reform Jews would thus be one hundred and twelve thousand, five hundred, but we rounded it off to a lower figure. I see no reason not to include children because they have not yet become sexually active. Their numbers should be the same as others when they become active, and no one attempts to remove the large number of adults who are not sexually active due to age, chronic disease, personal choice, etc. Finally, there are no studies I could find to show that Jews are more or less likely to be homosexual.

Thus, after two weeks of research, I find no reason to change our figures. I do regret that you interpret Mike's letter to imply that there is justification for overstating numbers and that, therefore, he may have done this in his original correspondence to Rabbi Schindler. There is nothing that I have found in my extensive search to suggest that the figure for Reform Jews should be anything less than one hundred thousand. If a religious school class in our Movement is dealing with human sexuality, I believe that the figures of ten percent for males and five percent for females should be used.

I am a little disturbed, David, about your statement "to influence these young men and women to lead heterosexual lives", when talking about the youth of our Movement. I believe it is very important to understand that no one knows why some people are homosexual. There have been, and still are, many hypotheses. However, I do not know of any respected researcher who is stating that this is a matter of personal choice, and that one may decide whether to be homosexual or heterosexual. There are, of course, isolated reports from the past of people being "cured" of their homosexuality through intensive psychiatric care, but these probably represent men who claim to be "cured" to appease their family, and then go on to lead their homosexual life in private.

Now, as to actually influencing our young people to live heterosexual lives, I would like to offer three comments. 1. I do not know of anyone who claims to have developed an educational program that can influence the young person as to their sexual orientation. Since no one understands why an individual is homosexual, it seems unlikely that any such program could be developed. 2. Any educational program offered in our religious school that implies that heterosexuality is good and homosexuality is bad would be a total disaster for many reasons. There are many members of our congregations who have children or other close relatives who are homosexual. There are leaders of our Movement who have children who are homosexual. I am certain that they and many others would find this teaching to be most offensive. 3. Now I would like to offer what I consider to be the most important reason for not trying to teach that heterosexuality is good and homosexuality is bad, as your letter implies. I personally find this type of presentation to be morally reprehensible. I have never judged a person

by his/her sexual orientation, and hope that I never will. I do not know why a person is homosexual, but I find that to be of no importance. If one chooses to he/she may read about the prohibition of homosexuality in Leviticus. However, just as in some other areas of literal readings of the Torah, most Reform Jews seem to have examined this passage and rejected it. I think you will find the previous UAHC resolutions on the topic of homosexuality most accepting. If at any time in the future someone tries to introduce a message to our young people in Reform Judaism that we must try to influence our young people to be heterosexual, I would fight it with every ounce of energy that I have. Knowing of your great caring and sensitivity, having served under you on the Outreach Commission, I would only hope someday in the future you would join with me in that fight.

I will be more than happy to meet with you in Seattle at any convenient time. I look forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,

Bo

Bo O'Mansky

c.c. Rabbi Alexander Schindler

Robert Rankin, M.D.



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

May 18, 1990
23 Iyar 5750

Alexander M. Schindler

Dr. Robert M. Rankin
5 Red Rock Way
San Francisco, CA

Dear Mike:

I really don't know what to say about David. He is an extremely difficult person, and stiffnecked. Once he gets hold of a particular issue, he tends not to let go.

Just the same, of course, he is very much devoted to many of the causes which we represent and is generous in lending not just his material resources, but his extraordinary gifts of heart and spirit.

Human relations are his main difficulty, and because of that his ability to advance to highest office both in the Union and in the World Union was frustrated, which is a pity because he really has so much to offer.

I think that it is important that you continue your conversations with him. I, too, felt that a four way meeting was not in order and I have already written him that I will be entirely too busy to make it. Too many things attendant upon the Board Meeting, etc. But you might have a brief chat with him since you both will be in Seattle, and continue the process of "education." I don't think it should be limited to written communication because in these things, establishing a personal relationship often is more effective in changing attitudes.

I look forward to seeing you in Seattle.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Outpatient Clinic

2221 Martin Luther
King Jr Way
Oakland CA 94612
May 8, 1990



Department of
Veterans Affairs

See top

In Reply Refer to:

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Dr. Boris O'Mansky
New York
Pikesville

Dear Rabbi and Bo,

And so the dialogue continues.

I know it's important to reach out to individuals like David Belin. He is influential in Des Moines, and in Reform Judaism. Whether he knows it or not, there are gay men and lesbians in his city, his synagogue, possibly even in his law practice. I want them to be treated fairly and with respect, and this is the reason I want to keep the communication open. I'm not sure a formal meeting with the four of us present would be helpful. I'd rather we just get to know each other through these letters, and through our working together on Union committees and such. Maybe I can reach him, maybe not. But I'll keep trying. I'd welcome your advice and insights.

The dialogue is important, but in a way it's like arguing with the National Rifle Association, or the Council for Judaism in the 1950's. The answers are so obvious that one wonders why there has to be an argument at all. That's not the real world, though, is it.

My best to both of you. I'll see you in Seattle.

Sincerely,

Mike

5 Red Rock Way
San Francisco, CA
May 7, 1990

David W. Belin, Esq.
2000 Financial Center
Des Moines, IA

Dear Mr. Belin,

Thank you for your letter of May 4. I am afraid, however, that we are still in substantial disagreement on several points.

You say in paragraph one, Mr. Belin, that "experts with whom I have talked do not agree that these figures are accurate nor do they agree that they have been generally accepted by experts in the field, including psychoanalysts. They believe the figures are substantially lower." May I ask why they believe the figures to be substantially lower? If their figures are accurate, and their research sound, I will be convinced. Because I value the truth as much as you do, Mr. Belin, and it really doesn't matter to me whether the number is 10% or 5% or 1%. Could you share their writings with me, as I shared the work of Green and Bell and others with you?

Paragraph two: "anyone addressing the issue has to be accurate and objective in statements of fact--." On this we agree absolutely. I believe the statements in the resolution to be accurate and objective. Otherwise I would not have included them.

Regarding Rabbi Kirschner's statement about the "fluctuating nature of sexual orientation," I'm afraid I wasn't sufficiently articulate in my discussion of sexual orientation as a range, from exclusively homosexual to exclusively heterosexual, with degrees of bisexuality in between. In the Marine unit in which I served, sexual relations between men overseas were not that uncommon--certainly above 10%. As a medical officer I listened to their stories, and was able to assure most of them that they were predominately heterosexual, and would be able to prove it to themselves when they returned home. I suppose some of these men would be considered bisexuals. After all, even when no women were available, most men did not have sex with other men. But many did, and most of

those are happily married today. I get holiday cards from a number of them, with pictures of their wives and children. Maybe they still feel they have to "prove" their heterosexuality to me. Maybe they were just grateful for an empathetic listener in the heat of battle.

In the third paragraph, Mr. Belin, you state that it is important to encourage young Jewish children toward heterosexual inclinations. I'm not sure how one does that. We feel what we feel. If we teach our children that homosexuality is wrong, that they are to deny and repress any homosexual feelings they have, even if they are predominately heterosexual, are we not creating a generation of homophobes? Would it not be better to teach our children to live lives of decency and integrity, and to value others who do the same?

You say in the same paragraph that "it may be important that they have accurate information concerning the actual percentages of homosexual men and women in the adult population." I would hope all the information they have about everything is accurate. But are you suggesting that we can affect the way they feel about certain minorities, and about themselves, by looking at the number of those individuals in the population? If so, isn't the implicit message "the majority is always right, the minority usually wrong." And if that is so, what are we to tell our children who question why they should remain in the Jewish minority, instead of joining the Christian majority?

If I were the faculty advisor to the gay and lesbian student organization on the campus you mention, I would tell them to use figures which can be substantiated fairly and objectively, or use no figures at all. Because of course you are quite right--if one lies about one thing, one may lie about everything, or be reasonably suspected of doing so.

I do not agree that there has been a tendency to overstate the number of homosexuals--I believe the numbers I gave you are correct. And I think those who counseled honest reporting of the strength of the anti-war movement in the 1960's and '70's were correct. But I also believe the Jewish leadership was correct in allowing the British Foreign Office to overestimate Jewish strength and influence, and thus gain the Balfour Declaration. I wish to God they had been even more successful and achieved the establishment of the State of Israel in 1939. If that is situation ethics, so be it.

I am delighted that you are a "strong advocate of equal rights for every

individual, regardless of race, creed, color, or sexual preference (could we agree that a better word is "orientation"?). I would expect no less from a member of the Board of Trustees, or from any Jew within living memory of the Shoa. And we do agree that as Trustees we have "an obligation to give our constituency accurate facts on all issues that are brought to their attention, particularly when those issues are discussed in the course of debate where resolutions are proposed."

We have been honest and respectful of one another in our disagreement, Mr. Belin. I must now confess that in reading both your letters, I found myself asking what it would be like to be a gay or lesbian member of your law firm. Would I have been hired, all things being equal, had I informed you of my homosexuality in the initial interview? If I were being considered for full partnership, would that be granted, all things being equal, if my homosexuality were known? These are the real questions, Mr. Belin. I don't ask you to answer them--just to think about them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert M. Rankin". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert M. Rankin, M.D.

c.c. Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Dr. Bo O'Mansky



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

Homosexual

May 11, 1990
16 Iyar 5750

Mr. David W. Belin
Belin, Harris, Helmick, et al
2000 Financial Center
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear Dave:

Thank you for your letter May 4th.

Obviously, I continue to be interested in this issue and I agree with you that facts are important and they should not be stretched to make a political point. Incidentally, my time in Seattle is so pre-empted with the special meetings usually attendant upon Board Meetings - this time around we have some severe problems concerning our camps, divergent issues involving long discussions, so that my time in Seattle is fully taken both before and after the Board Meetings and even during the Meetings.

On the other hand, there is no reason at all why you and Bo O'Mansky and Bob Rankin should not meet. I will be interested in the results of your conversation.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

**BELIN HARRIS HELMICK
TESDELL LAMSON McCORMICK**

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Of Counsel
Lawrence E. Pope
Bonnie J. Campbell

May 4, 1990

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York NY 10021

*Bi-racial
letter*

Re: Gay and Lesbian Jews

Dear Alex:

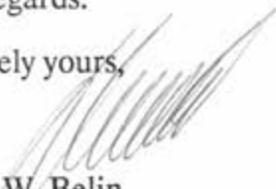
Enclosed is a copy of my correspondence to Dr. Robert Rankin, in response to his April 23 letter to me.

It appears that he recognizes that there has been an overstatement of the numbers of gay and lesbian Jews. I think this is very important, particularly if there are large numbers of young Jewish boys and girls who have homosexual tendencies and are subject to influence one way or the other. It seems to me that it is part of the Jewish tradition (as well as demographic common sense) to give high priority to influence these young men and women to live heterosexual lives.

I would be interested in your comments and observations in this area.

Best regards.

Sincerely yours,


David W. Belin

DWB:cs
Encl.

c.c. Dr. Bo O'Mansky

d:\b0075\schindle.doc

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Randall J. Carrigan

Of Counsel
Lawrence E. Pope
Bonnie J. Campbell

May 4, 1990

COPY

Robert M. Rankin, M.D.
Five Red Rock Way
San Francisco CA 94131

Dear Dr. Rankin:

Thank you for your April 23 letter and the enclosed article by Rabbi Kirschner, which I read with great interest. I read the statements in the article by Alan Bell, edited by Richard Green, that at least 10% of the adult male and 5% of the adult female population appear to be predominantly homosexual and that these figures purportedly are the "generally accepted ones, and have been since the Kinsey studies of the 1940s." Experts with whom I have talked do not agree that these figures are accurate nor do they agree that they have been generally accepted by experts in the field, including psychoanalysts. They believe the figures are substantially lower.

You then ask the question, "Does it really matter?" It does not matter so far as justice and fairness are concerned. But it seems to me that anyone addressing the issue has to be accurate and objective in statements of fact, because when one begins to veer from the truth in the area of numbers, other questions can be raised whether that same person is veering from the truth in other statements.

Moreover, from the perspective of my position as a Trustee of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, I think that we have an obligation to provide accurate facts to our constituency in general and to young Jewish boys and girls in particular. It is my understanding that Jewish tradition discourages homosexuality. In part, this is probably linked to the biblical admonition of "be fruitful and multiply". But whatever the reason, it is important in educating our young boys and girls to know the truth. I would suggest that it is even more important if Rabbi Kirschner is accurate in his statement (pages 455-456, where he writes: "According to the Kinsey Report, sexual orientation fluctuates over a lifetime. Fifty percent of the male population is exclusively heterosexual throughout adulthood; 4% is exclusively homosexual; and 46% have both heterosexual and homosexual inclinations in the course of their adult lives. Among women, the incidence of homosexuality is from one-third to one-half less than among men.") To the extent that young Jewish children might have "both heterosexual and homosexual inclinations", I believe it is important to encourage them toward heterosexual inclinations, and as part of this encouragement, it may be important that they have accurate information concerning the actual percentages of homosexual men and women in the adult population.

Robert M. Rankin, M.D.
May 4, 1990
Page 2

Last year, I spoke at a university in the East, and I noticed on a student bulletin board a large poster announcing a meeting of gay and lesbian students, urging new freshmen to join the organization and asserting that 25% of the campus was gay and lesbian. I asked the dean of the college if this was accurate. He said it was very inaccurate, but it was part of an overall effort on the part of gay and lesbian students to attract membership by asserting that their sexual preference orientation was shared by a large percentage of the student population.

This leads to the second question that you discussed concerning the integrity of "gay advocacy". You seem to agree that there has been a tendency to overstate numbers, but suggest that on important issues (and you analogize to Vietnam) it is important to overstate numbers in order to gain the attention of the overall population.

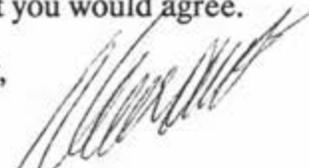
I really believe the analogy to Vietnam is inappropriate. (I happen to be someone who also spoke out against Vietnam many years ago). Your argument seems to say that if a group perceives ends are very important, it can resort to misrepresentation in order to attract attention. I do not think that is sound public policy because it encourages all groups to misrepresent the truth on issues that they think are important. Moreover, I do not believe this is in the Jewish tradition.

I wholeheartedly agree that gay men and lesbians face discrimination and that it is important to seek to end that discrimination. But I do not agree that misrepresentation of facts is the right way to do this.

I do plan to be in Seattle but I do not know my schedule at that time. However, perhaps we can get together sometime Saturday on that weekend, if you would like to opportunity to continue our discourse. I would prefer doing this when Dr. O'Mansky and Rabbi Schindler were also present so that we could also get the benefit of their perspective.

In closing, I want you to know that I am a strong advocate of equal rights for every individual, regardless of race, creed, color, or sexual preference. But as a Trustee of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, I believe that there is an obligation to give our constituency accurate facts on all issues that are brought to their attention, particularly when those issues are discussed in the course of debate where resolutions are proposed. I hope that you would agree.

Sincerely,



David W. Belin

DWB:cs

c.c. Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Dr. Bo O'Mansky



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

Homenage

May 2, 1990
7 Iyar 5750

Robert M. Rankin, M.D.
5 Red Rock Way
San Francisco, CA

Dear Mike:

Thank you so much for writing directly to David Belin and sharing your response with me and Bo. I appreciate the fullness of your comments to Mr. Belin.

Indeed, I am keeping all of this material on file as it will be very helpful for any future questions with regard to statistics.

I look forward to seeing you in Seattle. Until then, fondest regards from house to house.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

5 Red Rock Way
San Francisco, CA
23 April, 1990

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Dr. Boris O'Mansky
New York and Baltimore,

Dear Rabbi and Bo,

Here's the letter I wrote to Mr. Belin, plus copies of the articles I sent him.

I remember very well when he went to the microphone in New Orleans, the anger in his voice, the challenge. Clearly this is a very important matter to him. I have no idea why this is so, and I doubt that my letter, or any letter, will change his mind in any significant way. But I hope he'll accept my invitation to talk about it. If I can learn why he is so troubled about homosexuality, I might be able to help. The least I can do is try.

All the best to both of you, and I'll see you in Seattle.

Sincerely,

Mike

5 Red Rock Way
San Francisco, CA
23 April, 1990

Mr. David W. Belin
Belin, Harris, Helmick; et al
2000 Financial Center
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear Mr. Belin,

Rabbi Schindler asked me to help him respond to your letter regarding the Resolution on Gay and Lesbian Jews, passed at our Biennial in New Orleans. I was one of the authors of the resolution.

I'll begin by thanking you for writing to the rabbi as you did. I hoped the resolution would stimulate thoughtful discussion, as well as inform. It clearly has done so.

It seems to me, Mr. Belin, that your letter reflects two main concerns. The first is the actual number of gay and lesbian Jews in the United States, and the second is the integrity of those who seek justice for lesbians and gay men in our society. I will answer each in turn, beginning with the question of numbers.

Nothing is more difficult than deciding who is a Jew. But deciding who is a homosexual is almost as hard, for a number of reasons. As you can see from Richard Green's introduction to the enclosed chapter by Alan Bell, at least 10% of the adult male, and 5% of the adult female population, in all societies, appear to be predominately homosexual. At least. Both Green and Bell say why this figure is probably an underestimation: fear of discrimination if one admits to being homosexual; sexuality as a continuum from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively gay; etc. As one who has done research requiring accurate incidence and prevalence data, I can tell you that these numbers are extremely difficult to obtain. But those quoted by Bell and Green are the generally accepted ones, and have been since the Kinsey studies of the 1940's.

In recent years we've learned a great deal more about the development of sexual orientation. Most researchers now believe it is fixed at birth, or shortly thereafter, not at age ten. The etiology is complex, but it appears to be considerably more "nature" than "nurture." The old myth that one became homosexual if one had a distant father and a smothering mother has been quietly put to rest, to the great relief of parents who asked

themselves what they "did wrong," even if their gay children were leading happy and productive lives.

We also know from current research that individuals cannot be forced or "seduced" into homosexuality, Helms' and Falwell's protestations notwithstanding. Of course the fact that one's sexual feelings are predominately for individuals of the same gender, does not mean that the feelings will be acted-upon. Where it is safe to do so, we generally seek partners who appeal to us, and who respond with like feelings. Where it is dangerous or prohibited, we repress the feelings to a degree, or sublimate them. But they remain, nonetheless. They are not eliminated by psychotherapy, or by force of law.

As a practical matter, the homosexual has three choices. He or she may seek a loving and nurturing relationship with another individual of the same gender; remain celibate; or enter into a heterosexual marriage, knowing that the tension felt in the bedroom will be reflected in every aspect of the marriage. The later choice works for some. It didn't work for me, and my former wife and I loved each other very much. As a matter of fact, we still do.

So much for the accuracy of numbers (by the way, Green's book is the one we use in our human sexuality course for medical students, both at U.C.S.F. and at U.C. Davis). Now I will pose a more basic question. Does it really matter? Why should we care whether 10% of all adults are homosexual, or 10% of all Jews; or 5%, or 1%? Is the issue not justice and fairness, rather than numbers? Even if there were only one or two gay men and lesbians in the entire world, would they not be entitled to be treated with dignity, their abilities and contributions recognized, their feelings acknowledged?

There is no evidence that there are more gay Jews than gay Catholics, gay Buddhists, or gay Free Will Baptists. But again, what if there were? We Jews are used to acknowledging our minority status, and we are perhaps a bit more fiesty than others. So those of us who are gay or lesbian might be more likely to say so to an interviewer.

In addition, many non-Jewish homosexuals have been so drawn to the beauties of Judaism, to our life-affirming faith and our passion of justice, that they have joined us as Jews by choice. I welcome them with open arms (no pun intended), but I doubt very much that this has skewed the distribution in any significant way. But what if it did? If justice were meted out according to our numbers in the world, we Jews would find very little justice indeed.

If there is one Jewish teaching that should guide us in this, it is that every human being is precious, as an individual, not as a member of a

group, however large or small.

The second question you raise, Mr. Belin, has to do with the legitimacy and integrity of "gay advocacy." "--there is a general tendency on the part of advocates in the gay and lesbian community to overstate their numbers in an effort to show greater legitimacy," you said in your letter.

I'm not sure where you got this information, but you may well be correct. Every minority group seeking justice probably feels the need to exaggerate its strength, if the majority will grant justice only if confronted with a large and powerful opponent. That seems to be the way of this as yet unredeemed world, unfortunately. But the practice didn't start with homosexuals. Historians now believe we'd never have had the Balfour Declaration, had Chaim Weitzman not convinced the prime minister and the British Foreign Office that Jews were stronger and more influential than we actually were. Is there a Jew who doesn't praise Weitzman for what he did?

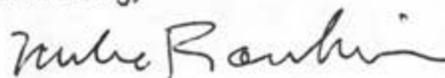
Twenty years ago this month, Mr. Belin, I returned from Vietnam. Like many of my comrades I was appalled by what I saw there, and was determined to do what I could to help get us out of that war before the carnage multiplied. There were many veterans like me, even in 1967, and we wanted to tell the public we represented the majority of those who had served in Vietnam. Wiser counsel prevailed. First of all it wasn't true, not then, and no one would believe it. Nor was it considered good strategy to say we'd lose 30,000 young Americans if we didn't end our involvement in Vietnam. Nobody would believe that either.

By 1970 we did represent the majority of Vietnam vets. And we lost more than 50,000, not 30,000. I spend much of my working day attempting to help heal those who returned. Were we wrong not to inflate our numbers in the early days of the movement? Would it have made a difference? God knows. All I know, and all we believed then, was that people were dying for nothing, and we had to stop it.

Gay men and lesbians face discrimination every day of their lives, Mr. Belin. Whatever the numbers, as Jews we have to stop it.

Again, thank you for writing as you did. I'll be at the Board of Trustees meeting in Seattle, as I'm sure you will. If you'd like to discuss this further, quietly and apart from the crowd, I'd welcome the opportunity. I think we'd both learn something, and we might even enjoy it.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Rankin, M.D.

P.S. I thought you'd find the article by Rabbi Kirschner interesting also.
It's just one rabbi's opinion of course, but a rabbi with a generous heart
and a first rate mind.

cc Rabbi Schindler
Dr. O'Mansky

Homosexual

February 23, 1990
28 Shevat 5750

Rabbi Fred N. Reiner
Temple Sinai
3100 Military Road, N.W.
Washington, DC 20015

Dear Fred:

It was thoughtful of you to share with me your Kol Nidre sermon on homosexuality. I look forward to some quiet moments when I may study your words with care.

I am just back from meetings with the Jewish Agency in Israel, and a mountain of mail awaited my return. Following meetings of our Budget Committee next week, I am off again for Congregational visits on the West Coast. Thus, I cannot promise to share my reactions to your words in the immediate future.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Temple Sinai

3100 MILITARY ROAD, NORTHWEST, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20015 • (202) 363-4055
RABBI FRED N. REINER

February 28, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregation
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

I am pleased to enclose a copy of my 5750 Kol Nidre sermon on homosexuality. I was guided by some of your work in my research and wanted you to have a copy.

I would be grateful for any reactions.

Best regards.

Cordially,



Fred N Reiner
Rabbi

FNR:ld

Rabbi Fred N. Reiner
Temple Sinai
Washington, D.C.

Vol. Nidre, 5750
October 8, 1989

I have always been intrigued by the choice of the traditional Torah reading on Yom Kippur afternoon. The traditional Torah reading is not the magnificent Holiness Code from Leviticus 19 that we read at Temple Sinai, as do Reform congregations everywhere. Rather, it is in the simple list of the forbidden marriages and sexual immoralities listed in Leviticus 18. I often have asked myself, as others have before me, "Why has our people read a passage from the Torah dealing with laws against incest and sexual immorality on the holiest day of our year?"

The answer is not clear. Different authorities have offered explanations over the years: Max Arzt in his classic work, Justice and Mercy, offers the explanation that it is a warning to young men against selecting the wrong mate. Israel is warned, he says, to shun the licentious ways of the heathen. Abraham Epstein suggests a connection with other cultures. He points out that to primitive cultures the New Year brought a sense of abandon; we have here a warning to counter the earlier excesses. J.D. Eisenstein, writing in 1919, points out that on Yom Kippur even the greatest sinners come to the synagogue--those who do not come again for another year; therefore the largest number of people must be warned against illicit sexual relations. In the sixteenth century, the Italian commentator Sforzo said that it was the intention behind both the warning against sexual prohibitions and stating our ethical obligations that we be led to holiness, a theme of Yom Kippur. Thus in the minds of the rabbis selecting the Torah readings, the issues of sexual morality and Yom Kippur--sin and atonement--were linked.

We would hope that this list of arayot, or forbidden relationships, was largely irrelevant for most of the congregation. This was the conclusion of the Reform movement in rejecting this traditional Torah reading in favor of the chapter that follows it. Despite the irrelevancy, however, the sexual lives, the Jewish lives, the sin, and the atonement of the congregation all were linked. Most of these thirty verses do not speak to us today. We would not think of uncovering the nakedness of our aunts or uncles, nor of committing bestiality. But one verse in this chapter stands out and troubles us as modern liberal Jews: "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; it is an abhorrence." (18:22)

Should we understand this clear and unequivocal prohibition against homosexual behavior as it is written? Is this law--chosen as part of the traditional Yom Kippur afternoon Torah reading--part of the timeless verities of our tradition "do not murder" or "honor your parents"? Or is it a law to be interpreted and changed and possibly disregarded in subsequent ages, laws such as: "do not boil a kid in its mother's milk," do

not mix wool and linen," or the limitations of women in Jewish religious life, or the ordeal for accusing a wife of infidelity. How do we understand homosexuality in Reform Judaism today? Do we see it as a sin or a lifestyle? Do we regard it as a choice or a disease? Should our attitude be understanding, condemnation, sympathy, or openness?

As I see it, our attitude about homosexuality is the most troubling moral issue confronting the Reform movement today. For the past twenty years, our movement has been dealing--indeed struggling--with this question. In 1969, and again in 1973, Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof, the leading Reform authority on Jewish practice, upheld the view of Jewish law that homosexuality is sinful. In 1973, however, our Union of American Hebrew Congregations accepted the membership of Beth Chayim Chadashim, the first gay and lesbian synagogue, despite Rabbi Freehof's rabbinic opinion to the contrary. In 1975 and 1976, the UAHC and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) passed resolutions affirming the civil rights of homosexuals in the secular sphere.

While the UAHC passed an even stronger resolution in 1987 that called upon member congregations to develop educational programs and employ without discrimination, the CCAR remains deadlocked over a stronger stand. In 1986, a resolution was offered at the CCAR convention and referred to a new ad hoc Committee on Homosexuality in the Rabbinate. For a year, the committee studied and argued and researched the topic to determine what moral leadership the Reform rabbinate should offer. Given the profound differences of opinion among rabbis and within congregations and the organizations they serve, and given the conflict between halacha (as confirmed and interpreted by many of Reform's leading voices), and given the direction of the movement, a conclusion was difficult to reach. In 1987, the committee reached no conclusion and instead of issuing a report simply sponsored a late-night session at the convention. Two years later--this past June--there still was no resolution. Instead, four papers were distributed to colleagues and a discussion was held at the convention. This unresolved issue confounds the Reform rabbinate.

AIDS, on the other hand, is an issue we can deal with as a movement. As Reform Jews, we all agree that AIDS is a devastating and tragic disease. Those of us who witnessed the moving presentation of the AIDS Memorial Quilt in our city cannot help but share in the sorrow that AIDS has brought to so many. The quilt, with its 10,800 individual panels covering fourteen acres, represents only 18 percent of the AIDS deaths in the United States.

We can relate to AIDS sufferers as we can relate to all who suffer: with caring, empathy, and outreach. No one has contracted AIDS on purpose, and we can deal with their suffering without being judgmental. We Reform Jews can afford to be

liberal on AIDS, to make it a major issue for us, because in some ways it is safe.

I applaud our Reform movement for its important work through its Task Force on AIDS and its excellent materials. Its courageous advocacy and its excellent educational efforts demonstrate our commitment in this area. I applaud our own Social Action Committee here at Temple Sinai for its forum on AIDS and its important work in developing an AIDS policy for our congregation. The policy, currently in draft, is carefully wrought, grounded in Jewish concerns, and enlightened on medical issues. As we work on it and pass it, it will continue to place our congregation in the leadership role of our movement and in our city on this crucial and important issue.

But AIDS is not really the entire issue. AIDS is a touchstone for a larger issue, for our attitude as Reform Jews towards homosexuality. AIDS is a catalyst to help us begin discussing the moral issues and to help us with our anxieties, frustrations, and fears on many levels. But I am frankly concerned that AIDS has also led us to focus on a side issue, for our attitude toward AIDS and toward people with AIDS may be very different than our attitude and our moral conclusions about homosexuality.

The great problem is how we reconcile a liberal, accepting position with the clear prohibition in the Torah, in Jewish law, and among Reform interpreters. Or, on the other hand, how do we resolve a condemnatory position with our historical Reform position that all people are children of God, created in God's image?

Part of our problem is that we don't understand the nature of homosexuality. Medical scientists do not agree. Human behaviorists do not agree. Jewish sources and authorities do not agree. Even the homosexual community does not fully understand all the factors that go into the development of sexual preference. The old questions still go unanswered: Are the determinants a matter of disorder or lifestyle? Of genetics or of character development? We do not know. In the Reform movement I can't even tell you that the disagreement falls along the lines of traditionalists versus classical Reform advocates, or conservatives versus liberals. The only insight I have to offer is that the issue divides among rabbis along generational lines.

Where, then, can we find models to help our understanding? How can we sort out conflicting viewpoints and work toward reaching a Reform ethic?

In his article in the journal Judaism Rabbi Robert Kirschner of Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco offers a model of how halacha is capable of changing. He points out how modern rabbinic opinion recognizes the limits of ancient rabbinic

knowledge in his model of the heresh, or deaf-mute. In the Talmud, a heresh is deemed incompetent and is classed with minors, the mentally deficient, and others who cannot serve as witnesses. The heresh cannot be counted in a minyan, nor can he be married. The rabbis assumed that those who could not hear nor speak could not possibly know what they were doing.

This is a view we could hardly support. We now know better than to exclude from Jewish life individuals with any kind of disability. We now know so much more about deafness and communication that even Orthodox halachic authorities, beginning in the nineteenth century, came to understand that deaf mutes could communicate and were mentally competent. So, albeit hesitantly, they included them in Jewish life.

This is an apt analogy, especially considering the fact that we support congregations for the deaf and hearing impaired, and almost every liberal Jew would support the rights of the deaf to lead the fullest possible Jewish life.

But I have a problem with this model, for I do not think of homosexuality as a disability. I suggest a different model, and to begin I must tell you about my Uncle Joe.

My Uncle Joe and I--as different as we were in age and background--shared one special trait: we were both left-handed. Uncle Joe used to tell me how his left-handedness would get him into trouble as he grew up. He grew up in a generation when people didn't understand left-handedness. They thought it was inferior, unnatural, a lifelong trouble to be endured. So they went to great lengths to suppress the natural instincts and inclinations of left-handed children. Uncle Joe used to tell me horrible stories of how teachers would wrap his left hand in bandages so he couldn't use it to write. He told me how they would strike his left hand when he used it to pick up a pencil. All of these acts were meant to guide him to use his right hand, to develop an imposed right-handedness for writing and doing other tasks. So Uncle Joe wrote with his right hand and ate with his left hand.

Uncle Joe's teachers were participating in a well-established anti-left-handed tradition spanning many cultures and generations. In many places, it is considered an insult to extend one's left hand in greeting or to be placed at someone's left side. Left-handed people are thought of as "sinister" (hence the word), evil, wicked. We Jews also have participated in this tradition: our Bible calls the right hand (of both God and people) the hand of strength. Left-handedness is seen as a sign of weakness, even a malady. As Jacob blesses his two grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, his right hand clearly confers the greater blessing. The Talmud states that the right hand controls all mitzvot except tefillin, and that is only because tefillin are wrapped on the right arm and hand. The Midrash says that in heaven there is only the right side. So for Uncle Joe's

sake they bound and hit his left hand and forced him into conformity.

By the time I was growing up, most people knew better. I learned that left-handedness is a recessive genetic trait, transmitted at conception. Certainly it was no more connected with good or evil than the color of one's eyes or hair. Today, a generation later, scientists are even less certain: some authorities believe left-handedness is inherited; others believe that it is learned; still others believe it is determined during pregnancy. And it is possible that all three theories are in some way correct! New parents still eagerly await the day that they can tell which hand their child seems to favor and make the appropriate entry in the baby book. But we still do not understand left-handedness entirely: some people are able to use both hands, and we certainly know that genetic determination either can be encouraged or discouraged. Those of us who are left-handed have learned early to look for the left-handed corner of the table, to be careful in selecting scissors, and that it is easier and neater to write Hebrew than English.

But would we say for a moment that this left-handed 5 or 10 percent of the population is inferior, unnatural, evil? This is what people have said in one way or another for centuries and still do say in many countries. Not for a moment. We would read or reconstruct biblical stories and talmudic law that have an anti-left-handed bias to be sure that our religion includes all Jews, regardless of hand-persuasion.

As Reform Jews, we know how to recognize the ethical laws in the Torah and how to distinguish between the ethical and ritual precepts. When the Torah says, "a woman must not wear a man's clothing" (Deut. 22:5), how do we understand this? Orthodox law prohibits women from wearing pants, but we Reform Jews do not for a moment forbid it, even though the Torah calls it to'evah--an abomination--the same word used to describe homosexual relations. We say instead that the law against women wearing men's clothes was a carry-over from ancient cultic practices. We are not troubled to see a woman wearing slacks or a suit, and we certainly do not view this as an issue of sexual ethics.

The Torah also tells us what parents should do in dealing with a wayward and defiant son they cannot discipline (Deut. 21:18). They are to take him to the town square and tell the elders of the community of their problem. Then all the men will stone this young man to death and all Israel will hear and be afraid. Not only would we never consider doing this; we are greatly relieved that one talmudic rabbi said this never happened and never will. Similarly when we read in Leviticus 20:13 that homosexual acts are capital offenses because they are abhorrent, I do not think we have any trouble rereading "abhorrent" as belonging to another place and time.

Our problem is in acceptance: of the different, of the threatening, of the unfamiliar, of people we don't quite understand. And our sin is in excluding and ostracizing and oppressing them.

I submit we find it easier to deal with black people, because we know we're not black and we can see the differences between us. We find it easier to deal with handicapped people because we know and understand those differences. We find it easier to press for equality of women and men because we know of the years of oppression, and we can understand this as a movement to unleash human potential.

But even we find it very hard to deal with the homosexual among us--that 10 percent, we think--because we do not understand and we cannot quite figure it out. Nor can we understand if we should respond to this problem with compassion (as with AIDS), or with caring, or with righteous indignation. I find it troubling that the movement that has pressed for equal treatment and openness--for all races, all immigrants, men and women, everyone with disabilities--finds itself stuck on the issue of sexual preference. But I believe that this issue is too close to home for many people and therefore too dangerous.

Let us understand that homosexuals are no longer "over there," on the other side of the sea. They are here: in our city, in our neighborhoods, in our families, in our midst. We cannot for a moment oppress nor segregate nor victimize these people, for they are creatures of God just as surely as you and I are. And just as we have been a movement concerned about all people--black and white, rich and poor, and especially the downtrodden and powerless and wanderer in exile--let us be concerned about these people too. As we read tomorrow morning that the Jewish people stand side by side before God--from the heads of tribes to the strangers in our midst--let us be concerned about all Jews standing in our midst.

I am not condoning promiscuity among homosexuals any more than among heterosexuals. I know better than to think that individuals of one sexual bent will be inclined to wantonness or loose morals or "recruiting" others.

Rather, I recognize that each of us must learn to deal with our own sexuality individually, as part of our maturation and growth. While there are many commonalities among people, this work is different for each person, part of the uniqueness within each of us, an expression of an important part of our lives. It must be guided by our Jewish tradition and by an ethical system.

So let our message this Yom Kippur be one of openness and honesty and understanding of people who may be different from us. As we appreciate people with different color skin and hair, of different backgrounds and abilities, of different languages and

cultures, of differences in self-expression, let us appreciate the spark of divinity that is in each of us. Each of us is a creature of God; each of us is struggling in our own way to be our own self; each of us is developing throughout our lives.

Let our sin this Yom Kippur be that there are many in our midst whom we have rejected, shunned, and denied. There are many whom we have feared without reason. When the time has come for honesty, we have been dishonest. When the time has come for welcoming, we have rejected. When the time has come for understanding, we have failed to listen.

Let us push our sin aside and do the introspection we need to do. Let us consider our responsibilities to others: to accept one another in openness, to welcome the stranger, to recognize that all of us are creatures of God. Let us bring these values to our homes, to our neighborhoods, to our congregation, to our families. In this way, let us seek holiness and find it within one another and within ourselves. Amen.

Annual

January 3, 1990
6 Tevet 5750

Julian H. Preisler
1409 Delaware Avenue
Apt. 3-B
Wilmington, DE 19806

Dear Mr. Preisler:

How gracious of you to write. I appreciate knowing of your involvement with Congregation Rodeph Shalom of Philadelphia. Of course, it delights me to know that you have found yet another place within our Reform Community to express and live your Judaism.

Rabbi Sternberger has been deeply involved with the work of the UAHC AIDS Committee. Of course, it is good to know that you have given time to work for our Mid-Atlantic Council and Temple Sinai of Washington. More and more of our congregations are following the path of Sinai and Rodeph Shalom welcoming all Jews who wish to be a part of the congregational family. After all, a temple is a community with people of every age, and interest and style. What joins us together is our Judaism and that must be the first criteria.

With best wishes, I am,

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

December 26, 1989

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021-7064

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

I am a resident of Wilmington, Delaware and recently read an article in the local Jewish press, entitled "Reform Movement Urged to Accept Gay Members". With this letter I send to you heartfelt thanks. I am a 26 year old Gay male and I belong to Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. One of the reasons for joining this particular Reform congregation was it's open involvement in dealing with the AIDS crisis in both the Jewish and non-Jewish community.

As a young person I had always felt somewhat of an outsider in the Jewish community because I felt I was "different". One can imagine the harshness that exists for a lesbian or gay person growing up in a anti-gay world. Many adult gays and lesbians find it very difficult to be part of the Jewish community because of anti-gay sentiments. As a result most do not join congregations and have very little to do with their religion. I was one of these people. Deep inside I had always had a love for my religion, but was unsure of how to express it as a gay person. After graduating from college, I decided that it was the right time to join a congregation. I searched for areas in the Jewish community that I felt were not anti-gay and hoped that I would fit in.

The Reform movement is to be commended for it's brave attempt to bring gay and lesbian Jews back into the fold and for it's attempt to abolish homophobia within the movements congregations. While living in Washington, DC, before moving to Delaware with my spouse, I became involved with Temple Sinai and also did some volunteer work for the Mid-Atlantic Council. Two rabbis in Washington that became dear friends are Rabbi Richard Sternberger and Rabbi Fred Reiner. Their understanding and friendship has made by journey back to my religion all the more happy.

My experience has been generally positive, but there is still much more to do in order for gay and lesbian Jews to feel at home in most congregations. Many rabbis are homophobic and their congregants much the same. If only they knew of the many people in the congregation who are in the closet. We gay people come in just as many varieties as heterosexual people. I look forward to a future when we will be judged by our actions and not bigotry.

The Reform movement is taking a bold stand against bigotry and intolerance. There is no room for homophobia in our temples and synagogues. Again, thank you for all you are doing.

Shalom,


Julian H. Preisler

1409 Delaware Ave., #3-B
Wilmington, DE 19806

FRIEND, MARKS & SCHLUSSEL

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SHEARA F. FRIEND*

* N.Y., FLA. & MASS. BAR

* MASS. BAR ONLY

** N.Y. & FLA. BAR

September 14, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Alex:

Thank you for sending me the speech you gave in Los Angeles at the Jewish Community Service In Support of People With AIDS. I read your speech carefully and with much interest.

I have never doubted for a moment your deep compassion for all people - Jew and non-Jew, including AIDS affected victims. I feel that same compassion and share with you your hope that research will bring a day of healing in the not too distant future.

However, I do not read your brilliant and eloquent statement in support of people with AIDS as a Jewish or even logical support for the CCAR report to the extent that it affirms the right and propriety of openly practicing gays and lesbians to be ordained as Rabbis.

Far be it from me to pry into or care about what happens in the privacy of one's bedroom, and I most vigorously oppose discrimination in any form based on sexual orientation or preference. However, being a Rabbi is something different and very special, for the Rabbi serves as a Judaic role model and exemplar with a unique opportunity, if not obligation, to teach and preach a central theme which has permeated the Judaic code from time immemorial, that the ideal human relationship for the preservation of the Jewish people and covenantal fulfillment is the monogamous, heterosexual, procreative marriage and family. In all ancient societies which have condoned, practiced or encouraged homosexuality, such as Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, and even Indian cultures, only Judaism shone as a lonely, but bright beacon of light in opposition to such practices. It is no mere coincidence, I believe, that while all of these ancient civilizations have long since perished from the face of the earth, only Judaism has survived with its fundamental principles largely intact.

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
September 17, 1990
Page Two

And that is why I am so concerned about the implication of the CCAR report and the perception it has created amongst lay congregants. In the opinion of many commentators, such as Prager, Eugene Borowitz and even Rabbi Solomon Freehoff, a Rabbinical giant who wrote on the subject in the Reform Responsa, and other Rabbinical leaders of our Reform movement, the CCAR report, despite certain qualifications and veneer designed to provide a link to mainstream tradition, represents a fundamental break with a cornerstone of our faith.

Alex, you are a dear friend whose wisdom and courage I deeply respect, but on this issue I am not persuaded that it was either appropriate or necessary for the CCAR to declare, as a matter of national policy, that openly practicing homosexual Jews are entitled to ordination and all that the term "Rabbi" implies and carries with it. Just as not everyone can or should be an airplane pilot, not every Jew can or should be a Rabbi.

The test of friendship and mutual respect cannot always be measured when friends agree. Rather, the test of their friendship is better measured when they disagree. Despite our disagreement, you are and will always be my friend in respect and admiration.

L'Shana Tovah to you, Rhea and the family.

Cordially.



Solomon H. Friend

SHF:dr



Beacon Press

25 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108-2800

617-742-2110 FAX 617-723-3097

*Per Andy
Signed* ✓

Harold
June 27, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

Enclosed you will find a copy of the letter concerning Twice Blessed, as you discussed with our author, Andy Rose. If it meets with your approval, please sign it, and then mail it to Rabbi Harold Schulweiss in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Sara C. Landis for

Laura Ayr
Advertising and Promotion Manager



Beacon Press

25 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108-2800

617-742-2110 FAX 617-723-3097

July 2, 1990

9 Tammuz, 5750

Dear Colleague,

Of all the issues which challenge and sometime divide our Jewish communities, few are as poignant and frequently difficult as the issue of homosexuality. With the rising presence of Jews who identify openly as lesbian or gay and want to claim their place in our congregations and communal life, it has become more important than ever to shed new light on this ancient issue. We join together in writing to you about a new source of enlightenment, one which we believe will help all of us as we wrestle with our own beliefs, attitudes, and feelings.

TWICE BLESSED: On Being Lesbian, Gay, and Jewish, edited by Christie Balka and Andy Rose and published by Beacon Press, is a groundbreaking effort to articulate the experiences and perspectives of a broad spectrum of lesbian and gay Jews. These Jews, sometimes against great odds, refuse to accept the two customary options given to them: to participate in Jewish communal life while hiding large parts of themselves, or to exile themselves from Jewish life. These women and men claim both their identities as blessings, and strive toward building a Jewish community that is diverse and inclusive.

TWICE BLESSED includes personal stories, new interpretations of traditional Texts and Jewish history, and essays on various aspects of family life. Authors also address issues of liturgy, the establishment of congregations and chavurot with specific outreach to lesbians and gay men, and Jewish communal responses to lesbian/gay rights issues in general and AIDS in particular. The book includes an author who describes how she and her rabbi husband came to terms with their son's homosexuality; it also features a heterosexual rabbi's eloquent description of her process of learning and acceptance while serving a lesbian/gay-outreach congregation. Appendices include suggestions for Jewish educators, a workshop model for Jewish organizations attempting to deal with homophobia, and bibliographic materials.

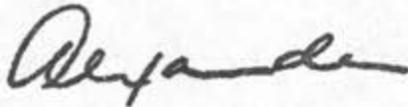
We believe that this unusual and thoughtful book deserves to be read and discussed by rabbis, used as a resource in our religious schools, and given to individuals and families who are coming to terms with these issues, often silently and without rabbinic support. We do not pretend to have a consensus on all the issues raised by this book, even between the two of us, and assume that parts of **TWICE BLESSED** will challenge you and possibly make you uncomfortable. But that is all the more reason to take this refreshing book seriously.

We realize that this letter is reaching you at a time when issues concerning homosexuality are rising to the fore of our organizational agendas, with the Rabbinical Assembly recently resolving to "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" and the Central Conference of American Rabbis urging that "all rabbis, regardless of sexual orientation, be accorded the opportunity to fulfill the sacred vocation which they have chosen." We also realize that our message arrives as you are reflecting in advance of the High Holy days and deciding what is most crucial to address at that time. We hope that this book enters into your reflections and that you will consider delivering a sermon that addresses these issues.

TWICE BLESSED can be ordered directly through the publisher, using the enclosed form. You may want to order copies for your educators, bookstore, and library in addition to your own study. The editors, both of whom have longstanding commitments and serious involvements in Jewish life, are available for speaking engagements, as are many of the contributing authors. They can be contacted through Beacon Press.

In closing we quote our colleague, Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, who states in his book review in Hadassah Magazine, "**TWICE BLESSED** deserves to be celebrated by all: as a call to discussion and heightened communication, it may well be an agent for redemptive healing that will bring us one step closer to the messianic age." We commend this book to you, and thank you for your serious consideration of this letter.

Shalom,



Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President of American Hebrew Congregations
New York, NY

Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis
Congregation Valley Beth Shalom
Encino, CA

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

11/14/89

Rabbi Daniel B. Syme

RESOLUTION ON LESBIAN AND GAY JEWS

We had best have this matter discussed at a future Board meeting next year, unless the CCAR Committee pre-empts such a discussion on a Board level. If our leadership is not with us we can't take the matter to a Biennial.



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 133 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

Homosexual

November 14, 1989
16 Heshvan 5750

Mr. Stanley R. Loeb
1546 S.W. Upland Drive
Portland, OR 97221

Dear Stan:

Thank you for your thoughtful note.

I appreciate your concerns and as I tried to indicate in my speech, there was a time when I shared some of them.

Obviously, it is impossible to engage in an extended conversation on this subject by means of correspondence, that requires the kind of conversation on a leadership level which you seek and which we must have. Indeed, my comments were designed primarily to stimulate such a discussion.

Let's hold it until next we meet.

All good wishes.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Founded in 1889

אגוד הרבנים המתקדמים

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

192 LEXINGTON AVENUE

NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10016-6801

FAX (212) 689-1649 (212) 684-4990

October 25, 1989

BY FAX

Handwritten signature

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
UAHC, New York

Dear Alex

Since you and Joe are now on record by Fax with regard to what I am alleged to have said at the NJ kalla, I think it best to share with you my record, because there has been some misreporting and misunderstanding, and therefore, I think, some unnecessary anger.

After describing our process and the reasons of content why our committee felt that a resolution would not be the best means of addressing the many issues which had been raised in committee over its several years, I further described the current process, which insofar as it concerns homosexuality and the rabbinate has led the committee to the preparation of study and syllabus materials, for use at regional kallot, and based primarily on papers already written and circulated to members of the CCAR, and the speeches at our Cincinnati convention. One rabbi -- I think Howard Jaffe, called the CCAR approach "bullshit," and castigated the CCAR for not having the courage to take a stand and adopt a resolution, as a ringing affirmation of CCAR support, at least for those of its members who are homosexuals. Most others in the room applauded his comment, and one rabbi asked why the UAHC always seemed to take leadership on important issues, while the CCAR seemed to duck them, and what would Alex Schindler be saying at the Biennial? I answered that I had no idea what you would be saying at the Biennial, nor could anyone guarantee what you would or wouldn't say, but I understood that you had discussed your comments with Selig Salkowitz, whom I believed had written you on the subject, and you had also had discussions with Joe; and my understanding was that Selig, at least, had shared with you his hope that you would see fit to endorse the process in which we were engaged, rather than encouraging resolutions while our deliberations were still in process. That's all. I never mentioned Sam Karff, nor did I mention any attempts at pressure or attempts to dictate what you would say. I firmly believe that pressure is (in general) counterproductive and (in this case) out of place. Words like "brag" (your FAX) are totally out of place. I was very cautious and careful in what I said. Anyone who interpreted my remarks as "gloating" can only be investing their own emotional stake in the subject into their interpretation of what I said. It simply didn't happen that way. When you quote a draft in which "Joe and Sam assisted," Alex, that is simply untrue as well; as I state above, I never mentioned

OFFICERS:

Sam at all.
I hope this clarifies and helps, and wish you well.

Rabbi Samuel E. Karff, President
Houston, TX
Rabbi Walter Jacob, Vice President
Pittsburgh, PA
Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser, Executive Vice President
New York, NY

Rabbi Frederick C. Schwartz, Treasurer
Chicago, IL
Rabbi Eugene H. Levy, Recording Secretary
Little Rock, AR
Rabbi Gerald I. Weiser, Financial Secretary
Brooklyn, NY

Elliot L. Stevens
Administrative Secretary
New York, NY
Rabbi Sidney L. Regner, Executive Vice President Emeritus
New York, NY
Rabbi Jacob R. Marcus, Honorary President
Cincinnati, OH



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

VIA FAX

October 25, 1989
26 Tishri 5750

TO: Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser

I didn't hang up on you. Our conversation was over.

I made three more phone calls this morning. They confirm the substance of the reports which I received. Elliot even referred to the letter which Selig sent me and in whose drafting "Joe and Sam assisted."*

I think it is a shame for Conference leaders to try to direct what I say in my Presidential Message and then have the temerity to brag about it to other colleagues.

I will not discuss this issue any more. What has happened convinces me that the UAHC Executive Committee meeting was orchestrated.

I'm not angry at all, I'm just bitterly disappointed that people like you and Sam, for whom I have the utmost respect, would attempt to censor a colleague and then gloat in public about it.

All the best.

* WHO GAVE HIM THAT LETTER - HE WASN'T COPIED
JUST YOU + SAM

I DIDN'T HEAR FROM ELLIOT YET -
LITTLE WONDER .

18th CCAR Centennial 1989

אגוד הרבנים המתקדמים

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

192 LEWISTON AVENUE

NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10016-6801

(212) 684-4990

Office of the Executive Vice President

JACSIMILE COVER SHEET

Date: October 25, 1989

Time: 10:30 A.M.

Total number of pages including this cover sheet: Two

TO:

Name: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

Company: JAHC

Fax #: 570-0895

FROM:

Name: Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser

Fax #: (212) 689-1649

COMMENTS: _____

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Cherry Chase, MD
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Cincinnati, OH

Founded in 1889

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CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

192 LEXINGTON AVENUE

NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10016-6801

FAX (212) 689-1649 (212) 684-4990

Office of the Executive Vice President

October 25, 1989

TO: ALEX SCHINDLER

Dear Alex:

I'm still stunned at what you had to say last night and a little offended that you hung up on me the way you did. You are obviously very angry, though at the very least prematurely so, and I'll overlook it.

Regardless of the outcome of your conversation with Elliot Stevens and whom you choose to believe, I must register my reaction to your conditional "all bets are off" and, when I asked you what that meant, your statement that you would now say what you really wanted to say.

I don't know what that means either. You wrote in no uncertain terms to Sam Karf that you had no intention anywhere along the line of addressing the issue of the rabbinate and homosexuality. You then emphatically affirmed that in your meeting with me. Once I unraveled the tangle of misunderstanding as to who thought what, I told you I didn't see anything wrong with your saying whatever you wanted on the general subject of homosexuality and of AIDS. I really don't know what "bets are off" or what you were being prevented from saying to begin with.

I hope that you and Elliot Stevens straighten out the matter. What you said was reported to you just didn't sound like Elliot Stevens at all, and from what he told me when I asked him what transpired in New Jersey before I was able to reach you, I find his account thoroughly credible. Apparently a number of people said a lot of things during that session in New Jersey and my guess, as I went my way home Tuesday night after leaving the office at 9:30, is that a number of comments were twisted together and that some of the things Elliot told me were said by others were unfortunately attributed to Elliot.

I really wish you wouldn't get yourself into such a state. It isn't good for you.

Warm good wishes.



VIA FAX

OFFICERS:

Rabbi Samuel E. Karf, President
 Houston, TX

Rabbi Walter Jacob, Vice President
 Pittsburgh, PA

Rabbi Joseph B. Glasser, Executive Vice President
 New York, NY

Rabbi Frederick C. Schwartz, Treasurer
 Chicago, IL

Rabbi Eugene H. Levy, Recording Secretary
 Little Rock, AR

Rabbi Gerald I. Weider, Financial Secretary
 Brooklyn, NY

Rabbi Elliot L. Stevens, Administrative Secretary
 New York, NY

Rabbi Sidney L. Regner, Executive Vice President Emeritus
 New York, NY

Rabbi Jacob R. Marcus, Honorary President
 Cincinnati, OH

October 24, 1989
26 Tishri 5750

MEMORANDUM

TO: Rabbi Joseph E. Glaser

Referring to your memo of October 18 to Sam Karff, with a copy to Selig Salkowitz, everything you have to say is correct -- barring only your last comment that "there will not even be a mention in Alex's President's Message of the issue of homosexuality and the rabbinate."

As I told you, I intend to make this my point of departure, that a committee of our Conference is working on it, that they have not reached a decision but that they have asked us, that is to say the Union, to undertake a Union-wide educational program on the subject of homosexuality, which I will initiate.

Now, that should not be a problem and as I indicated to you, I will certainly not introduce a resolution calling on the Conference to do so. Nor will I call on the CCAR to undertake such a step with the College-Institute.

I do hope you will understand where my vote on that subject will be should it ever reach the floor.

All good wishes.

Founded in 1889

אגוד הרבנים המתקדמים

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

192 LEXINGTON AVENUE

NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10016-6801

FAX (212) 689-1649 (212) 684-4990

Office of the Executive Vice President

October 18, 1989

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sam Karff

CC: Alex Schindler, Selig Salkowitz

I had a fine meeting with Alex on Monday and feel that it is necessary to report it among the four of us because there appears to have been a double misunderstanding.

The fact of the matter is that Alex really never did intend to raise the subject of homosexuality in the rabbinate at all, with or without a call for a resolution to be produced by the President's Message Committee then and there at the Biennial.

What he was thinking of doing was to call for some action on the general subject of homosexuality. He thought that we were even opposed to that, which is why he objected so fiercely.

I had to read his letter to you, Sam, five times before I began to get an inkling of all this, and then of course, my meeting with Alex cleared it up.

So: There will not even be a mention in Alex's President's Message of the issue of homosexuality and the rabbinate, nor was there ever any intention for such to be the case.

All the best.

↓
I will refer
to the committee's ^{work}
+ its recommendation
that

OFFICERS:

Rabbi Samuel E. Karff, President
Houston, TX

Rabbi Walter Jacob, Vice President
Pittsburgh, PA

Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser, Executive Vice President
New York, NY

Rabbi Frederick C. Schwartz, Treasurer
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Rabbi Elliot L. Stevens, Administrative Secretary
New York, NY

Rabbi Sidney L. Regner, Executive Vice President Emeritus
New York, NY

Rabbi Jacob R. Marcus, Honorary President
Cincinnati, OH



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 385 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

October 3, 1989
4 Tishri 5750

Rabbi Samuel E. Karff
• Temple Beth Israel
5600 N. Braeswood Blvd.
Houston, TX 77096

Dear Sam:

I am glad we had a chance to chat personally after the UAHC Executive Committee meeting, it took the edge off some of my anger. In any event, you ought to know that I never allow a divergence of view on any subject, however bitter, to affect my personal relationships.

Now, on to substance. To begin with, it was never my intention to introduce a resolution which would call on the CCAR to formally endorse the ordination of homosexual rabbis. I would vote within the CCAR for the issue but I would not ask the Union to direct the rabbinate along these lines.

It had been my intent merely to call on the congregations to study this issue and to sensitize our congregants on the broader subject of homophobia which - our affirmative resolutions to the contrary notwithstanding - is still widespread in our midst.

Frankly, I don't know what harm such a resolution would have done. When you discuss a resolution you engage in the sensitizing process and you initiate precisely the kind of program that I understand the CCAR Committee has endorsed, via Selig Salkowitz's most recent letter to me.

But since you and Joe and Fred joined in the chorus of "resolutions are counter-productive," I will defer to your request. What I expect to do, however, is to make a personal statement. My point of departure will be along the following lines: the Conference Committee has met to address the issue of homosexuals in the rabbinate and within synagogue life. It has not reached a conclusion. It has called upon the Union to engage in a process of study and sensitizing on a national, regional and local level. While I have no resolution to offer on this score, I

Rabbi Samuel E. Karff
October 3, 1989
Page -2-

know of no better way of initiating this process than to tell you where I stand -- and then go on from there.

I checked the record of the last Biennial and you are right, Selig asked the chairman whether the operative clause of the resolution, "congregations should not discriminate in employment on the basis of sexual preference," referred to rabbis and the answer coming from the chair was "no." You realize, of course, that following the rabbinic dictum, "once you specify, you exclude," the specific exclusion of the rabbinate thereby, by legislative intent, includes every other profession: not just janitors and secretaries but also administrators, educators, teachers and cantors.

My objection to a Joint Committee on Aids was on several grounds: a) I am, in principle, loath to multiplying structures. I would much prefer to contract. b) We already have an amplitude of rabbis on the committee and we would be willing to appoint others whom you would choose. c) I was mindful of the financial burdens which the joint approach imposes on the CCAR. When we invite rabbis their expenses are not paid, once the committee is joint, the CCAR obligates itself to pay their expenses.

In context with point a) above, you ought to know that I will discuss the dramatic increase in substance abuse (including alcohol) among our congregants, and especially teen-agers, during my sermon and I will recommend that our national responsibility be coordinated through the Task Force on Youth Suicide - Yad Tikvah. This is also a contraction as it were rather than a layering of committee upon committee which could drown us.

With warm regards and the hope you will, as the English say, be well over the fast, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser
Rabbi Selig Salkowitz

bcc: Allan B. Goldman, Esq.
Rabbi Janet Marder
Dr. Robert M. Rankin
Albert Vorspan

Founded in 1889

אגוד הרבנים המתקדמים

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

192 LEXINGTON AVENUE

NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10016-6801

FAX (212) 689-1649 (212) 684-4990

September 25, 1989

Office of the President:
Rabbi Samuel E. Karff
Temple Beth Israel
5600 N. Braeswood Blvd.
Houston, TX 77096

Dear Alex:

I want to follow up on our all-too-brief conversation in New York.

I see no necessary connection between the sentiments exquisitely expressed in your Los Angeles talk and any particular stand on the formal endorsement of homosexual rabbis.

If you intend to draw on your Los Angeles address, I would hope you could expressly disclaim any intention to prejudge the latter issue, endorse the process of study and sensitization now in progress within the Conference, and commit the UAHC to share in it. I am confident that would be Selig Salkowitz's position as well.

Joe Glaser has reminded me that the Biennial resolution in Chicago to which you referred at the Board meeting explicitly excluded a judgment on homosexuality in the rabbinate. The delegates were told, prior to the vote, that the CCAR was studying the matter. Do you have a transcript that could clarify this important issue?

I did not have a chance to ask you about the proposal at our last Executive Board of the CCAR for a Joint Task Force with the UAHC on AIDS - rather than establish a separate CCAR Committee on AIDS. I understand that you do not favor this proposal. Is that discussable? There are already Rabbis on the UAHC Committee and I am reluctant to see us duplicate what the UAHC is doing.

OFFICERS:

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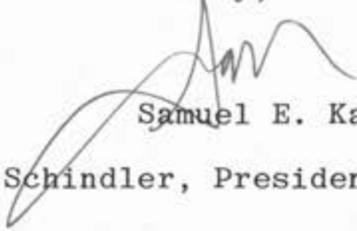
Rabbi Sidney L. Regner, Executive Vice President Emeritus
New York, NY

Rabbi Jacob R. Marcus, Honorary President
Cincinnati, OH

I would, of course, welcome a continuation
of our dialogue by letter, phone, or panim-el-panim.

With every good wish to you and Rhea for
the New Year, I am

Warmly,



Samuel E. Karff

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

cc to: Rabbi Glaser
Rabbi Salkowitz

STANLEY R. LOEB 11/7/89
1546 S. W. UPLAND DR.
PORTLAND, OREGON 97221

Rabbi Alex Schindler,
President, UAHC
838 Fifth Ave.,
New York, N.Y.

Dear Alex,

It was a wonderful convention:
educating, enlightening, motivating, uplifting.
Multifaceted. And deeply religious.

Your speech on Saturday morning had
all of these qualities as well. And I agreed
and support 98 or 99 per cent of it. But I feel
that I must write to you (and talk to you)
about the 2 per cent (or 1 per cent) with which
I disagree. Deeply.

It involves that portion of your address
that involves gay and lesbian Jews. And it
involves a matter of degree. I support that
portion of the 1987 biennial resolution
that welcomes gay and lesbian Jews into
the congregation as all Jews are welcome
into a congregation. But I could not then
support that part of the resolution that
urges congregations to accept practicing
public homosexuals into positions of
congregational leadership or in teaching
roles. Those positions are role model
positions. Filling those positions with
assertive or militant gays or lesbian Jews
involves an endorsement and validation
of a value system and life style that
is axiomatically inconsistent with
Judaism as I understand it. This is true for
all positions of sensitive leadership: teacher,
trustee, officer, rabbi, cantor.

My feelings and opinions of 1987 have not changed over the last 2 years. Unfortunately, this issue is almost a bottom line issue. I have not seen or been told of any responsa that would support the 1987 resolution, let alone an extension of it. The analogy of the deaf-mute that you used is probably inapposite since those folks can communicate and participate in the religious community through technology (including the signers used during the biennial) and without the prohibited behavior that ultimately burdens gay and lesbian folk.

I guess that's the point: "prohibited behavior". If Reform Judaism believes that homosexual practice and life style is acceptable behavior for Jews, the 1987 resolution can stand in full and perhaps be extended. But to those Reform Jews who do not believe Reform Judaism to be capable of this, some aspects of the 1987 resolution are unacceptable, and should not be extended. Ever.

At the September executive committee meeting, you made a remark or two following Fred Gottshalk's report on HUC and the present dilemma it faces regarding this area. David Belin disputed the reach of the 1987 resolution, as you viewed it. And the matter was then tucked away. For a while.

But Alex, this deeply divisive issue will come up again. And the 1987 resolution will not resolve matters and will not be the basis for extending a things. If anything occurs, it may be a re-examination of that 1987 resolution. Worse, people may ignore it, even its many good parts.

Quite early this year, an article appeared in Reform Judaism supporting broad gay and lesbian Jewish rights and participation. It was a sensitive article - and a very aggressive one. I wrote a letter to the editor in response. It was a timely reply and expressed the position I've expressed above : involvement - yes, leadership - probably not. Unfortunately, my letter was not published - for whatever reason. Even though I took some pains to try to assure its publication. I think that I feel the way quite a few Reform Jews feel. I do not believe that the 1987 resolution represents a consensus of Reform opinion. And that resolution may never represent a consensus. And probably should not. And we would never want to suppress dissent to give the appearance of a consensus.

Perhaps then, this is a time to sound out UAHC leadership on this sensitive and basic issue.

With best regards,



Alexander

Rabbi Joseph A. Edelheit

September 15, 1989
15 Elul, 5749

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

Thank you very much for allowing me to be so open and candid with you. It was most helpful. I have had a conversation with Florence Katz, the new president of ARZA, who was quite upset that she would not be allowed to come; I tried to explain to her not to worry. I am most appreciative of your sensitivity and support as we try and pull the Congregation out of this near tailspin.

I also want you to know that after some consideration, I fear that I might have unwittingly been a part of Sam Karff's inappropriate manipulation at the Board meeting. I say this within the following context. Bo O'Mansky called me several weeks ago to inform me that the offer for the CCAR to join the AIDS Committee as a joint commission had been turned down by you and the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Goldman. While he was not fully clear why, certainly I didn't understand. Bo asked me to call Sam Karff, since it had been a committee meeting at the CCAR convention which had prompted the CCAR Executive Committee to ask to join on a joint commission level. In my conversation with Sam Karff, he asked my view of why the UAHC was not prepared to join the CCAR on this joint level regarding AIDS. I said I wasn't sure, due to the fact that the UAHC had taken the leadership role, and that in many ways had allowed the rabbinate to remain peripheral except for the leadership roles that a few of us have taken on the UAHC committee level. We both noted your very strong statement in your Erev Shabbat sermon in Cincinnati, and both of us were aware that in the area of AIDS as well as your supportiveness of the gay and lesbian community that the UAHC was certainly at a far different place than the Conference.

I hope that I in no way fostered his attempt to preempt your saying anything. Sam knows that I am very much opposed to the position that the Conference is taking with regard to homosexuality, most specifically with regard to homosexuality and the rabbinate. I apologize if in my conversation with Sam, I led him to a place where he has attempted to preempt you.

Let me move my presumption one step further regarding your decision about the AIDS Committee and the joint relationship with the Conference. If, as we both want, the UAHC position is to have a greater

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Joe seems to
think there was
an endeavor to
preempt
yes,
but I'm
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EMANUEL CONGREGATION

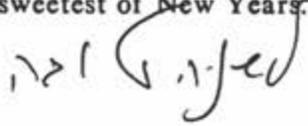
impact on the Conference process and the HUC mentality, we have a place where we can begin, in my view, to create a broader strategy, that is to say, if you might reconsider putting the CCAR on a conjoint, co-equal basis of responsibility with regard to AIDS, we can then hold them responsible for what they have not yet done, including permanent curricular material at HUC on rabbinic literacy with regard both to AIDS and those gays who are suffering. That then opens the door for the UAHC to demand a co-equal role with regard to the CCAR's process with regard to homosexuality. Though Dick Sternberger sits on the CCAR Committee on Homosexuality, it seems to me the focus of that Committee and its position between now and Seattle or anything beyond should now be widened. It might be a point of negotiation that since the issue involves more than the rabbinate and that the UAHC was light years ahead of everyone in sponsoring congregations with special outreach to the gay and lesbian community, that the conversation regarding the school and the rabbinate should as a matter of course involve the laity.

Please excuse the presumption of pushing you on a decision that you have made, but it might be a new point of strategy with regard to our conversation yesterday. Once again, I thank you for your depth and understanding. I hope that the material that I sent under separate cover is helpful. The Kol Nidre sermon is simply an example of how one can deal with issues of homophobia and homosexuality in a broader sense. My best to you for the sweetest of New Years.

Most sincerely,

Joseph A. Edelheit
Rabbi

JAE/hmp





Beacon Press

25 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108-2800
617-742-2110

Handwritten signature
April 3, 1989

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Ave.
New York, NY 10021

*Called
4/10/89*

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

Thank you very much for your superb comment. We will most certainly put it to very good use in advance publicity for the book as well as on the book jacket. For publicity purposes, we will probably have to trim it considerably. I have devised two abbreviated versions that I would like to run by you:

"TWICE BLESSED will bring healing to many."

and

"TWICE BLESSED reveals a deficiency in the Jewish community's immune system: that we are not so immune to the very process of stigmatization by which we as Jews have been shunned and persecuted and massacred...TWICE BLESSED will serve to repair this deficiency and thus bring healing to many."

OK

Are these OK? The first one would be used where we have great space limitations; the second where the allowable space is bigger. The entire quote will be used on the book jacket.

With regard to the talk you enclosed, I have passed it on to Christie Balka and Andy Rose. As you guessed, it is much too late to include your piece but I appreciate your sharing it with us.

Thanks again for all your help.

Sincerely,

Joanne Wyckoff
Joanne Wyckoff
Executive Editor



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

March 28, 1989
21 Adar II 5749

Ms. Joanne Wyckoff
Executive Editor
Beacon Press
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Ms. Wyckoff:

I scanned the manuscript you sent me and I feel quite comfortable in making comments concerning this volume.

My comments are rather lengthy. Feel free to cut them down to proper size, but if you do, let me have a look at it before you finalize it.

"Twice Blessed reveals a deficiency in the Jewish community's immune system: that we are not so immune to the very process of stigmatization by which we as Jews have been shunned and persecuted and massacred. We have not extended our embrace to include gay and lesbian Jews, affirming that we all are family, that they and their relatives are our sons, our sisters, our neighbors, our fellow Jews. Hopefully, Twice Blessed will serve to repair this deficiency and thus bring healing to many."

Actually these comments are drawn from a talk I gave several weeks ago at a Jewish Community service in support of Jewish people with AIDS. I enclose a copy. It occurs to me that conceivably it could be an addition to this volume. But for that it is probably too late.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

enc.



Beacon Press

25 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108-2800

617-742-2110

March 21, 1989

Rabbi Alexander Shindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Rabbi Shindler:

At the suggestion of the editors, I am sending you the enclosed unedited manuscript of TWICE BLESSED: ON BEING LESBIAN, GAY, AND JEWISH. Beacon plans to publish this important anthology in November. Do you think you could supply us with an advance comment?

TWICE BLESSED is the first collection of writings (22 in all) by and about lesbian and gay Jews that proposes integration of the Jewish community with the lesbian and gay one. Showcasing a wealth of writings--personal testimonies, essays, oral histories, and liturgies--by some of the most important spokespeople--Judith Plaskow, Martha Ackelsberg, Eric Rofes, Linda Holtzman, Yoel Kahn, Evelyn Torton Beck--this book speaks to the possibilities of bringing lesbian and gay experience to bear on Jewish history and tradition, family, and community life.

Christie Balka, one of the editors, is a social change activist who has written and spoken on the Middle East, feminism, and lesbian and gay issues. She is a former national co-chair of New Jewish Agenda, and former Associate Director of The Shalom Center. She currently works for a small public foundation in Philadelphia where she lives with her partner and 2 children. She is active in her synagogue, and serves as an openly lesbian member of its board.

Andy Rose, the other editor, is a social worker and community activist in San Francisco. A founding member and national co-chair of New Jewish Agenda, he currently coordinates the Jewish community's AIDS Project in San Francisco. He also serves on the Union of American Hebrew Congregations AIDS Committee, is a Board member of the AIDS National Interfaith Network, and serves on the Advisory Board of the Lesbian and Gay Parenting Project in San Francisco.

If you could give us a comment on this unique volume I would be most grateful. Your comments, which we would use on the jacket and/or in publicity and promotion for the book, could help this work reach the wide audience it deserves. If you find that you cannot comment, please return the manuscript in the envelope provided.

Thanking you in advance for any attention you can give TWICE
BLESSED, I look forward to hearing from you by April 3.

Sincerely,


Joanne Wyckoff
Executive Editor

N A T I O N A L
NGLTF
G A Y & L E S B I A N
T A S K F O R C E

October 18, 1988

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
835 5th Ave.
New York, NY 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

In order to update a civil rights publication of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, I am surveying various religious organizations regarding their policies and views on sexual orientation.

I am concerned not only with the religious aspect of homosexuality itself, but also with the position your religious denomination takes regarding human rights for gay men and lesbians. Could you please send me the most recent statement by your denomination concerning these issues. Also, could you address the views of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations if it differs in any way from the leadership of your denomination.

Please send any statements or materials to my attention at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force by the end of October, if possible.

Sincerely,



Robin Kane
NGLTF Intern



HUC-JIR's student organization for Lesbian and Gay students
and their supporters.

The following are excerpts from an address given by Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler to the AIDS Committee of the UAHC Pacific Southwest Council in March 1989:

We have not as a community crossed the boundaries of Otherness--the fringed boundaries at which compassion gives way to identification. We have not extended our embrace to include gay and lesbian Jews. We have not acknowledged their presence in the midst of our synagogues, nor consciously included gay and lesbian parents as part of the Jewish family circle. Indeed, we have not affirmed that we all are family...

In our denial, in our failure to see one another as one family--indeed, as one holy people--we exile ourselves from Jewish history, we opt for amnesia. We who were beaten in the streets of Berlin cannot turn away from the plague of gay-bashing. We who were Marranos in Madrid, who clung to the closet of assimilation and conversion in order to live without molestation, we cannot deny the demand for gay and lesbian visibility!

The Star of David has emerged as the most visible sign of Jewishness. Curiously enough, it is not the oldest or most venerable symbol of our people. While archeologists have discovered some ancient stones bearing this emblem, it did not become commonplace until more modern times. Indeed, rabbinic literature, in all its variety and vastness, makes absolutely no mention of it. There is a more recent event that has irrevocably rendered the Magen-David as the preeminent Jewish sign. It was the shoah, the Holocaust, the martyrdom of six million Jews. It was the Nazis who stitched the six-pointed star to our hearts as a badge of shame, a mark of death. And, it was our own partisans and Zionist pioneers who reconverted it into a badge of pride and life...

There is another meaning that we can attach to the Magen David. It is an interpretation that any Jewish child with a crayon can tell you: that the Star of David contains, within it, the triangle.

For those of us here who would, a generation ago, have been wearing the pink triangle as a badge of shame and a mark of death; for those of us here who today wear it as a badge of honor and resistance and identity: it is time to complete the outline of your Jewish star.

For those of us who have been willingly blind to the geometry of Jewish life, who would keep invisible the presence of the triangle within the Shield of David: it is time to complete the outline of our Jewish star...

I, a leader of this movement for Reform Judaism; I, a refugee from Hitler's Germany, I will no longer be content to speak in the first person plural declaring that "we have dealt perversely." Instead, I declare myself your ally today, an ally to all those

whose Star of David needs completion...

I declare myself a rabbi for all Jews, at every moment of life, not only for heterosexual Jews, or for gay Jews only at their funerals...

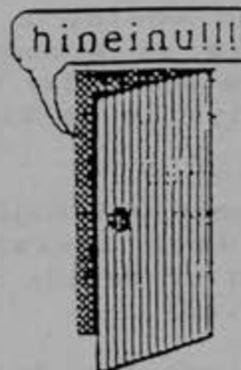
I declare myself the compassionate ally of every person heterosexual and homosexual, Jew and non-Jew, who is wrestling with the shame, the confusion, the fear, the endless torment involved in the inner struggle for sexual identity. It is a struggle that includes, but also goes beyond, civil liberties. It is, when all is said and done, a struggle for the integrity of selfhood...

As individuals, we still have much to fear, much to reckon with. But let us not add to our loneliness and our suffering by believing that God does not recognize us and our relationships. Let us rather exalt our relationships so that they be worthy of God's gaze. Let us learn that God's image is reflected in each and every face. Let us not add to our heartache by separating our by letting ourselves be separated from the Jewish people. As Jews, together, let us search through the Torah, the written Torah and the Torah of life, to find those affirmations for which we yearn.

HINEINU asks you to consider...

If acceptance of lesbian and gay Jews is limited to congregational participation, and not extended to include rabbis, cantors and educators--can this be regarded as true acceptance or is it actually a false welcome?

For those of us who fully support the acceptance of lesbians and gay men in the Jewish community, serving in both professional and non-professional capacities--how can we effectively extend an honest invitation for their participation?



Rabbi Joseph A. Edelheit

September 15, 1989
15 Elul, 5749

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

Thank you very much for allowing me to be so open and candid with you. It was most helpful. I have had a conversation with Florence Katz, the new president of ARZA, who was quite upset that she would not be allowed to come; I tried to explain to her not to worry. I am most appreciative of your sensitivity and support as we try and pull the Congregation out of this near tailspin.

I also want you to know that after some consideration, I fear that I might have unwittingly been a part of Sam Karff's inappropriate manipulation at the Board meeting. I say this within the following context. Bo O'Mansky called me several weeks ago to inform me that the offer for the CCAR to join the AIDS Committee as a joint commission had been turned down by you and the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Goldman. While he was not fully clear why, certainly I didn't understand. Bo asked me to call Sam Karff, since it had been a committee meeting at the CCAR convention which had prompted the CCAR Executive Committee to ask to join on a joint commission level. In my conversation with Sam Karff, he asked my view of why the UAHC was not prepared to join the CCAR on this joint level regarding AIDS. I said I wasn't sure, due to the fact that the UAHC had taken the leadership role, and that in many ways had allowed the rabbinate to remain peripheral except for the leadership roles that a few of us have taken on the UAHC committee level. We both noted your very strong statement in your Erev Shabbat sermon in Cincinnati, and both of us were aware that in the area of AIDS as well as your supportiveness of the gay and lesbian community that the UAHC was certainly at a far different place than the Conference.

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Let me move my presumption one step further regarding your decision about the AIDS Committee and the joint relationship with the Conference. If, as we both want, the UAHC position is to have a greater

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EMANUEL CONGREGATION

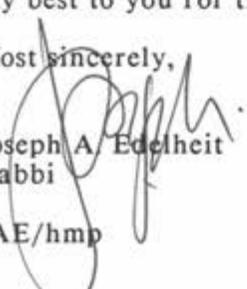
impact on the Conference process and the HUC mentality, we have a place where we can begin, in my view, to create a broader strategy, that is to say, if you might reconsider putting the CCAR on a conjoint, co-equal basis of responsibility with regard to AIDS, we can then hold them responsible for what they have not yet done, including permanent curricular material at HUC on rabbinic literacy with regard both to AIDS and those gays who are suffering. That then opens the door for the UAHC to demand a co-equal role with regard to the CCAR's process with regard to homosexuality. Though Dick Sternberger sits on the CCAR Committee on Homosexuality, it seems to me the focus of that Committee and its position between now and Seattle or anything beyond should now be widened. It might be a point of negotiation that since the issue involves more than the rabbinate and that the UAHC was light years ahead of everyone in sponsoring congregations with special outreach to the gay and lesbian community, that the conversation regarding the school and the rabbinate should as a matter of course involve the laity.

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Most sincerely,

Joseph A. Edelheit
Rabbi

JAE/hmp



Handwritten signature of Joseph A. Edelheit, appearing as 'JAE' with a flourish.

Handwritten signature

December 17, 1987
26 Kislev 5748

Mr. John E. Hirsch
999 Windsor Gate Drive
North Hills, New York 11040

Dear John:

Your recent letter awaited my return from meetings in Israel where I attended the World Zionist Congress meetings. This is my first opportunity to reply to your concerns.

As you know when the Union Biennial resolution came to Committee, it was agreed to remove the question of Rabbis from our resolution on gays. This, done at the specific request of the CCAR, in as much, as they have a committee studying this matter. You should know, however, that the Union representatives on the Study Commission are pressing hard for a more open policy in regard to ordination of gay rabbis. I believe that we are gradually selling the representatives of the CCAR and the College-Institute. Thus, the matter is really out of the hands of the Union at this time. We have done our very best but the final determination will be made by the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

With kindest regards and every kind wish for a Happy Hanukkah, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

AMS:rh

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

*Ask Al how
I should respond
since I did not
attend Resolution
Ami-Hee.*

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

Your note of thanks for my participation at the Biennial arrived in today's mail, but it is I who should thank you for the opportunity to be a part of such a wonderful experience. I have not had such a feeling since I last participated in an NFTY Institute in 1962; my joy is indescribable.

Although this is a thank you note, I would like to have the chutzpah to address one of the challenges made in your moving "State of the Union" speech. I was greatly troubled by your reminder of the desperate need for Reform Rabbis and your call for encouragement of young people to consider the Rabbinate as a career choice.

As I am sure you are aware, there was much wrangling about the language in Resolution XV regarding the inclusion of homosexual Jews in all aspects of congregational life. The language was watered down to specifically exclude the Rabbinate from that resolution. It is apparent that, despite all the social values we are taught regarding discrimination, the Reform Jewish Rabbinate reserves its right to discriminate against homosexuals. A resolution was quashed at the May meeting of the CCAR regarding this subject with the specific knowledge that it could not be brought up again for at least two years. It is obviously a topic that they do not want to discuss.

Rabbi Schindler, there are honorable, talented committed men and women in this country who would make dynamite Reform Rabbis but who are excluded because of their sexual orientation. There are probably young people in the HUC-JIR who are homosexual, but like their already ordained counterparts, live in constant terror for their careers, their jobs, their livelihoods, and their reputations. If a Jew had to live in that kind of fear over just being a Jew, we would all march in the streets in protest. I am not going to march in Washington this weekend, not because I am unsympathetic to the plight of Soviet Jewry, but because I see a tragedy right here in America which is not being addressed by American Jews. There are people throughout this country (including some in very high places) who would put all homosexuals into camps. Where is our righteous indignation?

Are we no better than the West Virginia rednecks on a recent "Oprah Winfrey Show" who advocated such a position? The New York State Legislature rejected a bill endorsed by

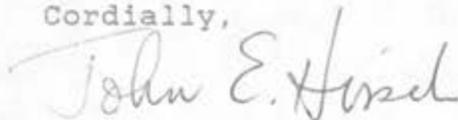
Mayor Koch and Governor Cuomo calling for stiff penalties for violence directed at anyone because of religion, race, ethnic origin, sex, or sexual orientation merely because the words "sexual orientation" were included? That bill will come up again soon, and its opponents are again threatening to defeat it suggesting once more that violence against homosexuals can be tolerated. Soon we will "celebrate" the 50th Anniversary of Krystalnacht where violence was committed against people just for who they were. Have we learned nothing about discrimination? Homosexuals have less choice about their sexual orientation than they have about their religion. We know about persecution of people simply for what they are.

If the Reform Jewish Rabbinate is allowed to discriminate, what good is a resolution calling for an end to discrimination? It is a difficult subject, and an unpleasant one for many, but it must be addressed! If it cannot be addressed because it is the honorable, moral thing to do, then it must be addressed from a pragmatic standpoint. As you indicated, we need dedicated Reform Rabbis.

Dr. Julius Morgenstern came to my hometown for retirement from the HUC. He was a wonderful man who, as a mentor, took me under his wing to "make me a Rabbi." There was a point as a teenager that I really wanted to enter the Rabbinate. Although I was only seventeen, not yet sexually experienced, and not even in possession of the vocabulary for what I was (at that point I thought I was the only person like me in the world), I knew intuitively that life for me as a Rabbi would be impossible. It is too late for me, but there is a generation out there to whom we must reach out. A life in the Rabbinate should not be impossible for any young man or woman who really wants it.

I wish you good health, happiness and all the miracles of Chanukah.

Cordially,



John E. Hirsch

95 Windsor Gate Drive
North Hills, New York 11040
4 December 1987

From the desk of
Albert Vorspan

Alex

He shouldn't
badger you. Here's the
scope: we agreed to
remove the question
of rabbits from the
res in on gaps, at the
specific request of the
OAR; however,
you can tell Sam

the AACAC
representatives on
the joint study
Commission are
pressing hard for
ordination of gay
rabblis. I
I think we are
gradually
selling the CMA
& IHUC. So why
should we be defensive?
We (meaning I) crossed
ourselves out for horses
already. J

Homosexual

December 22, 1986
20 Kislev 5747

Rabbi Jack Stern
Westchester Reform Temple
255 Mamaroneck Road
Scarsdale, N.Y. 10583

Dear Jack:

Thanks for correcting your mistake regarding the CCAR
Committee on Homosexuality. No problem.

Love and Kisses.

Fondly,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Mr. Albert Vorspan

fr. hope -

אגוד הרבנים המתקדמים

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

21 EAST 40th STREET • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016-0501 • (212) 684-4990

Office of the President
Rabbi Jack Stern
255 Mamaroneck Road
Scarsdale, NY 10583

December 9, 1986

all being brought to discussion.

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex,

Joe Glaser pointed out to me that I made a mistake in my letter to you regarding the CCAR Committee on Homosexuality.

The proposal of our Committee was that we remain a CCAR Committee but with official representation from the College and the Union. This would mean, of course, that the Committee would speak only on behalf of the Conference and that whatever is addressed to the College or the Union would simply be Conference recommendations. Such recommendations would have to be considered by the respective bodies.

I hope that the above makes sense and that you will accept my apology for the error. If there is anything to discuss further, please be in touch.

You were superb this past weekend. I read the Friday evening address and, you made good sense -- eloquently.

Best from house to house.

Sincerely,



JS/csf

CC: Joseph Glaser
Selig Salkowitz
Richard Sternberger
Albert Vorspan

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איחוד
ליהדות
מתקדמת
באמריקה

*Edie:
We mailed
it delivered
this!*

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE -- JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

838 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100 CABLES: UNIONUAHC

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Richard Cohen
(212) 758-6969

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, representing some 60,000 congregants of more than 30 Reform synagogues in New York City, this week urged the City Council to pass the so-called Gay Rights Bill.

In a telegram sent to all members of the Council, the Federation noted that its parent body -- the Union of American Hebrew Congregations -- since 1977 has supported legislation barring discrimination based on sexual preference. The UAHC represents 791 Reform congregations in the United States and Canada with a membership of 1.3 million.

The telegrams were signed by Rabbi Bernard Zlotowitz, Federation director, and Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, assistant director.

#####

1/16/86

*cc BY
all*

"Lesbian and Gay Pride Day at Beth Am"
Rabbi Margaret Moers Wenig
Beth Am, The People's Temple - NY, NY
June 5, 1987

A month ago, Miriam Frank and Audrey May told me they would like to sponsor an Oneg Shabbat in honor of Lesbian and Gay Pride Day. I want you to know why I, as their rabbi, supported them and why, as your rabbi, I ask you to support them as well.

The upshot is this: I believe that homosexuality is good: To be attracted to a person of the same sex is not sick or queer, not an aberration but a solid, natural and fundamentally loving human expression -- timeless, valuable and universal in our species. And I believe that homophobia (fear of homosexuals and, discrimination against them) is wrong. And further, I believe that no one should have to hide who they are or whom they love, for to do so, to live in the closet, takes a terrible human toll.

If either of my daughters turns out to be a lesbian I don't want her to feel guilt or humiliation. I don't want her to lose her job, or be denied admission to rabbinical school. I don't want her to feel that she has to lie to me. I don't want her to be shut out of synagogue life.

I want her to have a sense of dignity as a human being created in the divine image and, as a Jew, a partner to an ancient covenant. I won't mind if she chooses to live alone, but I don't want her to be lonely because she is afraid to be herself. If she finds her love, I want her to be able to bring her partner to our family seder. I want to celebrate their commitment to one another. While I do want grandchildren, if my daughter chooses not to become a parent I'll support her choice. And if she does choose to bear or raise children I want to welcome those children into our ancient covenant. I want her to be able to receive an aliyah with her partner when those children celebrate their bar/bat mitzvah. I want her to receive a card from the Sisterhood when she and her partner celebrate their milestone anniversaries. I want her to be free to sponsor an Oneg Shabbat in honor of her partner's birthday. And if her partner dies I want her to have a synagogue community to comfort her.

Should a daughter of mine turn out to be a lesbian, I don't want her to suffer shame; and should she be straight, I don't want her to inflict pain upon lesbians or gay men. But wanting does not make it so. I learned a few years ago that if I want my daughters to grow up accepting homosexuality in themselves or in others then I had a lot of work to do right now in my own home, in my Jewish community and in society at large.

inferior to being white.

I don't for a minute blame the self-hating Jew or the self-hating black. They have only learned the anti-semitism and racism that they have been exposed to since birth. But I do bemoan it; for as Muriel Rukeyser put it, Jews "who wish to be invisible choose death of the spirit." Stokely Carmichael understood this too. In the 60's he taught Blacks that civil rights are only the first step. Blacks need to believe that Black is Beautiful! So too, an 18 year old gay kid needs to believe that Gay is Good, if he is to have a healthy and fulfilling adult life. And that is why Gay Pride Day is so important.

Gay Pride day was first celebrated in 1970 as Christopher Street Liberation Day. It marked the first anniversary of the Stonewall riots. The riots began on June 27, 1969 when police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar on Christopher Street, and arrested the owner, employees and many of the patrons.

That was not the first police raid of a gay bar. There had been many and gay men were used to police harassment. But until Stonewall, gay men had never fought back. In the 60s most gay men and lesbians so feared the repercussions of coming out, so feared the effect on family members or their own employment if their names or photos appeared in a newspaper, that they wouldn't participate in political activity to promote their own rights. They wouldn't march, wouldn't demonstrate, wouldn't press employment discrimination charges; many even used pseudonyms.

With Stonewall that changed. The gay men who were arrested at the Stonewall Inn did fight back. Like the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto, these men refused to walk quietly into the paddy wagon to be beaten and hauled off to jail. And for several successive nights gay men, straight people, Village residents, gathered on Christopher Street to protest the police raid. These small but rowdy demonstrations came to be known as the Stonewall Riots. And though they were small in size their impact on the self-image of homosexuals in New York was tremendous. (Remember the pride we felt when Israel successfully completed the Entebbe raid?) The Stonewall riots galvanized gay men into self-respect and political action.

In June of 1970, on the first anniversary of Stonewall, a few hundred homosexuals gathered in Sheridan Square to march to in Central Park. When the front column of marchers reached the Sheep Meadow, climbed the hill at the Meadow's far side, and turned and saw that their numbers had swelled to three thousand, they applauded and wept.

The past 18 years since Stonewall have been a hard uphill battle. It took 15 years to convince the New York City Council to pass the Lesbian and Gay Rights Bill (and I am proud that some of you wrote to Stanley Michaels last year reinforcing his support for the bill). The annual Lesbian and Gay Pride Day Parade is an important ritual. It is a time for lesbians and gay

As late as 1969, the Village Voice refused to print a classified ad announcing a Gay Community Dance on the grounds that the word "gay" was obscene. As late as 1970 the New York chapter of the National Organization for Women refused to use the word "lesbian" in its publications. As one NOW representative put it, "Suppose lesbians notice the word and flock to us in droves. How horrible. After all, think of our image."

Yes, think of our image! If we have the courage to print in our Messenger the words "The Oneg Shabbat will be sponsored in honor of Lesbian and Gay Pride Day" it will affect our image. It will show that we really mean it when we say that all are welcome at Beth Am. It will show our children and grandchildren some of whom will turn out to be lesbian or gay, that among us they may feel at home.

Ken yehi ratzon. Amen.

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

January 13, 1987

Charles J. Rothschild, Jr.

Homestead
KEEPING POSTED ARTICLE

I asked Aron Hirt-Manheimer to draft a response to the letter you received from David Belin. It is enclosed herewith, together with your original letter from David as well as a copy of the edition of KP involved.

*Handled
with GJR*

MEMORANDUM

From: Aron Hirt-Manheimer
To: Alexander Schindler
Date: January 13, 1987

Dear Alex,

If I understand David Belin's letter correctly, he objects to the Keeping Posted issue on homosexuality for its failure to represent the minority view of the American Psychiatric Association, which generally classifies homosexuality as a medical disorder that can and should be treated.

Belin assumes that the psychiatrist we interviewed, Dr. Lionel Ovesey (see page 11 of the KP) supports the majority APA view (that homosexuality should not be classified as a psychiatric disorder unless it's causing a person difficulties in everyday life). That is not the case. We chose Ovesey specifically because he was outspoken in opposition to the American Psychiatric Association's position.

Dr. Ovesey's classification of homosexuality as "a neurosis, a psychiatric disorder that originates early in childhood" matches that cited by Belin's authority, Dr. Socarides. Dr. Ovesey's differs only in his view of treatment of homosexuals. Ovesey, considered one of the field's leading experts on the subject, believes that psychiatrists and analysts can play a vital role in counseling and treatment of homosexuals, if they want to change and are bisexual. However, in his experience, a homosexual who doesn't want to change is not a successful candidate for therapy and shouldn't be forced by parents or others to submit to analysis.

In summary, the phrase Belin quotes at the beginning of his letter, viz., that the APA no longer classifies homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder, appears at the end of the interview and clearly contradicts Ovesey's own opinion. Perhaps what disturbed David is the subsequent (to my mind enlightened) statement by Dr. Ovesey, that if one is "homosexual and this gives him no trouble, he doesn't need to see a psychiatrist." There are, of course, many shades of opinion, even among those in the APA minority.

I believe we acted responsibly in presenting both the majority and minority positions of the psychiatric community within the context of an issue concerned primarily with issues of homo~~ph~~obia and human rights as applied to this still-persecuted minority.

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

January 9, 1987
8 Tevet 5747

Mr. Aron Hirt-Manheimer

The enclosed letter from David Belin requires a response. Would you please draft something and send it up to me before we do anything further. Your prompt attention will be much appreciated.

Thank you.

LAW OFFICES

BELIN HARRIS HELMICK
TESDELL LAMSON BLACKLEDGE MCCORMICK

A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION

2000 FINANCIAL CENTER

DES MOINES, IOWA 50309

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TELECOPIER (515) 282-7615

Immediat

*Let Bronckhoff continue
to flood it to all
first*

DAVID W. BELIN
CHARLES E. HARRIS
ROBERT H. HELMICK
E. S. TESDELL, JR.
JEFFREY E. LAMSON
FREDERICK C. BLACKLEDGE
MARK MCCORMICK
DAVID L. CLAYPOOL
JON L. STAUDT
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TWX
910 520 2625
(FINA DMS)

December 1, 1986

OF COUNSEL
MATTHEW J. HEARTNEY, JR.
LAWRENCE E. POPE

PHILIP C. LOVRIEN
1911-1980

Mr. Charles Rothschild, Jr.
660 Sunderland Road
Teaneck, NJ 07666

Dear Chuck:

I am writing as a part of my continuing concern about the need for greater scholarship and more balance in presentations of views on important social issues that are submitted to our congregations and their members.

You will remember my earlier correspondence of August 22, 1986 concerning the inadequacies of the information presented to UAHC members on the sanctuary issue and the omission of the facts and perspective included in the winning essay of the 1986 American Bar Association Ross Essay Contest. This letter today concerns what I believe to be a very important omission concerning the issue of homosexuality which was featured in the November, 1986, issue of Keeping Posted (Volume XXXII Number 2) which is distributed to children in our congregations.

On page 12 of the issue there is a question asked in bold faced type: "How does the American Psychiatric Association classify homosexuality?"

The answer is then stated: "They no longer classify it as a psychiatric disorder unless it's causing a person difficulties in his everyday life. If he's homosexual and this gives him no trouble, he doesn't need to see a psychiatrist."

The basic problem is that there are other psychiatric points of view that were not presented in the magazine that would lead one to a different conclusion. For instance, I am enclosing an article written by Dr. Charles W. Socarides of the Department of Psychiatry, Albert Einstein College of Medicine at Yeshiva University, entitled "Homosexuality and Medicine" and published in the JAMA May 18, 1970, Vol 212, No 7. The introductory portion of the article states:

Mr. Charles Rothschild, Jr.
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December 1, 1986

"Homosexuality is a medical disorder which has reached epidemiologic proportions; its frequency of incidence surpasses that of the recognized major illnesses in the nation. Homosexuality may be classified in two categories: Obligatory (true) homosexuality and episodic homosexual behavior. It is essential to differentiate carefully between these types in order to determine the significance of the disorder, its treatment, and its prognosis. This condition is not innate or inborn but is an acquired, learned maladaptation arising from faulty gender identity in the earliest stages of life. Only massive childhood fears can damage and disrupt the standard male-female pattern and ultimately lead to the later development of obligatory homosexuality."

In the last two paragraphs of the article the author states:

"If the homosexual is to be granted his human right as a medical patient, issues which becloud his status should be clarified. Above all, the homosexual must be recognized as an individual who presents a medical problem.

"The whole issue of homosexuality must be transformed into one more scientific challenge to medicine which has time and again been able to alleviate the plaguing illnesses of man. With this respected leadership on the part of the physician, we will see a surge of support for the study and treatment of the disorder by all the techniques and knowledge available through the great resources and medical talent of the United States."

Unfortunately, this point of view was not adequately presented in Keeping Posted. It seems to me that when an entire magazine is devoted to the issue of homosexuality, and where there are at least two major points of view, there should be an adequate presentation of both.

Let me give another specific example. It is true that the American Psychiatric Association Board of Trustees voted to remove homosexuality from the APA Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (Second Edition, 1968--referred to as DSM--II). It is my understanding that the category was replaced by "sexual orientation disturbance" and that the American Psychiatric Association Trustees stated that homosexuality "...by itself does not necessarily constitute a psychiatric disorder." However, after that position was taken by the Trustees, a substantial number of dissenting psychiatrists signed a petition to hold a referendum on the issue. The referendum was held with

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approximately 5,854 members supporting the Trustees' position and 3,810 voted against, with 367 abstentions. The wide split in this memorandum was not noted for the readers of Keeping Posted. (It is my understanding that has been a more recent change in the APA in how it defines homosexuality.)

Commenting on the background of this controversy and the vote that was taken by the members of the American Psychiatric Association, Dr. Joel Klass, a trained psychoanalyst who heads a psychiatric and psychological group in Hollywood, Florida (and who is a cousin of mine) states that there was great political pressure put on the American Psychiatric Association at the time of the vote. Here is what he writes:

"It is of course ludicrous that a scientific organization would vote on determining whether a diagnosis of pathology is indicated for homosexuality. This only confirms the obvious political pressure at the time the American Psychiatric Association struggled with the issue of homosexuality. Most psychiatric residents have minimal training experience in treating homosexuality. In addition, the nature of homosexuality is such that in a general psychiatric residency training insufficient understanding would be obtained to effectively treat this disorder.

"The reasonable approach in 1973, as today, would be to refer the issue of diagnosing the degree of pathology in homosexuality to those experts who have sufficient training experience and effective results.

"Most research and the opinion of knowledgeable experts consistently concludes that the disorder originates in early childhood and is therefore not a matter of free choice for the individual. Of course there are always those unusual exceptions that may exist and that may relate to unusual hormonal problems during gestation or genetic defects. However, the majority of research points to the nurture and not nature origins of homosexuality. In summary homosexuality is not a normal variation but a maladaptive response to abnormal circumstances in the developing child's perceptions within the family.

"My own experience in treating this disorder is consistent with this view. The fact that those psychoanalysts who understand these psychodynamics obtain significantly higher cure rates for the disorder is obviously also convincing."

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The point of all of this is that if Keeping Posted is going to have an article on homosexuality and present "a psychiatric view", it is very incomplete to just present a single psychiatric view when there are basically at least two major schools of thought which are very much different from one another. It is also incomplete to mention the position of the APA without showing the large minority who disagreed. (It is my understanding that among psychoanalysts, a majority would disagree with the position of the APA on this issue).

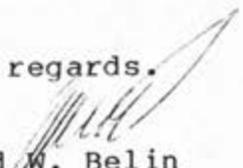
I think that the failure to have adequate presentation of the point of view of Dr. Socarides in the Keeping Posted issue was particularly regrettable in light of the fact that younger people who might be reading the article and who might be homosexual should know that there are significant numbers of trained people who believe that homosexuality is a disorder that can be treated. I know that if one of my children were homosexual, it would be important for me to know that it would be something that could be treated, because I believe in the long run that child would have an opportunity to lead a happier and more productive life if he or she were heterosexual. I also believe that this is in keeping with the Jewish tradition.

As I previously wrote in my August 22 letter to you we justifiably place great reliance upon our professional staff at the UAHC who, as we all know, are people of great ability. However, when people have thrust upon them the confidence of others, particularly in an organization such as ours, there is a tremendous responsibility to make certain that when important national secular issues are presented for consideration by the UAHC trustees, or by our member congregations, or for consideration by our members or their children, or at annual general assemblies, there must be adequate indepth discussion of the facts and of the arguments pro and con. I know that the editors of Keeping Posted have been conscious of this in the past, and I am sure they were conscious in presenting the issue of homosexuality. However, unfortunately, I do not think there was as much scholarship as there should have been in putting the issue together, and I think that there was a failure to present in adequate depth some key facts and also some important alternative opinions.

Mr. Charles Rothschild, Jr.
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I would be interest in your comments. As I did with my letter of August 22, I am sending a copy of this letter to both Donald Day and Matthew Ross.

Best regards.


David W. Belin

jc

Enclosures

cc: Donald Day
Matthew Ross



"Including Non-Traditional Families in the Synagogue"

Sermon by Rabbi Yoel H. Kahn

Temple Brit Kodesh, Rochester New York
March, 16, 1990 - Shabbat Ki Tisah 5750

Thank you, Rabbi Miller. It's an honor to speak from this bimah. I'd like to thank the Rabbis of this Congregation for inviting me to speak here. I would also like to express my thanks to the members of Na'im, Rochester's organization for gay and lesbian Jews, their families and friends, under whose auspices I have made my trip to Rochester this weekend.

I have been asked to speak about families and inclusiveness in synagogues. I realized as I prepared my remarks that I have certain stereotypical images of "family," and I thought: well, where do those come from and are they entirely true? What do Jewish sources tell us about families? So I went back to the oldest Jewish source we have, the Bible. And what do we find there?

Adam and Eve, the first family, have trouble putting down roots because they are transferred by the corporation just when they are getting used to their first home. A few verses later, the text marks the first recorded case of family violence when one son rises up and kills the other. The first nuclear family is not a very promising beginning.

What of the Patriarchs? Abraham, Isaac, Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael - the first blended family. While Isaac may not have been physically harmed by his father's desire to slay him on Mt. Moriah, according to the midrash, Sarah his mother swooned and died when she heard the news. Nor should we overlook the contrast between the ascent up the mountain together, so famous for the unity between father and son, "V'yalchu shneihem yachdav," and their descent from the mountain, separately. In fact, if you look at the Biblical text closely, you will see that Isaac never again speaks to his father, Abraham.

Isaac's unhappy home life as a child is repeated in his own family. His two sons, Jacob and Esau, are embroiled in perpetual quarrel. His wife and son join together to deceive him and thwart his explicit intentions.

And the pattern continues. Considering his childhood background, we should not be surprised that Isaac's son Jacob is again a poor father. The result is intense jealousy amongst his children, and yet another generation in which child deceives the parent. This time, the intensity grows, as the brothers convince Jacob that his son Joseph has been killed - when in fact, he has merely been sold as a slave to a passing caravan of Midianite traders. Need must I continue? Now, of course this is a selection. We should not overlook the many different accounts of family loyalty, filial love and marital happiness recorded in our sacred texts. The Torah is honest, it never suggests that our relationships are simple or free of pain or anger. The Torah's portrayal of family life amongst the patriarchs and matriarchs is surely not prescriptive - these are hardly the models of Jewish family and relationships which we would wish for. But Torah is forthrightly descriptive - without covering up, it admits to the many blemishes that families frequently have.

What of modern families? Has anything changed so substantially in the intervening thousands of years? Basic human relationships have not. I will not quote you statistics or percentages, but we know that families in general, and Jewish families, too, despite our continuing communal denial - have incest, know violence, we know that Jewish men do batter their wives, that some Jewish parents do abuse their children. Far less critically, within your own extended family, are there perhaps parents who do not speak to children, siblings who do not recognize each other - is there not jealousy, anger, deep disappointment? Our ability to hurt one another has not diminished over time.

I am not here to recommend the abolishment of the family, or even to propose radical alterations or rearrangement - however, I do suggest that our discussion needs a bit more honesty. It is necessary to give up our Norman Rockwell-like idealization of what families are and accept that the reality of the family as a less than perfect human institution. Having done so, we will perhaps more readily come to understand the need for and place of alternative families.

What is different about our modern families is their composition. The nuclear family is the core unit of relationship within which we live is a relatively new phenomenon. The nuclear family has in fact displaced a more ancient primary model, the extended family. When parents and children lived in the same town or near geographical area, a person was part of a multigenerational, multi-household network. Each person was part of both an immediate family and also linked through extended lines of relationship to the wider community.

In contrast, as numerous studies illustrate and our own life experience can often attest, the modern family is characterized by mobility throughout the life cycle. Buffeted about by the demands of corporate loyalties or employment opportunities, few of us live as adults in the same states, let alone communities, in which we were born.

I want to assure you that I have no nostalgia for Tevye's shtetl or the crowded tenements of the lower East Side. I do though believe that the concept of the extended family needs to be recovered and consciously reestablished in order to build and extend the family life of our community. And, I would argue, the synagogue has a special role and opportunity to lead this campaign - in order to strengthen our families and the synagogue itself.

So what did the traditional community, with its extended family structure, have that our communities lack? It had a place for those who did not fit into the normative definition of family. If we look at the historical record, we will find innumerable examples of single parent families, blended families, of people who - for whatever reason - were living alone. The traditional community found a place for them, accepted them and took them in. I do not think that I am suffering from romantic nostalgia if I suggest that it was more likely in a traditional community for a single person, a widower, or a student to be included around another family's Shabbat table. Then, just like today, such a person was an outsider, a guest. But there also was a social contract that the community as a whole had a responsibility to these individuals. At the synagogue, roles and social grouping were not entirely assigned by age or marital status. Surely these played a part - but the synagogue was also a place where the boundaries between young and old, single and married, rich and poor could be transcended.

So my first suggestion about how our synagogues can be more inclusive is to resist the continual subdividing of our families. Let's resist the trend to provide increasingly specialized outreach and programming, ever more precisely identifying the segments of the shul market share that we are trying to target and instead focus our efforts on integration - elders with youth, singles with married and all the other permutations. I am perfectly aware of the natural gravitation from the members of each group to seek out their own peers, but family by definition is not homogeneous and I think that we can and should greatly resist the continual subdividing into perceived special interests and instead seek ways to build programs and activities which are of common appeal. For this continual spinning off into special interest sub-groups helps to reinforce the concept that there is a single mainstream standard over here and then all the deviants who are different. In our modern world, the extended family - a rich mix of different ages, different households, bound together by common history, shared commitment and ongoing interaction - need not be organized along biological or marital lines. The synagogue can be the place of building and common meeting for our new extended families. The activities which are most central to the synagogue community: worship, celebration, study, Jewish action commitment and action lend themselves to intergenerational and interfamilial observance.

Now heterogeneous, multi-generational chavurot within the synagogue are a beginning. Having said this, I also want to point out that it's not enough to simply include those who have been marginalized by giving them a seat at the seder, inviting them to our Shabbat table, or helping them to start a Chavurah, although these are indeed worthy activities. I believe that a truly inclusive synagogue community can and should give full recognition and value to the non-traditional families in our community and in our synagogue.

So who are and what are "non-traditional" families? There are blended families in which either or both parents bring children from a previous marriage and all are living together; there are single parent families; there are same sex couples; and there are there are gay and lesbian single parents, gay and lesbian couples with biological and adopted children. There are married people who are unable - for a variety of different reasons - to have children. There are

people who are single.

All of these alternative families are somehow in conflict either with the prescriptive model of our secular culture or what the Jewish tradition has valued until now and often both. How then can the Jewish community, in general, and synagogues in particular, respond? In recent years, we have witnessed three different responses.

The ideal Jewish "lifestyle" most of us grew up learning about is a life-long, heterosexual, procreative marriage with a Jewish partner. And in order to uphold this ideal of what ought to be, rabbis and synagogues have sometimes denied that other types of families exist at all. All who did not fit the mold were simply rendered invisible.

And it's not as if these alternative families are something entirely new. They are not, they have been here all the time - throughout our history - divorced families, blended families, single parent families, same sex families - even if we have chosen not to see them. Only in recent years, as evidenced by such important steps as the Reform movement's outreach program and Brit Kodesh's own recent vote to change its definitions of synagogue membership, has this communal denial begun to be overcome.

The second possible response offers acceptance but withholds approval. This position admits the reality we are not all of the same cloth, not all relationships or family situations are the same - but the message ultimately is one of disapproval: you cannot be a leader in the synagogue or community, we will not validate your relationship, we will not support or encourage the stability of your commitments.

The argument in defense of this position is that if we move to explicitly encourage or support the non-traditional family, we will be undermining what Judaism has stood for over the generations and endanger the already precarious position of the traditional family.

This is the position that most of my colleagues who are rabbis in the Reform and Conservative movement hold and I suspect what many of you are thinking right now. And this is where I must tell you I am in fundamental disagreement. My disagreement is both tactical and religious.

Religiously, I believe that our concept of Jewish covenantal obligation needs to be expanded. Now stay with me for a moment as I wax theological, just for a paragraph. Jewish responsibility is threefold - we have obligations to God, to Torah and to the people of Israel. As a Jew, I am committed to Torah, as our people have understood it and as we understand it today. And Torah, in its widest sense, is the on-going expression of our people's relationship with God. So as an individual Jew, I am bound by my commitments to God, to Torah and to the people of Israel. And I speak collectively of these together as my Jewish covenantal obligation.

The essence of covenant is relationship and commitment. Historically, the Jewish tradition has taught that the proper expression of individual Jewish

life in the context of covenantal obligation is through heterosexual marriage and parenting. Simply put, to be a "good Jew," this is what you have to do. I do not advocate the abdication of this standard. However, I do insist tonight that we do not undermine it if we acknowledge this is not the only standard of Jewish living. Not everyone is able to meet that strict standard of covenantal obligation - can we not also affirm other standards of covenantal obligation through which it is possible to responsibly fulfill Jewish citizenship and responsibility? If at the core of covenant is Jewish commitment, Brit Kodesh, can we acknowledge that commitment can be our ideal, that kiddushin, sacred relationships, between people are a reflection of the kedushah, the holiness of God, but that not everyone need express that commitment heterosexually? Can we teach that parenting is a Jewish responsibility and that ensuring the future is a fundamental Jewish act of faith - but that not everyone can or even should be parents. Can we create other ways to fully assume this responsibility - as adoptive and foster families, as teachers, god-parents, aunts and uncles, youth workers, and dedicated synagogue volunteers. I believe that we should continue to teach our young people that Judaism believes - and we believe - that loving marriage is good. But we don't believe that marriage is good if it damages the soul or the self; and for some people, the primary commitment and loyalty in their lives will be best expressed in friendships and other relationships. I am for a plurality of Jewish ideals of relationship and covenantal commitment. So that was my theological argument. Perhaps two paragraphs, not just one.

Let's talk about taklis (as you know the Greek tactics comes from the Yiddish taklis). So my tactical suggestion is that this endorsement of Jewish diversity will not erode support for the traditional family. History, tradition, social rewards, and natural interest will lead those who are able to build traditional families. We should not be teaching that Jewish responsibility is abdicated by those who do not meet a single standard - instead, let us teach that responsibility can properly be expressed in different ways. Honoring a lesbian couple by having them light candles on Shabbat at our synagogue is not going to dissuade any of our young people from heterosexual marriage; it can be a model for all of us though about the possibility of enduring commitments in the face of adversity and send a message to the 10% of our children and adults who are gay that they have a place in the synagogue. The acknowledgement that not everyone can and should be parents will not radically alter or reduce the birth rate in the Jewish community. It can, however, produce a generation of healthier children who are nurtured by the entire community and who are in life-long contact with adults outside their immediate family. Finally, the welcoming of non-traditional families into the synagogue will help heal the rifts between parents and children, brothers and sisters, and begin to bring back all those who have been excluded or left out because they were made to feel unwelcome.

The consequences of our present course in the Jewish community, the rejection or continuing invisibility of non-traditional families will be their continuing exclusion from the home, the family circle, the synagogue and the Jewish community. Told that they have no place, these words become then self-fulfilling prophecy when the family members - old and young - are made to feel unwelcome and find themselves cut off from family, tradition and

community. What else can we expect from them? Met with coldness and rejection, what kind of strength of commitment is necessary for these people to return and none-the-less cling to Torah and Judaism, despite the rejection they have known.

This week's Torah portion, Ki tisah, begins with the words, Ki tisah et rosh adat b'nai Yisrael, "When you take take a census of the Israelite people..." Now the Hebrew phrase, Ki tisah, is not just "count," which the English word census suggests to us; it literally means "when you lift up the heads of the people of Israel" to see who is numbered amongst them, for to be numbered amongst the people of Israel is to have one's head lifted up. May the day yet come when all of our families can proudly lift their heads and be fully numbered amongst the people and household of Israel. Ken yehi ratzon. So may it be. Amen.



Union of American Hebrew Congregations

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

Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman
Director of Program

April 27, 1984

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut
Holy Blossom Temple
1950 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5P 3K9 CANADA

Dear Gunther:

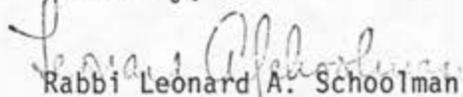
I think we need to put our heads together on the matter of the article on homosexuality in the Leviticus Commentary.

I want to share with you my most recent communication from Dr. Rankin. I am also enclosing all the other communications I have received on the subject. I would appreciate it very much if you would telephone me after you've had a chance to digest the material.

Having just re-read the essay, I think that some changes of nuance might be appropriate. However, the essence of the Bamberger essay should stand. Rankin's suggestion re the three psychiatrists is intriguing.

With warm fond wishes to you and Elizabeth.

Cordially,


Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman
Director of Program

LAS:jh
Encl.

cc: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler ✓

April 5, 1984

Dr. Robert M. Rankin, President
Congregation Sha'ar Zahav
Post Office Box 5640
San Francisco, CA 94101

Dear Mike:

Thanks very much for your letter of March 5 and for the prayer books which you so graciously sent to me.

I regret my delay in responding to you, but I am now without a secretary. Unfortunately, the weekend of May 18, 19 and 20 is the Annual Spring Board meeting of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. This is a command performance for me. Therefore, I regret very much that I will not be able to participate in the dedication of your new synagogue.

I expect to be in San Francisco in the course of the summer. Hopefully, I will be able to find the time to visit your congregation at that point. Morrie Hershman will have my schedule, and will be able to make the arrangements for me.

The various revisions of the Torah Commentary essay on homosexuality are out to readers, and their comments are now coming back. As you might have expected all of the responses are not what we would like to hear. I will have to sift through them, and show you a revised essay. This will be done in the next several weeks.

With warm good wishes,

Cordially,

Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman
Director of Program

cc: Rabbi Morris M. Hershman

שער זהב



SHA'AR ZAHAV

P.O. BOX 5640, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94101
PHONE (415) 621-2871

CONGREGATION OF THE GOLDEN GATE

March 5, 1984

Rabbi Leonard Schoolman
Director of Program
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
New York, N.Y.

Dear Rabbi Schoolman:

On behalf of the Board and officers of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, I would like to invite you to attend and participate in the dedication of our new synagogue. The dedication and celebration will begin on Friday evening, May 18, with a special Shabbat service, and will continue throughout the weekend. On Sunday the 20th the "main event" will include a speech by Mayor Feinstein and participation by a number of local dignitaries, including Rabbi Hershman. We'd like to have you take part in that event as well, if there is a chance you can be in San Francisco at that time.

We're sending out invitations listing the names of participants, and we'll need to know who is coming by March 19th. If you could let me know by then, I'd appreciate it. Having you here would be a big plus for us, and as clear a message of Union support as there could possibly be.

Meanwhile, all is well with the Congregation. We begin to interview some of the applicants for the position of rabbi in the next few weeks, and with a little mazel we'll have that person hired and on board by this summer.

I'll be looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Rankin, M.D.
President, Congregation Sha'ar Zahav

cc Rabbi Hershman

Lennie - Hope you can make it! I haven't heard from Paul Vaneck re the Biennial Committee.. should I call him directly? What's happening to the Torah Commentary revision? L.A. & Miami had nothing more to contribute. San Francisco is beautiful in May!!

October 10, 1985

Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman
Washington Hebrew Congregation
Massachusetts Avenue & Macomb Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Josh:

I do see your point now, and I, too, would not want the Union or the CCAR to endorse homosexuality as a preferred (or pampered) life style. But I ~~just don't think~~ calling fellow Jews and fellow congregants "brother and sister Jews" constitutes such an endorsement. It certainly was not the intention.

I do appreciate your taking the time and trouble to articulate your view on most of the specifics you mention. I do agree with you.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

*Ashtal
how I should answer*

See my draft

WASHINGTON HEBREW CONGREGATION
Massachusetts Avenue and Macomb Street, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20016 • (202) 362-7100

JOSHUA O. HABERMAN, D.H.L.
Senior Rabbi

September 26, 1985

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Alex,

You either didn't see my point or did not want to see it.

The Biennial reference to Jewish homosexual "brothers and sisters" is altogether exceptional. It singles them out in terms suggesting a favorite people status. Previous Biennial programs express concern and solidarity with various groups of Jews: Israeli Jews, Soviet Jews and, I believe, also Ethiopian Jews. But, to my knowledge never did any of our previous programs refer to any of them as "brothers and sisters." This exceptional reference to homosexuals is puzzling.

So, what's my point? Many of our constituency, myself included, share a deeply human concern for the plight of homosexuals. There is need for understanding, sensitivity and even legal protection of their civil rights. So far, I am sure, we have a near consensus.

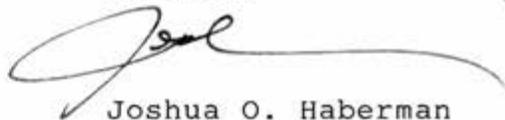
But there is a very real difference among us as to our moral and religious judgment on homosexuality, on matters of public policy and especially congregational policy with regard to homosexuals. I am not prepared to concede that homosexuality is a perfectly normal option and morally equivalent to heterosexuality. For example, I can see justification in certain restrictions on homosexuals (to mention only one example: I would not like to see homosexuals appointed as Boy Scout leaders). I have grave doubts about the wisdom of separating Jewish homosexuals in special homosexual congregations. I am vehemently opposed to the consecration of homosexual "marriages" by any rabbi or synagogue and, therefore, suspicious of anything that looks like a trend in that direction.

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
September 26, 1985
Page 2

I believe before we are swept off our thinking feet by a tide of do-goodism, we should consult with our rabbinic colleagues in the Conference how far we want to move from a toleration of homosexuality as private preference to an official and public endorsement of homosexuality by our movement. The reference to homosexual Jews as "brothers and sisters," because of its exceptional nature, implies more than toleration, more than acceptance. It suggests full approval, even a pampering commendation. To this I object. I hope you see my point.

With best greetings and good wishes for the New Year,

As ever,



Joshua O. Haberman

JOH:bg

cc: Mr. Albert Vorspan

I do appreciate your taking the time to trouble to articulate your views. On most things I specify your intention. I do agree with you.

Dear Josh:
I do see your point now, and I too would not want the Union or the CCAR to endorse homosexuality as a preferred (or pampered) life style. But I just don't think calling fellow congregants "brothers and sisters" constitutes such an endorsement; it certainly implies an intention.

*Homosexual
Evry*

✓

September 17, 1985

Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman
Washington Hebrew Congregation
Massachusetts Avenue at Macomb, NW.
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Josh:

As I take it, the Biennial workshop is to deal with the problems of Jewish homosexuals. Indeed, the participants will be members of our several synagogues whose membership is made up predominantly of Jewish gays. I hope this answers your question.

All the best for the New Year.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Mr. Albert Vorspan

*Side -
That's a slip
you know we
have now Jewish
Gays in our
Syn*

WASHINGTON HEBREW CONGREGATION

Massachusetts Avenue and Macomb Street, N.W.

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20016 • (202) 362-7100

JOSHUA O. HABERMAN, D.H.L.
Senior Rabbi

September 12, 1985

*Ask all to
people -
+ to please
answer
with me!*

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Alex,

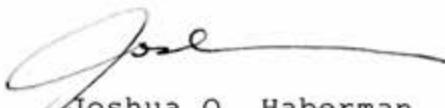
A recent program outline of the forthcoming biennial in Los Angeles lists a workshop entitled "Toward an Understanding of Our Homosexual Brothers and Sisters." I am puzzled. Many previous biennials dealt with the problems of deprived or underprivileged groups, but never before have we referred to such victims as "brothers and sisters." During the civil rights struggle we did not refer to victimized blacks as our black "brothers and sisters." We never referred to the unemployed, or poor, or orphans, or widows, etc., who all merit our sympathy, as our "brothers and sisters."

Why all of a sudden this unusual accentuation of our concern for homosexuals?

I have no objection at all to consideration of the civil rights or spiritual or moral problems of homosexual Jews. However, must we turn them into the darlings of the UAHC? Aren't we overdoing it?

Best regards,

As ever,


Joshua O. Haberman

JOH:bg
Enclosure

cc: Albert Vorspan

*Say these are Jews -
even our Congregants
we're talking about!*



Please Help Us to Plan Better For You

There are about 40 workshops, seminars and Torah sessions on Thursday and Friday. The Century Plaza Hotel has many rooms of varying sizes. By indicating on this sheet which sessions you plan to attend, you will help us to assign a room of sufficient size for each program.

To facilitate registration, please complete.

I shall arrive in Los Angeles on (day) _____ at approximately (time) _____ on (airline) _____.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31: (Check If You Plan to Attend)

- 1:30 to 5:00 p.m. Field Trip to Emanuel and Stephen S. Wise Day Schools
- 2:00 to 7:00 p.m. Study Kallah at HUC-JIR, Los Angeles (A variety of themes led by faculty).
- 7:30 p.m. First Timers Dessert and Coffee.
- 8:00 p.m. **Special Pre-Biennial Conferences**
(If you check one of these boxes, we will send you full background material. This constitutes your pre-registration commitment.)
 - a) Case Studies in Medical Ethics.
 - b) Coping with Synagogue Change.
 - c) Seminar on Estate and Tax Legislation.
 - d) Establishing a Certification Program for Reform Mohalim—limited to physicians and rabbis. I am a rabbi _____
I am a physician _____
(indicate specialty) _____
 - e) NFTB/JCS Programming Seminar

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1:

8:30 a.m.
OPENING PLENARY SESSION
 Addresses by
Mayor TOM BRADLEY, City of Los Angeles
Chairman CHARLES J. ROTHSCHILD, JR., UAHC Board of Trustees

- 10:00 a.m. to 12 Noon **Focus on Current Issues**
 - f) Insights into Youth Suicide.
 - g) Cults & Missionaries.
 - h) Programming for Interfaith Couples (Affiliated and unaffiliated, parents of couples, pre-college students of interfaith couples).
 - i) Toward an Understanding of Our Homosexual Brothers and Sisters.
 - j) Can a Modern Reform Jew Pray?
 - k) Responding to our College Students Needs.
 - l) Israeli Opportunities and Aliyah Seminar (Reform Kibbutzim, Har Chalutz, Youth Israel programs, Aliyah, Religious Pluralism).
- 12 Noon to 1:30 p.m. Lunch for Presidents of Medium Size Congregations (250-899 member units). (Further details will follow.)
- 12 Noon to 1:30 p.m. Lunch for Presidents of Small Congregations. (Further details will follow.)

Please indicate size: Members: 121-249 Under 120

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1: (continued)

- 10 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Presidents of Large Congregations (900 +)
(Including lunch. Further details will follow.)
- 1:45 to 5:00 p.m. Curriculum Implementation Workshop
My congregation uses NEW curriculum _____
My congregation does NOT yet use NEW curriculum _____
- 1:45 to 5:00 p.m. Leadership Development Seminar.
My congregation has had a UAHC Leadership Seminar _____
- 1:45 to 3:15 p.m. Leadership Workshops
Youth Israel Programming
Parenting Programs Responding to Disabled Needs
3:30 to 5:00 p.m. Finance (Medium Size Congregations) Caring Community
Programming for Small Congregations Programming for Senior Members
Special Education Day School Seminar



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838 Fifth Avenue
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BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

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Congregation _____

Your Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

PLEASE TAPE HERE



Veterans
Administration

In Reply Refer To:

April 19, 1984

Rabbi Leonard Schoolman
Director of Program
UAHC
New York, N.Y.

Dear Leonard:

Many thanks for your nice letter.

I'm sorry you can't make it to the Dedication, but I certainly understand. Unfortunately, the same conflict is making it necessary for me to miss the first Biennial Program Committee meeting. I sent my apologies to Paul and Iris.

I do hope you can get to San Francisco this summer or early fall; we'd love to have you at one of our services. I'll coordinate your schedule with Morrie.

As for the "not entirely positive" comments on the homosexuality section for the Torah Commentary, I'm not at all surprised. First of all, it's not a perfect document and it certainly can be improved.

Second, I'm under no illusion that everyone is understanding and empathetic, no matter how supportive the Union is. Even here in San Francisco, a liberal, young, progressive Rabbi can deliver a sermon which would have the Rev. Jerry Falwell grinning from ear to ear! Robert Kirschner, assistant Rabbi at Emanu El, did that just last Shabbat. And wouldn't you know that was the Congregation I would choose to worship with that Saturday!

We both know how complex this topic of homosexuality is. One can't speak of it intelligently without considering both the theological and scientific aspects. I'm hoping the theologians among you will take a really creative approach. Since we now know that homosexuality is neither a disease nor a conscious choice (except in the sense that one can choose to be sexually active with a same sex partner or celebrate), there is a wonderful opportunity to say something significant about relationships, from a modern religious perspective.



Veterans
Administration

In Reply Refer To:

- 2 -

As a psychiatrist I can tell you that when two people pair off, the relationship can be nourishing, loving, supportive, and sustaining--or it can be exploitative and toxic. That is true in both gay and non-gay relationships, and religion certainly should have something meaningful to say about it.

No one could rightfully challenge a religious perspective which demands that relationships be monogamous, loving, and long lasting (though many would challenge it).

If your committee of reviewers decides simply to restate the Leviticus passages, then Reform Judaism will have missed a golden opportunity, and in the thinking of sophisticated people will have lost credibility in this area. The Union will be viewed as the Roman Catholic Church is viewed on the issue of birth control--as largely irrelevant.

If the final draft simply reflects the traditional position, then that, I think, is simply bad theology. For that we can turn to the Orthodox theologians. But if it reflects bad science, an outdated theory that clinicians, sociologists and anthropologists have long since moved beyond, then it is a more serious matter. I think that would be embarrassing for the Union.

For that reason, I'd strongly suggest you consult the three men whose names I include with this letter. All three are former presidents of the American Psychiatric Association, all are heterosexual, all are Jewish, and all have written extensively on the subject. You can trust their objectivity and knowledge far more than you can trust mine.

I hope the Board meeting goes well, and again, I'm looking forward to showing off our happy little group of feigeles when you're in San Francisco.

B'Shalom,

Mike

Mike Rankin, M.D., President
Congregation Sha'ar Zahav

p.s.: The Los Angeles Congregation asked that I pass their comments on to you, which I do herein.

*by separate
cover*

Medical Center

4150 Clement Street
San Francisco CA 94121



**Veterans
Administration**

In Reply Refer To:

Psychiatric Consultants in the Field of Homosexuality

Dr. Judd Marmor
10889 Wilshire Blvd.
Suite 909
Los Angeles, Ca. 90024
213-223-2512

Dr. Alfred Freeman
New York Medical College
Valhalla, NY 10595
914-347-5360

Dr. John Speigel
Brandeis University
Heller Building--Room 105
Waltham, Mass. 02154

RABBI A. STANLEY DREYFUS
Rabbinical Placement Commission
21 East 40th Street
New York, NY 10016
(212) 684-4990

March 20, 1984

Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Leonard:

Thank you for your invitation to comment on the proposed revision of the section on homosexual behavior in the Torah Commentary.

I am enclosing several suggested revisions of the revision submitted by Dr. Robert M. Rankin and his colleagues.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stanley M.", written in dark ink.

ASD;bf

c: Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut

Paragraph 1, line 1 --retain the original "absolute condemnation."

There is nothing "apparent" about it.

line 8: publicly

Paragraph 3, line 4 --delete comma after 1974

lines 5-10 --delete from "Dr. Judd Marmor...discrimination."

Paragraph 6, lines 4-5 --delete the sentence "Nor are they...the other."

Paragraph 8, line 4 --after "women and men." add, from paragraph 3,

"As Dr. Judd Marmor, past president of the American Psychiatric Association, writes in his book Homosexual Behavior: a Modern Reappraisal, 'The vast majority of homosexual men and women ask only to be accepted as human beings and allowed to live their own lives free of persecution or discrimination.' Yet to the extent that homosexual activity represents a conscious choice, then the heterosexual Jewish community, while respecting the freedom of men and women to select their personal life-styles, is equally free to express its disapproval of practices which violate Jewish sexual morality as Jews have historically understood it."

Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman

February 7, 1984

Torah Commentary Advisory Committee

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut; Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

THIRD PRINTING OF COMMENTARY

I am pleased to inform you that the Torah Commentary is doing so well that we are now ready to think about a third printing. In this new printing, we are eager to make those corrections which are necessary. We are also adding the cantillation notes.

Therefore:

1. If you have any corrections, please let me have them immediately.
2. I was visited by representatives of the association joining together those congregations which are primarily homosexual. They felt certain nuances of Bernard Bamberger's essay on homosexuality were inappropriate. I invited them to suggest changes, without making any commitments to use their material.

Attached are Mike Rankin's letter of transmittal and the revised essay. May I have your views at the earliest possible time.

Thanks and good wishes.

שער זהב



SHA'AR ZAHAV

P.O. BOX 5640, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94101
PHONE (415) 621-2871

CONGREGATION OF THE GOLDEN GATE

February 2, 1984

Rabbi Leonard Schoolman
Director of Program
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
New York, N.Y.

Dear Rabbi Schoolman:

As you requested, my colleagues and I have prepared a revision of the section on homosexuality written by Rabbi Bamberger for the first edition of the TORAH COMMENTARY.

The revision is approximately the same length as the original, and much of what Rabbi Bamberger wrote has been retained. We have removed those lines which contained inaccurate information, or which were offensive in tone. And we have added information which will bring the piece up to date with current scientific thinking on homosexuality.

Since the original bibliography will not be altered, we included the title of Dr. Marmor's book in the text. It is the volume most used in teaching health professionals about homosexuality, and is a fine reference for the general public as well.

We would be most interested in following the process through to publication. Specifically, I'd be happy to discuss the piece with your editorial board if they have questions or concerns.

Thanks very much, Leonard, for allowing us the opportunity to make these all important changes. This seems to me to be another indication of the fairness and support we have come to expect from the Union.

B'Shalom

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike".

Robert M. Rankin, M.D.,
President, Congregation Sha'ar Zahav

cc: Rabbis Hershman, Thal, Marder
Dr. Cooper, Dr. Tom Johnson,
Mr. Freier.

REVISION OF SECTION ON HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR

5. HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Far more controversial, from the modern standpoint, is the apparent condemnation of sexual relations between males (18:22)--conduct for which the death penalty is prescribed (20:13) (21). We have no record of a death sentence for this crime being carried out under Jewish auspices. Apparently, Christian courts executed some persons for sodomy during the Middle Ages. Up to the present, persons who commit homosexual acts are subject to severe prison sentences in many countries, including some parts of the United States--even in the case of consenting adults. A number of homosexuals were publically executed in Iran in recent years.

Until recently, homosexuality, especially among males, has been regarded with horror as unnatural, perverted, and degenerate, wherever the Jewish-Christian outlook prevailed. The first public change of attitude in the western world was voiced chiefly by psychiatrists who called for greater compassion toward homosexuals.

In his famous 1935 letter to the concerned mother of a homosexual man, Sigmund Freud wrote, "Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness". In 1974, the American Psychiatric Association deleted the term "homosexuality" from the official list of mental illnesses. Dr. Judd Marmor, past president of the American Psychiatric Association, writes in his book *HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR: A MODERN REAPPRAISAL*, "There is no doubt that ultimately an enlightened and civilized society must rid itself of its homophobic fears and prejudices. The vast majority of homosexual men and women ask only to be accepted as human beings and allowed to live their own lives free of persecution or discrimination."

The summary and rigid condemnation of homosexual conduct found in the Hebrew Bible (22) will leave many modern readers dissatisfied. Whether the time has come to re-think our attitudes toward homosexual relationships is still debated. The subject is difficult to deal with both because of the strong emotions it rouses, and because our understanding of the matter is far from complete. The following statements, however, are probably reliable.

In many cultures there has been little or no objection to homosexual behavior. The ancient Egyptians condemned it (23) but it was widespread among the Greeks. In the Athens of Pericles and Plato, love affairs between teenage boys and older men were frequent and were even considered beneficial for the intellectual and moral development of the younger party. Even in societies that officially ban such practices, they occur more frequently than former generations supposed--or at least admitted. Homosexual behavior has often been noted among lower animals as well. The extent of homosexual activity in a given time or place is conditioned partly by social factors. It is more common where members of the opposite sex are not readily available. The reason for this is that most people cannot be sharply separated into two categories. They can respond to either heterosexual or homosexual stimulation. The exclusively heterosexual and the exclusively homosexual represent extremes; but, as a rule, people are predominantly one or the other.

We do not really know why some people have a predominantly homosexual orientation. There is no known physiological or biochemical distinction between heterosexual and homosexual persons. Homosexual men and women are rarely identifiable by the stereotypical behavior once attached to them. Nor are they more likely than the general population to exhibit neurotic symptoms or traits.

There does not appear to be any successful technique by which a homosexual orientation can be transformed into a heterosexual one, and mental health professionals rarely attempt it.

Our greatest needs at present are to gain more knowledge on the subject, knowledge which is sought objectively and without prejudice; and to insure that individual reactions to this admittedly sensitive subject do not result in the denial of simple justice and fairness for homosexual women and men.

Rabbi Robert I. Kahn D.H.L., D.D.



Congregation Emanu El
1500 Sunset Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77006
(713) 529-5771

Dear Leonard,

I have read the letter and enclosure from Mike Rankin. I take no exception to the revision he has submitted. (I believe that the word "publically" is a misprint).

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Kahn'.

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut, J.D., D.D.

March
Seventh
1984

Dear Lenny,

I have read the suggestions for the revision of the segment on homosexual behaviour, and have the following comments.

A footnote ought to be inserted stating something like this: This section has been somewhat revised from the author's original text to reflect current thinking on the subject.

Line one, the word "apparent" is unacceptable. If a word of lesser punch than "absolute" is wanted, I suggest outright.

End of first paragraph, omit the reference to Iran and instead add: but in Canada, homosexuality has been removed from the criminal code.

Paragraph two, line two, after the words "Jewish Christian" add "or Muslim".

Paragraph five. At the end of line nine, after the word available, the subsequent part of the sentence written by Dr. Bamberger has been omitted. However, what Dr. Bamberger had to say represents - as far as I can determine - incontrovertible fact. I rather think that those who revise the text thought the words "more permissive" to be offensive and I, therefore, suggest that after the word available, you continue as follows: "and where prevailing standards allow for it".

The last paragraph is really the important one and I would be willing to go with it.

One other correction: in paragraph three I would leave out the words "in his book *Homosexual Behaviour: A Modern Reappraisal*". Freud's source is also not quoted and there is no reason to give the Marmor reference in detail.

...../2

Rabbi Leonard Schoolman

March
Seventh
1984

On the whole I think the adjustments are fair and very acceptable, but I repeat that in the first line the substitution of the word "apparent" for "absolute" is not acceptable. The condemnation of the Torah is not apparent, it is in fact outright.

On another matter: I am glad that the title page of the Commentary will have the additional listing "edited by W. Gunther Plaut". I saw a note by Alex which suggested that I be listed as Editor in Chief; I rather think the simple "edited by" will more than suffice.

For the last few years I have sent regular corrections to Stuart, and I trust they will be incorporated.

With cordial regards.

Gunther

WGP:hk

Rabbi Leonard Schoolman,
Union of American Hebrew Congregations,
838 Fifth Avenue,
New York, N.Y.
10021. U.S.A.



Memo RABBI LEONARD A. SCHOOLMAN

From the desk of

3/16/84

9:15 AM

Krantz - leave as is

- No change result of
political pressure.



HEBREW UNION COLLEGE—JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
Cincinnati • New York • Los Angeles • Jerusalem

3101 CLIFTON AVENUE • CINCINNATI, OHIO 45220-2488
(513) 221-1875

February 14, 1984

Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman
Union of America Hebrew Congregations
838 5th Ave.
New York, NY 10021

Dear Lennie:

Congratulations on the publication success of the Torah Commentary. While we others have directed our concern elsewhere, you continue loyally and energetically. Therefore, these congratulations are due to nobody but to you.

I have nothing to contribute to the homosexual question, but by the same token I have nothing against the proposed revisions.

Best regards,

Matitiah Tsevat

MT/bah

Memorandum

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE--JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

Brookdale Center • One West 4th Street, New York, N.Y. 10012 • (212) 674-5300

2/14/84

To: Rabbi Schoolman
From: H.M. Orlinsky

Re the proposed revision of Bernie Bamberger's
5 on "Homosexual Behavior"

(1) Whatever changes may be introduced in Bamberger's text,--unless they should end up being essentially minor--should be clearly indicated as not his. It is manifestly unfair to attribute to him what he did not say, and it is not easy for us to decide whether he would have agreed to the changes had he remained among the living to this day.

(2) I find it very difficult to compare the two versions in the form that you sent them out. Why not reproduce Bamberger's text ~~with~~ of this section, with wide margins, and indicate at each place the changes that are being proposed. In this way, it will be clear at once exactly what is involved. (We began some time ago to do this in the changes being proposed in the RSV, because the old way--the way you now have it--was from many points of view too difficult.

Yes, I have some opinions in the matter; but I got tired trying to follow the texts at each point.

Cordially,

H.M. Orlinsky

TEMPLE ISRAEL

Longwood Avenue and Plymouth Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
Telephone 617-566-3960

RABBI Bernard H. Mehlman

14 February 1984
11 Adar 5744

Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Leonard:

I am in receipt of your memorandum of February 7 concerning the Torah Commentary. I have read over the section of the essay by Rabbi Bernard Bamberger and the proposed revision by Dr. Michael Rankin et. al.

The Rankin essay, while in general an improvement over the Bamberger piece, presents me with certain serious questions. In paragraph 1, the revision uses the word apparent/apparently in the opening three sentences. I find that use of the term inappropriate and inaccurate. There is no "apparent" condemnation or there is not "apparently" the fact that Christian courts executed certain people for sodomy during the middle ages. These are not apparent/apparently true, they are, fortunately or unfortunately factual. The Bible does condemn sexual relations between males, and Christian courts did execute some people for sodomy during the middle ages. In that same paragraph, I am unsure of what purpose the final sentence concerning execution of homosexuals in Iran bears to our subject. I understand, of course, that it makes matters more current and therefore seemingly more appropriate. One of my greatest objections in rereading the Bamberger piece is precisely to those places where he has made remarks which have a time-bound character. They make the essay that he wrote stilted and dated. Will the addition of that sentence in the Rankin piece stick out as dated five years from now?

My most serious complaint about Bamberger and Rankin is there invocation of the words of Sigmund Freud. There seems to be a need on the part of all modern writers who deal with psychological issues to invoke the name of the great master, Freud. One knows that one can quote scripture for whatever end one chooses. It seems that one can quote Freud for whatever point of view one wants to express. I am not an expert in the writings of Freud. I think, however, there is a problem when both those expressing opposition to homosexuality and those attempting to destigmatize it invoke his name. I would

Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman
14 February 1984
Page 2

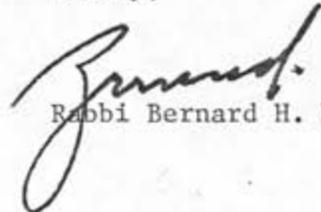
prefer us to steer away from such usages. If we don't keep our distance from that, then this portion of the essay should be submitted to several independent psychiatric experts for some sort of "Din Torah." In paragraph six, I find the language of the second sentence much superior to Bamberger's, "no identifiable glandular disturbances involved," but in the same paragraph, of the Rankin revision, I am not sure that the sentence "nor are they more likely than the general population to exhibit neurotic symptoms or traits," is absolutely correct. I think that there are enumerable symptoms and traits which devolve to the homosexual person, particularly those who have not "come out of the closet."

In general, I would suggest that the section which has been revised should be reconsidered and appropriately edited. I further suggest that the revised section be read by several readers including several psychiatrists. Perhaps it should also be submitted to Dr. Judd Marmor, who is listed as the writer of the work Homosexual Behavior: A Modern Reappraisal. It seems to me most important that we issue in our commentary a statement that is spiritually understanding, but also medically sound.

I shall consider the other question you put to us in the memorandum and will forward any suggestions that I have. I do heartily endorse the adding of cantillation notes to the Hebrew text, which would be a wonderful addition to the commentary.

With best personal regards.

Fondly,



Rabbi Bernard H. Mehlman

BHM/ljm

BETH CHAYIM CHADASHIM



MEMBER UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
6000 WEST PICO BOULEVARD • LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90035 • (213) 931-7023

February 28, 1984

Rabbi Leonard Schoolman
Director of Program
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10021

Dear Rabbi Schoolman:

Enclosed is a copy of my congregation's suggestions for revising the section of homosexuality written by Rabbi Bamberger for the first edition of the Commentary on the Torah. We are in substantial agreement with the revisions that have been forwarded to you by Dr. Rankin of Sha'ar Zahav. Indeed, we used the Sha'ar Zahav revisions as the basis for our discussion. The format of the revisions I am sending you differs from that of Sha'ar Zahav, however. Since much of what we have to say would duplicate what Sha'ar Zahav has already said, I thought it might be useful to the editorial committee to have a sentence by sentence breakdown, indicating clearly the passages that our congregations would like to see deleted, those they would like to see retained (B.C.C. disagrees with Sha'ar Zahav on the passage at the top of page 3 of my breakdown), and those they would like to see altered (again, B.C.C. would like to see alterations in a couple of passages that apparently were acceptable to Sha'ar Zahav--one on page 2 and two on page 3 of the enclosed). We agree additions suggested by the San Francisco congregation, and we have added a couple of our own: one that makes reference to the resolution passed by the General Assembly of the U.A.H.C. in 1977 (page 2) and one that points up the new attitude toward homosexuality that has been taken by psychotherapists in recent years. The thrust of all of these suggested changes is to present a more positive, up-beat attitude toward homosexuality than that expressed by Dr. Bamberger.

I appreciate your willingness to consider these revisions, and I hope you will keep us informed of the decision of the editorial committee regarding them.

Sincerely,



J. Thomas Johnson
President

A sentence by sentence breakdown of the revisions of the section on homosexual behavior suggested by congregations Sha'ar Za'hav and Beth Chayim Chadashim.

5. HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Alter original (SZ)

Far more controversial, from the modern standpoint, is the apparent condemnation of sexual relations between males (18:22)--conduct for which the death penalty is prescribed (20:13) [21].

Retain original

We have no record of a death sentence for this crime being carried out under Jewish auspices. Apparently, Christian courts executed some persons for sodomy during the Middle Ages

The committee at B.C.C.
suggested that the following addition
by S.Z. be verified before inclusion.

and at least one extreme fundamentalist group continues to advocate this punishment today.

Alter original (SZ)

Up to the present, persons who commit homosexual acts are subject to severe prison sentences in many countries, including some parts of the United States--even in the case of consenting adults.

Retain original

Until recently, homosexuality, especially among males, has been regarded with horror as unnatural, perverted, and degenerate wherever the Jewish-Christian outlook prevailed. The first public change of attitude in the western world was voiced chiefly by psychiatrists who called for greater compassion toward homosexuals.

Delete original

Such persons, it was argued, are not criminal but sick; according to Freud, they are examples of arrested emotional-sexual development. They require treatment rather than punishment.

But in the last few years, homosexuals have been identifying themselves as such, instead of trying to conceal their "infirmity." They have demanded an end to persecution and discrimination. They have insisted that adults who find homosexual relationships physically and emotionally satisfying have every right to enter into them. In some instances, they have called for legal and religious recognition of homosexual "marriage." In many cases, this homosexual revolt has been associated with other rebellions against the established order, including women's liberation, various racial movements, and some left-wing groups. Some of the "gay" literature seems to imply a claim of superiority, suggesting that homosexuals are more sensitive, creative, and spiritually advanced than heterosexuals.

Add to original (SZ)

In his famous 1935 letter to the concerned mother of a homosexual man, Freud wrote, "Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness." In 1974, the American Psychiatric Association deleted the term "homosexuality" from the official list of mental illnesses. Dr. Judd Marmor, former president of the American Psychiatric Association, writes in the introduction to his *HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR: A MODERN REAPPRAISAL*, "There is no doubt that ultimately an enlightened and civilized society must rid itself of its homophobic fears and prejudices. The vast majority of homosexual men and women ask only to be accepted as human beings and allowed to live their own lives free of persecution or discrimination."

Add to original (B.C.C.)

In 1977 the General Assembly of the U. A. H. C. overwhelmingly adopted a resolution opposing such discrimination and, as of this writing, there are three congregations in the U. A. H. C. which primarily serve the homosexual Jewish community.

Retain original

The summary and rigid condemnation of homosexual conduct found in the Hebrew Bible [22] will leave many modern readers dissatisfied.

Alter original (B.C.C.)

Perhaps the time has come to re-think our attitudes toward homosexual relationships.

Alter original (SZ)

The subject is difficult to deal with both because of the emotions it rouses and because our understanding of the matter is far from complete.

Retain original

The following statements, however, are probably reliable:

In many cultures there has been little or no objection to homosexual behavior. The ancient Egyptians condemned it [23], but it was widespread among the Greeks. In the Athens of Pericles and Plato, love affairs between teenage boys and older men were frequent and were even considered beneficial for the intellectual and moral development of the younger party. Even in societies that officially ban such practices, they occur more frequently than former generations supposed--or, at least, admitted.

Delete original (B.C.C.)

Homosexual behavior has often been noted among lower animals as well. The extent of homosexual activity in a given time or place is conditioned largely by social factors. It is more common where members of the opposite sex are not readily available and where prevailing standards are more permissive.

Retain original

The reason for this is that most people cannot be sharply separated into two categories. They can respond to either heterosexual or homosexual stimulation.

Alter original (B.C.C.)

To be exclusively heterosexual or exclusively homosexual is relatively rare; but, as a rule, people are predominantly one or the other.

Alter original (SZ)

We do not really know why some people have a predominantly homosexual orientation. No known glandular disturbance is involved.

Delete original

Homosexuals are not necessarily effeminate in appearance and manner; nor do they display any consistent or significant pattern of abnormality in other respects. The Freudian theory of arrested emotional development seems to fit some cases, but not all. In some instances, homosexuality appears to have resulted from maternal domination and the absence of a vigorous father figure; but some homosexuals insist they were such from earliest childhood. The effort to transform

Add to original (SZ)

Homosexual men and women are rarely identifiable by the stereotypical behavior since attached to them. Nor are they more likely than the general population to exhibit neurotic symptoms or traits.

Alter original (B.C.C. revision of SZ)

The effort to transform homosexuals into heterosexuals by psychotherapy has rarely been successful, and attempts by mental health professionals to effect such "transformations" are becoming less and less frequent.

Delete original

Most perplexing, shocking, and pathetic are the occasional cases of married men with children who are arrested for molesting little boys.

Add to original (B.C.C.)

Indeed, many therapists are today seeking to help their homosexual clients achieve personal self-acceptance.

Alter original (82)

Our two greatest needs at present are to end the discrimination to which homosexuals have been subjected for so long; and to gain more knowledge on the subject, knowledge which is sought objectively and without partisanship.

Delete original

The rage that homosexuality evokes in many "straight" people should certainly be avoided. Defenders of the homosexual have argued with cogency that "adultery--which our society views with comparative tolerance--has done far more harm than so-called "unnatural" sex. But, though restraint and tolerance seem to be called for, we should not be stampeded into endorsing and approving these practices.

Congregation Beth Israel

ORGANIZED 1854

5600 North Braeswood Boulevard

Houston, Texas 77096

SAMUEL EGAL KARFF, D.H.L.

RABBI

February 24, 1984

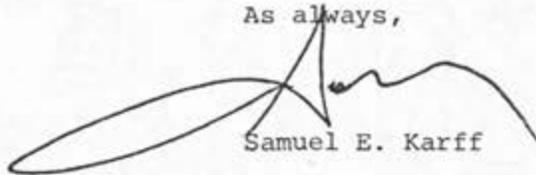
Dear Lenny:

I received the proposed change of the section on homosexuality and am not totally comfortable with it. I certainly would not substitute one of those Freud quotations for the original. At the very least let both stand. My bottom line is that the passage in its revised form should not suggest that we are moving from condemnation and severe sanction (which is certainly unacceptable) to the sense that it is an alternate lifestyle of equal value (also unacceptable). It may well be a condition that must be accommodated, but it cannot be regarded by us as the normative equivalent of heterosexuality.

I am not volunteering to rewrite the section, but I hope this reaction is of some assistance.

It has been too long since we have communicated on "this and that." I hope all is well in your life. Joan joins me in sending fond regards to Diana and the girls.

As always,



Samuel E. Karff

Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

שער זהב



*x-Vanek
Blaut
Lisman
AMS*

SHA'AR ZAHAV

P.O. BOX 5640, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94101

PHONE (415) 621-2871

CONGREGATION OF THE GOLDEN GATE

December 19, 1983

Dear Tom, Jay, Aaron, Stan, and Jerry,

I had a very productive meeting with Rabbi Schoolman in New York last week, and I want to fill you in on it.

The two primary issues we covered were the Houston Biennial, and the section on homosexuality in the Torah Commentary. First the Biennial.

I'm convinced now that there was a genuine misunderstanding regarding the deadline for applying for convention space, and that there was no desire on anyone's part to exclude us because of our sexual orientation. Last spring the UAHC sent out a letter to congregation leaders asking for suggested topics for the one-day session for presidents and vice-presidents. I saw that and assumed incorrectly that it was still possible to reserve space and time for our symposium, which was, of course, to be offered not just to the leadership but to all of the delegates. Since neither Dr. Vanek, the chair of the planning committee, nor Rabbi Schoolman, knew what letter I was responding to, they correctly informed me that the basic agenda and program had already been set. The deadline for applying for space in the general program was months before.

Rabbi Schoolman is very supportive of our having a presentation at the 1985 Biennial in Los Angeles, and I certainly hope we can. He has appointed me to the new planning committee (again chaired by Dr. Vanek, with Iris Franco of Miami as vice chair), and so I will be alert to all application procedures and deadlines.

Regarding the Torah Commentary, Rabbi Schoolman tells me it will go into the second printing in 1984, and he has encouraged us to rewrite the section on homosexuality, removing the offending passages and modifying the patronizing tone. Because of somewhat complex legal agreements with the estate of the late Rabbi Bamberger, the author of the section, it won't be possible to rewrite the whole thing. But I think we can edit it sufficiently to make it reasonably satisfactory. I'll work with people in my congregation to write a draft, and will send that to you in Miami and Los Angeles for your comments and suggestions. We do have to have the finished product to him by March 1st, however.

All in all, I feel very optimistic about all of this, and I hope you do too.

All good wishes for a happy, healthy, and rewarding 1984!

Mr. Tom Johnson
Mr. Jay Freir
Mr. Stan Notkin
Jerry Kreiger, Esq.
Dr. Aaron Cooper

cc Rabbis Schoolman,
Herberman, Thal,
and Marder

ALL DONATIONS TO SHA'AR ZAHAV ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

*Shalom,
Mike*

December 13, 1983

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut
Holy Blossom Temple
1950 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5P 3K9 CANADA

Dear Gunther:

In response to your letter of December 11 let me say this:

Robert Rankin of the gay group in San Francisco who incidentally, is a psychiatrist, is coming to see me this week. I will share with him your letter and Bob Kahn's letter.

Warm good wishes to you and Elizabeth.

Cordially,

LAS/msl

cc: Robert I. Kahn

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut, J.D., D.D.
SENIOR SCHOLAR

December
First
1983

Dear Lenny,

I am submitting herewith some observations and suggestions with regard to the subject of homosexuality as treated by Bamberger. The text to which I will refer is on pages 882 and 883.

Page 882, column 1. Bamberger uses the term "gay" as covering both male and female homosexuals. That may have been accurate at the time, it no longer is. Also, his reference to "some left-wing groups" is very time-bound and should really not be in the Commentary at all. My suggestion, therefore, which will require only the replacement of a single line (line twenty-three from the top), is as follows:

... various other groups. Some of the partisan ...

Column 2, line 16 from the bottom. This is not a good statement. I suggest:

... development finds nowadays only limited support.

Omit the last sentence in that paragraph which I find unnecessarily harsh. I will make up the three lines by adding and changing the top of page 883 first column.

Line 6 and following might read as follows:

... natural" sex. But though understanding is called for, this does not mean that Judaism can be seen as approving of it as an alternate lifestyle. The Bible certainly does not allow for it, and neither does our later literature. Judaism continues to consider heterosexuality as normative for human behaviour. (End of paragraph).

I believe that Bamberger would approve of the above. I have phrased the subject matter in such a way that it fits the space requirements and keeps the cost to a minimum.

...../2

Rabbi Leonard Schoolman.

December
First
1983

There is one additional question: should there be an asterisk at the end of the final paragraph with a footnote that states that the above represents a slight modification of the original text?

With best regards.

Cordially,

Greuther

*P.S. Bro Kalin's comment just arrived,
it is appended. I think that his
suggestion would put BJB down,
which I would not want to do.*

WGP:hk

Rabbi Leonard Schoolman,
Union of American Hebrew Congregations,
838 Fifth Avenue,
New York, N.Y.
10021. U.S.A.

c.c. Rabbi Robert I. Kahn.

Rabbi Schoolman



RABBI ROBERT I. KAHN, D.D., D.H.L.

TEMPLE EMANU EL 1500 SUNSET BOULEVARD
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77005 STUDY 713 529-5771

November 28, 1983

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut
Holy Blossom Temple
1950 Bathurst St.
Toronto M5P 3K9
Ontario, Canada

Dear Gunther,

I have read the Bamberger Commentary on Leviticus 18. I think the only solution might be to add a footnote saying something about this having been written in 1969 (?) before much of the more recent research and thought on the whole subject, and that AT THAT TIME to urge that we not be "stampeded" was in order. This way, we date the material, even as the Bible is dated, and imply that were the commentary to be written in 1983, the attitude might have changed.

It was good seeing you and Elizabeth.

Yours,


Rabbi Robert I. Kahn

RIK/pj

Homosexuality

March 14, 1984

Dr. Eugene Mihaly
HUC-JIR
3101 Clifton Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio 45220

Dear Gene:

Thank you for your extensive response to my recent inquiry.
It was helpful and informative. I am profoundly grateful to
you.

With warmest regards and looking forward to see you soon, I
am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



HEBREW UNION COLLEGE—JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
Cincinnati • New York • Los Angeles • Jerusalem

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DEAN
FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

3101 CLIFTON AVENUE • CINCINNATI, OHIO 45220
(513) 221-1875

*Thanks for
attentive response
to my recent
inquiry*

35 rubles

March 2, 1984

Personal and Confidential

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Alexander Schindler
R. A. Schindler

Dear Alex:

I am responding to your personal and confidential letter regarding the "admission of an applicant to HUC-JIR who admitted that he was a homosexual."

Let me first make clear that it has been the long-standing policy of the College not to admit homosexuals. Though we never published the fact and did not want to make a public issue of it, if a person either professed that he/she was a homosexual, or if our elaborate psychological testing and personal interview indicated as much, that applicant was not admitted to the College. This policy has been in effect through the years, considerably prior to my assuming any administrative responsibility. Our internal guideline, "Standards for Admission," which was drafted a number of years ago, states, "A student must be mentally and physically healthy. Psychological testing (required of candidates prior to final consideration of their applications) is designed to screen out deviates, psychotics, and those students unable to cope with the stresses and pressures of graduate work and ultimately rabbinic responsibilities."

It is also true that some of our students who turned out to be homosexuals were ordained. To my knowledge, however, these men and women were closet homosexuals. They did not, in other words, proclaim the fact publicly, nor was it definitely known by the College until after their ordination. Through the years, the few instances of known homosexuals (and they were very few indeed) quietly left when their homosexuality became known beyond doubt.

Also realize, please, that these policies, along with all other basic policies of the institution, are not the result of the opinion of any one person. They are, in almost all cases, the result of lengthy discussion by the deans, other administrative personnel and faculty, and it is on this basis that the president, who has the ultimate authority under the Board of Governors, decides on the course that we follow.

Recently, and this was a first, a student applied who stated in her bio (required of all applicants) that she is a homosexual; all her previous contacts with Reform institutions have been through a homosexual congregation; and her letters of recommendation were from homosexuals. As a result, the question was raised whether we should study the matter anew or not. At a recent meeting of the Deans' Council, we decided, a decision which I supported, to consider the matter in the light of more recent developments and the most competent advice of experts, etc. We shall proceed to do so.

As to my own personal view, about which you inquire, I certainly do not base it on any negative moral judgment regarding the homosexual. The responsum, which I wrote in answer to questions addressed by you, represents my basic attitude. As I stated there, the homosexual must minimally be considered as acting under duress; he is an *אונס*; he merits compensatory consideration. Certainly, in the eyes of Judaism as understood in the light of our contemporary view of reality, he is not to be judged; he does not bear any moral blemish; he is not to be excluded from any religious activity and is to be welcomed and treated with an extraordinary measure of sensitivity and compassion.

In admitting students as candidates for the rabbinate, we consider, however, many factors. We test a student, for example, to determine his/her academic and intellectual capacities. If a student's GRE scores are below a minimal level, we do not admit him/her. This certainly does not involve any moral judgment regarding the student. It is just that we do not feel that we would be fulfilling our obligation to our constituency by ordaining such a person. Similarly, if a person has serious health problems, or if he/she does not have a sufficiently strong commitment to Judaism, or if he/she tends towards being misanthropic, or if he/she has no commitment to the Jewish people or its history, we would not admit him/her. The admissions committees, in other words, have the responsibility of determining whether an applicant, in terms of his/her total personality, would be an effective rabbi. The College has always viewed this process as one of its most serious and onerous responsibilities.

In spite of our elaborate screening, a number of students are ordained who, for one reason or another, are ineffective, cannot hold a pulpit, and are a lifelong burden to the Placement Commission, the CCAR, and the Reform Movement. In addition, they are frustrated, unfulfilled human beings to whom we would

have done a great kindness had we not admitted them. The College very frequently receives letters of complaint from the Placement Director, rabbis, and laymen asking how we could possibly have ordained certain individuals.

It has been the judgment of the College, a judgment which I have shared, that an overt homosexual will not serve effectively as a rabbi, will not be able to find placement, and will not find fulfillment for him/herself in the profession. There is no moral judgment involved in this. This is simply a view of the practicalities of the situation. Alex, not everyone has to be a rabbi. Every Jew is entitled to be given an opportunity to participate in the institutions of religion, but not everyone is either qualified or suitable for, or will find fulfillment in, the rabbinate.

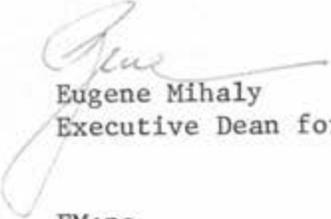
It is possible that my estimate of the situation is incorrect, and that the Reform Movement is now ready to accept as role models for their children, as their officiants, counsellors, and guides, and as spokesmen and spiritual leaders of their community, overt homosexuals. We propose to enter a deliberate process to study the situation.

I repeat that my own personal stance at this time is not based on the regressive, traditional view regarding the homosexual; nor is it a result of any moral judgment. I certainly do not see the homosexual as a sinner. My approach is simply a matter of the realities and practicalities of the current situation. In attempting to explain my attitude at this juncture, I cannot "be learned" or quote classic sources. It is a judgment based on my understanding of current reality.

I much look forward to your forthcoming visit to Cincinnati and hope that we shall have an opportunity to spend a little time together.

With warmest greetings and best wishes, I am

Cordially,



Eugene Mihaly
Executive Dean for Academic Affairs

EM:pg

P. S. A case could be made on the basis of the Codes that a "closet homosexual" is tolerated and no special efforts are made to expose him, as follows: Maimonides in his Code repeats the law as stated in the Mishnah that homosexuality is a capital offense punishable by stoning. Strangely, the Tur does not repeat this law, and neither does Joseph Caro in his Shulhan Arukh. Both only repeat the talmudic statement that "Jews are not suspect concerning homosexuality," and therefore no special precautions like not being alone with another man or sleeping in the same bed with a

male need be taken. The fact that Jacob ben Asher and Caro both omit this law specifically stated in the Mishnah and repeated by Maimonides indicates perhaps that they would just as well not pursue the matter and keep silent about such incidents as long as they were not overt and publicly known.

See, however, the responsum of the Responsa Committee of the CCAR entitled "Homosexuals in Leadership Positions" in the recent collection, American Reform Responsa, pp. 52ff. See also Freehof's responsum in the same volume, pp. 49ff.

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

February 28, 1984

Dr. Eugene Mihaly
HUC-JIR
3101 Clifton Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio 45220

Dear Gene:

The other day Fred mentioned that you opposed the admission of the applicant to HUC-JIR who admitted that he was a homosexual. In the light of your very understanding Responsam on the general problem of homosexuality, I am interested to know why a difference is made, also what the difference is between someone who is discovered to be a homosexual after he is admitted yet not dismissed and such an applicant as noted above. You ought to know, moreover, that to the best of my knowledge, that is to say the best of my information, there was a meeting of men who are homosexuals, many of them married, and well over 35 of our colleagues attended this session. The assumption is that there are many others who for one reason or another did not dare to attend this meeting (the general population statistics are 5% homosexual and there is no reason why the rabbinate should not be paralleled with that - that is to say we must have some 50 to 75 rabbis who are homosexual).

Please do not misunderstand me, I am not challenging your position at all. I am merely eager to be instructed.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



איחוד
ליהדות
מתקדמת
באמריקה

Memo

From the desk of
EDITH J. MILLER

FAX -213-553-0764

May 27, 1988

*Allan & Allen
Prose -
free*

TO: Allan B. Goldman, Esq.

Your memo of May 19 in regard to Gay and Lesbian Rabbis was received but there was no attachment. Would you be good enough to put a copy of Bregman's letter into the mail so Alex will have it when he gets back to the office on Tuesday or Wednesday.

Many thanks. Have a good week-end.

Amos and

Edie

*let me have
it as soon
as you get
it.*

Attached



איחוד
ליהדות
מתקדמת
באמריקה

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
100 WEST MONROE STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60603 (312) ST 2-1477

GREAT LAKES REGION

Rabbi Alan D. Bregman
Director

Gerard W. Kaye
*Director of Camping &
Youth Activities*
Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute

May 16, 1988
29 Iyar, 5748

Mr. Allan B. Goldman
Wyman, Bautzer, Rothman, Kuchel & Siebert
2049 Century Park East
14th Floor
Los Angeles, CA. 90067

Dear Allan,

I tried to reach you by phone last week. You are not easy to catch. I am not complaining as they say the same about me. Let me put in capsule form what I wanted to speak with you about and quickly add that I am contacting you at the suggestion of Bob Kohn who will further discuss this matter with you.

You may or may not be aware but we have had a very complicated and painful experience take place in our region, at Mt. Zion Temple, St. Paul, Minnesota. In short, the associate rabbi came public with the fact that she is a lesbian. Chaos and anguish ensued resulting in the separation of her from the congregation. The details of all that happened are important but somewhat irrelevant to the concerns of Bob and myself. The reason that Bob has asked that I communicate with you first is that, in my judgment, when the first congregation has been confronted with this circumstance, we failed miserably. With all of our resolutions on the books, we did not prepare ourselves adequately for this eventuality. There has been a lot of finger pointing and blaming. But in the end, the congregation has ended up in disarray, the senior rabbi feeling defensive (my opinion) and a very talented and wonderful woman rabbi's career being marred if not ended altogether.

This is my concern. I am aware that there is a CCAR Committee on Homosexuality. I know that one of the agenda items is the gay rabbi among others. However, I am very concerned that this issue is being relegated only to the rabbis. In fact, I would say that this is a terrible mistake. The problem of the gay rabbi is every bit as much a problem of the lay persons as it is of the rabbinate. As the UAHC does not have a mechanism, it allows our congregations not to take responsibility for this issue and related issues dealing with homosexuality.

Chairman
Charles J. Rothschild, Jr.

President
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

President - Great Lakes Region
Robert Kohn

President - Chicago Federation
Helen H. Herst

*B.J.E. Director of Services
to Reform Congregations*
Dr. Betsy Katz

Outreach Coordinator
Mimi Dunitz

Administrative Coordinator
Audrey H. Goldblatt

Therefore, my suggestion is that the national committee be made a joint CCAR-UAHC committee or that the UAHC develop its own mechanism. The fact is this congregation had nowhere to turn for help, guidance and now healing. Of course, I was involved but

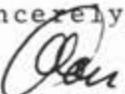
- 2 -

turning to the regional director is not being able to turn to the movement in time of crisis, at least not on an issue such as this.

Bob is very much aware of the situation and has strong feelings about it. I believe that he would like some time to speak to the Board about this responsibility of the UAHC. These are my thoughts, if we don't, someone and it could be me, can say that, we are great at passing resolutions but when it comes time to get our hands dirty with the work, we may deny the reality of the problem.

As you can see, I feel as strongly as Bob about it. I wanted to do some preparation work before he speaks with you.

Sincerely,


Rabbi Alan D. Bregman, Director
UAHC, Great Lakes Region

ADB/mrg

CC: Mr. Robert Kohn

MEMORANDUM

From Allan B. Goldman
To Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Copies
Subject Gay and Lesbian Rabbis

Date 5/19/88

*NO ENCL.
4/19/88
For ABG
and*

Attached is a copy of a letter dated May 16, 1988 that I have just received from Rabbi Alan Bregman. I actually returned his call three times but he was never in -- yet he makes no reference to that. I called him today after receiving his letter, but again he was not in.

I was surprised to see that he did not copy you or Arthur Grant on this letter. //

Let's talk about the feasibility or advisability of seeing if we can convert the CCAR Committee on Homosexuality into a joint committee; or as an alternative see if we can have some UAHC representatives on the CCAR Committee which would remain a CCAR Committee (like we have HUC representation on our Long Range Planning, MUM and other committees and CCAR-Rabbinic representation on other committees).

Frankly, I do not understand what he means when he says "The fact is this congregation had nowhere to turn for help, guidance and now healing." Turning to the Regional Director, who in turn should be able to bring in regional and national lay and professional leadership, does and should bring the Movement to address these problems. We also have the NCRCR. Until I received his letter I was not aware of this matter at all. Is he saying that at some level the UAHC ducked this question and left the congregation adrift? As you can see, I am very puzzled. I want to get a handle on this before considering whether Bob Kohn should bring the subject up to the Board (if we concur that the UAHC should play a role in this area and should have played a role in St. Paul, but that something went awry, then I can discuss this with Bob Kohn; if we feel that there is no role that the UAHC can play, then at some point Bob should probably have a forum at the Board to express contrary views).

ABG:beb

*Subject to final Campaign...
should not
be bear to
over his fire*



Homosexual

November 22, 1989
24 Heshvan 5750

Rabbi Joseph Edelheit
Emanuel Congregation
5859 N. Sheridan Road
Chicago, IL 60660

Dear Joe:

Thank you for your recent letter and your suggestions that a sub-committee be named to guide the process of education in our congregations regarding the issues of gay and lesbian Jews. As a matter of fact, I have just asked Janet Marder to assume this responsibility.

She is in the ~~best~~^{best} position to do so and I am confident she will carry this forward with diligence and devotion.

Andy Rose's book might well be of value but I leave that to Janet to decide. We certainly have many resources on hand for use in providing guidance to the regions and our congregations.

With repeated thanks and warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

*Task Force
on Gay & Lesbian
Rabbis. no file*

December 3, 1986
I Kislev 5747

Rabbi Jack Stern
Westchester Reform Temple
255 Mamaroneck Road
Scarsdale, N.Y. 10583

Dear Jack:

I am responding to your letter of November 25, 1986 in regard to the CCAR Committee on Gay and Lesbian Rabbis. Please forgive the delay but I wanted to double check with Union staff to see if our two appointees would be available for the meeting scheduled for March, 1987. By the way, you are absolutely correct, I agree it is important that this Committee be reconstituted as a Task Force to include the Union and the College-Institute as well as the CCAR.

I have asked Al Vorspan and Richard Sternberger to represent the UAHC on this Task Force. Both are available for the meeting scheduled for March 4-5, 1987. I presume the sessions will be in New York and that you will send pertinent materials to Al and Dick. In the mean time, I am sharing with them the Resolution drafted in February, 1986 as well as a copy of your letter of November 25th.

I look forward to seeing you this weekend, until then warm regards from house to house.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Rabbi Joseph Glaser
Rabbi Selig Salkowitz
Rabbi Richard Sternberger
Mr. Albert Vorspan

cc: RABBI STERNBERGER
AL VORSPAN

אגוד הרבנים המתקדמים ^{12/3/86}

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

21 EAST 40th STREET • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016-0501 • (212) 684-4990

Office of the President
Rabbi Jack Stern
255 Mamaroneck Road
Scarsdale, NY 10583

November 25, 1986

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
UAHC
838, Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Alex,

The enclosed Resolution was submitted for consideration at the 1986 CCAR Convention. Because Joe Glaser and I felt that the matter deserved more studied deliberation than it could receive on the Convention floor, we proposed to the submitters of the Resolution that they remove it from consideration in 1986 with the understanding that a Committee would be formed to study the matter and present a report at the 1987 Convention in Florida.

The Committee met for the first time yesterday, under the Chairmanship of Selig Salkowitz, and we proceeded to formulate an agenda for our research and discussion. It was strongly felt by all of those present that the process would be more productive if we were to be re-constituted as a Task Force representing the UAHC, HUC-JIR and CCAR, rather than as an exclusively CCAR Committee. Since many of the questions will necessarily involve congregation/Rabbi relationships, the participation of UAHC becomes essential.

The recommendation of yesterday's Committee was that you appoint two people, preferably staff members, to join us at our next meeting on March 4 and 5, 1987. (What about Vorspan and Syme?) They will of course receive the minutes of yesterday's meeting as well as various materials which will be circulated.

I hope that this proposal meets with your approval and that you will make the appointments soon. If you have any questions, we can discuss the matter further when we see each other this Monday.

Best from our house to yours.

Sincerely,

Encl.

JS/tr
c.c. Rabbi Joseph Glaser
Rabbi Selig Salkowitz, Chairman

OFFICERS:

Rabbi Jack Stern, President
Scarsdale, NY
Rabbi Eugene J. Lipman, Vice President
Chevy Chase, MD
Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser, Executive Vice President
New York, NY

Rabbi Martin S. Weiner, Treasurer
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Newton, MA

Rabbi Elliot L. Stevens, Administrative Secretary
New York, NY
Rabbi Sidney L. Regner, Executive Vice President Emeritus
New York, NY
Rabbi Jacob R. Marcus, Honorary President
Cincinnati, OH

RESOLUTION ON GAY AND LESBIAN RABBIS

WHEREAS our faith teaches us that every human being is created in the image of God, and every Jew is a member of k'lal yisrael, and
WHEREAS the Reform movement has traditionally interpreted levitical prohibitions in light of broader principles of human sanctity and freedom, and
WHEREAS the Reform movement has a proud history of leadership in the fight to erase discrimination against disfavored and excluded members of our society, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis exemplified this position in 1977 with its resolution encouraging "legislation which decriminalizes homosexual acts between consenting adults and prohibits discrimination against them as persons," and
WHEREAS it is now well over a decade since the Union of American Hebrew Congregations offered membership to a congregation with an outreach to gay and lesbian Jews; and there are now several such member congregations, and they are prospering and offering a home to Jews who, in many cases, were previously unaffiliated, and
WHEREAS there are Jews who, moved by an expectation of non-discrimination based on the historical stands of the Reform movement, now seek admission to rabbinical study as openly gay or lesbian Jews and, following ordination, full participation in the Central Conference of American Rabbis throughout their careers, and

WHEREAS a statement of non-discrimination against gay and lesbian Jews in the Reform movement must include assurance of their access to positions of leadership within the movement,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Central Conference of American Rabbis does hereby:

- 1) affirm that it does not discriminate against gay and lesbian rabbis within the CCAR;
- 2) offer its full support to gay and lesbian members of the Conference encountering discrimination in employment;
- 3) urge our alma mater, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, to make explicit a policy of non-discrimination against gay and lesbian applicants and students;
- 4) encourage members of the CCAR to reach out to unaffiliated gay and lesbian Jews in their communities;
- 5) encourage members to establish programs which seek to eliminate covert and overt discrimination against gay men and lesbians by adults and children.

Homosexual Gay



July 11, 1983

Ms. Cheryl Orvis
Immediate Past President
Congregation Sha'ar Zahav
Post Office Box 5640
San Francisco, CA 94101

Dear Ms. Orvis:

Just a note to advise that Rabbi Schindler is out of the country and not due to return for another week or two. Be assured your letter of July 4 will be brought to his attention when he returns to his desk.

With kindest greetings, I am

Sincerely,

Edith J. Miller
Assistant to the President

שער זהב



SHA'AR ZAHAV

P.O. BOX 5640, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94101
PHONE (415) 621-2871

CONGREGATION OF THE GOLDEN GATE

July 4, 1983

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

We want to thank you for your kind letter of support on our building fund campaign. We regret that your official policy limits your participation as an endorser of fundraising projects, but it is good to know that you support our efforts nevertheless.

On another note, I have enclosed copies of correspondence which outlines the ongoing dialogue we have had with Ted Broido this past year. We are very troubled that neither a letter nor a phone call were received by us during the year on this matter, and we want to bring it to your attention at this time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cheryl Orvis".

Cheryl Orvis
Immediate Past President

Enclosures

שער זהב



SHA'AR ZAHAV

P.O. BOX 5640, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94101
PHONE (415) 621-2871

CONGREGATION OF THE GOLDEN GATE

18 May 1983

Theodore K. Broido
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Ted:

After months of waiting for a response from you to my several letters (attached), I phoned Rabbi Randall Falk, Chair of the NCRRCR Mediation Panel on which you served and which handled my Congregation's dispute with Rabbi Allen Bennett. I inquired as to when the Panel would address the points raised in my letters and was amazed to discover that Rabbi Falk had never received the letters which we had sent to you with the specific request that you circulate them to the other Panel members. Rabbi Falk told me that he knew, from a chance conversation with you, of our ongoing difficulties in the situation and expressed concern and sympathy that "things did not turn out as we (the Panel) had hoped."

I am not writing to you now to request a response. Your inaction combined with the good faith decision of our Va'ad to continue payments to Allen, for our own reasons, have made response irrelevant. I am writing to express disappointment, in the extreme, that a representative of the Union has so utterly failed to meet the responsibilities of his position and has treated a Member Congregation with not even a modicum of respect. For you to have failed to even acknowledge the substantive issues we raised is bad enough; to have unilaterally withheld our letters from the other Panel members is outrageous. Fortunately, Morrie Hershman, Edith Stern, Joe Podolsky and Tom Lowenstein have shown us a more responsive, positive side of the Union.

When you were in San Francisco for the signing of the memorandum of understanding in this matter, you spoke kind, hopeful and encouraging words to our Congregation's leadership about our future and the Congregation's opportunities to strengthen itself and prosper. It hurts me that your actions compromised what I took to be sincere words of concern, because I really did trust you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cheryl A. Orvis".

Cheryl A. Orvis
President

cc: UAHC

19 March 1983

Mr. Ted Broido
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Ted:

I am writing to express my concern and dissatisfaction about not having received a response from the Conciliation Panel to my letter of 6 December 1982 to Rabbi Morris Hershman, which we requested he send on to you, Rabbi Falk and Mr. Golden. Although Chanukah and other holidays tend to result in further busying already busy schedules, it seems to me that our Va'ad has been more than patient in awaiting a response.

As you may be aware, the December 1982 meeting Aaron Cooper, Irene Ogus, Mike Rankin and myself had with Rabbi Hershman, Joe Podolsky and Tom Lowenstein, was independent of the issues raised for the Conciliation Panel's response. We feel we do not as yet have a true resolution of the issues raised.

That our letter has been ignored is a matter of disappointment and financial consequence to us, for we have, in good faith, continued to honor the Conciliation Panel's recommendations of last July, 1982, despite the issues which my letter raised which go to the very heart of the July agreement. Furthermore, it is troubling to have no response to the broader questions put to the Panel concerning the substance and process of the Union's conciliation program, such as follow-up.

I trust that we will have a reply from all members of the Panel.

Sincerely,

CONGREGATION SHA'AR ZAHAV

Cheryl A. Orvis
President

CAO:ac

שער זהב



SHA'AR ZAHAV

P.O. BOX 5640, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94101
PHONE (415) 621-2871

CONGREGATION OF THE GOLDEN GATE

6 December 1982

Rabbi Morris Hershman
UAHC
703 Market Street Suite 1300
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Rabbi Hershman:

During the last several months, you and I have spoken generally about the recently created congregation, Ahavat Shalom. We have skirted the pivotal issue of whether the formation of this congregation and its relationship to Rabbi Allen Bennett—while he is receiving full salary and benefits from Congregation Sha'ar Zahav—violates the conciliation agreement reached in July, 1982. The Va'ad of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav has expressed specific concerns which must be addressed and so I am turning to you for guidance and support in this matter. Although the Union's publication, "Suggestions for Procedures in Rabbinical-Congregational Relationships" does not address the issue of follow-up after conciliation, I know that you, both personally and as the Union's representative, the Union itself and the National Commission on Rabbinical Congregational Relationships (NCRCR) are committed to providing resources and support following the conciliation process to a point of true resolution. We have not yet attained the much desired state of satisfactory resolution. Such resolution is unattainable until we address and act on the overwhelming sense of the Va'ad that Rabbi Bennett is in violation of the conciliation agreement.

In signing the conciliation agreement on behalf of the Congregation through the Va'ad, I was perhaps naive to trust that the formation of a splinter group, with its attendant divisiveness, would be avoided. If so, I was in very good company—the NCRCR Panel itself—for it was our clear understanding that the Panel was guided by the desire to protect Rabbi Bennett's professional and personal interests and at the same time to support the continued existence, stability and vitality of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav. To attain this end, particularly in light of the trauma which the Congregation had recently experienced, the Panel recognized that it would be necessary to protect Sha'ar Zahav from the formation of a splinter group. To this end, Mr. Broido stated on July 27 during the mediation:

"...During the year of pay and study, he (Rabbi Bennett) would not be available to some split away group that would wish to create a congregation around him. This would give the Congregation a year to heal its wounds..."

During the closing mediation session later that morning, Rabbi Falk reiterated

this theme, stating:

"After his Ph.D., a group of supporters may want to start a congregation around Allen Bennett."

When Mr. Broido stated "...around him" and Rabbi Falk said "After his Ph.D.", they set the terms, in part, under which a new congregation could be formed—not around Allen or with his support—and not until Allen obtains his Ph.D. These terms, among others, embody the spirit in which the conciliation was carried out by the Panel and agreed to by the Va'ad. It was in this spirit of facilitating Sha'ar Zahav's unity and stability, that the Va'ad agreed to pay Allen Bennett's full salary and benefits through July, 1983. In fact, the Va'ad agreed to assume additional financial payments to Allen for vacation pay which the Panel recommended, and a roundtrip airline ticket enabling him to return to San Francisco from out-of-town for the signing with Mr. Broido. There was a reason for agreeing to these terms and that reason was that we had an agreement based on the objective that no splinter congregation would be created, supported or encouraged by Allen Bennett while he was receiving compensation from Sha'ar Zahav.

What actually happened after the agreement was reached and signed, you are familiar with. All of Rabbi Bennett's representatives during the conciliation process became co-convenors of Ahavat Shalom. Indeed, the rabbi's lover became a moving force in the creation and development of Ahavat Shalom. Of course, Steven is an individual capable of independent action. As Allen's lover and best friend, however, it is obvious that he is acting in accordance with Allen's wishes and is undertaking a leadership role at Ahavat Shalom with Allen's knowledge and approval. Had Allen determined not to encourage the formation of this congregation around him or had he expressed any discomfort with the inherent ethics under the circumstances, one can reasonably assume that the situation would be different today. Allen's supporters would clearly not have undertaken the organization of Ahavat Shalom at this time if Allen had asked them to wait until July, for the sake of our agreement. Allen's actions amount to outright approval and support. He cannot be "above reproach" merely by not taking the pulpit or otherwise "officially" functioning as a rabbi at Ahavat Shalom.

And yet this is the smug view advanced by the convenors of Ahavat Shalom in their correspondance with you and myself. This attitude is an affront to the very meaning of the conciliation and healing process attempted by the Union through the NCRCR.

What we seek is your guidance as to the manner in which we shall proceed as we reevaluate the meaningfulness and vitality of Allen Bennett's agreement with Congregation Sha'ar Zahav. Our Va'ad has been patient in the extreme. We have not questioned Ahavat Shalom's use of our prayerbooks, our newsletter's graphics file for their own newsletter, the telephone solicitation of our members in violation of the confidentiality of our membership list, "sham" membership in Sha'ar Zahav (no participation, payment of the most minimal of our already minimal! dues), Building Fund pledge cancellations and efforts to be reimbursed Building Fund pledges already made.

We now feel it is time to talk with you. At this juncture we are

flexible and do not rule out any form of solution, retroactive and/or prospective, and are very much open to guidance from the Union. Please share this letter with the Panel.

As I will be out-of-town for the next two weeks, I have asked Mike Rankin to contact you to arrange an appointment with you upon my return. The representatives of the Va'ad to the conciliation process, Irene Ogus, Mike Rankin and Aaron Cooper, plus myself, look forward to meeting with you to resolve these issues. Thank you, in advance, for your help toward that goal.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Orvis
President

CA0:ac

*Homosexual
Gay*

Gay Rights National Lobby
West Coast Regional Office
1080 Haight
San Francisco, CA 94117
415/864-6481

April 3, 1981

Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York

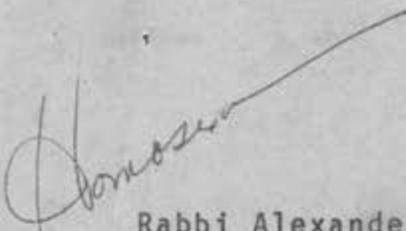
Dear Friend,

I understand that Rabbi Alexander Schindler has published a speech/article on threat of the Moral Majority and other right wing groups to American Jews. Would you please send a copy of that article, or inform me where I can find it?

Sincerely,

Kerry
Kerry Woodward
West Coast Field Director
GAY RIGHTS NATIONAL LOBBY

*Sent
4/10/81*



Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

November 22, 1989

Rabbi Janet Ross Marder

Allan B. Goldman, Esq.

First of all, let me thank you for all your help in regard to the President's Message Committee. I am grateful for your counsel and for all your efforts in our behalf.

Well, a debate was initiated in New Orleans and while the operative clause in the resolution on Lesbians and gays did not go as far as some of us hoped, the matter is now on the national agenda and doubtlessly will assume a momentum all its own.

Of course, this momentum has to be guided properly. Therefore, I am turning to you to carry out those provisions which call for a wide-spread educational effort in our regions and our congregations. I would like you to develop the appropriate patterns, to package the required study materials, perhaps even to prepare lists of speakers, so that the mandate of the Biennial will indeed be fulfilled and we will have a more aware and sensitive constituency to deal with in the future.

Allan does not want to have this project come under the heading of the AIDS Committee. But, of course, you will undoubtedly want to have some lay people or perhaps even staff, work with you. If you have any suggestions in this realm please share them.

I also believe that we ought to have a discussion at the UAHC Board level. We must allow for that within the next two years, although the June Board meeting will focus on the process of these changes. This will be along the lines of the debate engendered by Matt Ross' Resolution and the Biennial workshop which followed his initial call.

Warm regards.

Handwritten signature



2131 ELMWOOD AVENUE ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14618
244-7060

THE RABBI'S STUDY

November 14, 1989

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
UAHC
838 fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex,

Well, we did it! A by-law change was approved by a special congregational meeting of Temple B'rith Kodesh on Sunday morning, November 12th by an impressive vote of 117 to 16. Everyone understood that the effect of the by-law change was to allow our congregation now to accept as full members Jews who are living in non-traditional households, i.e. Gay, Lesbian and couples not formally married. It was quite a battle, but worth doing.

Sincerely yours,

Judea

Rabbi Judea B. Miller

JBM:nk

By Hand

Homosex

*Release
Letter*

October 12, 1983

Mr. Arthur Schwartz
22 Aspen Tree Lane
Irvine, CA 92715

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

Thank you for your letter of October 8. I appreciate the candor of your comments, even as I thank you for sharing your concerns with me.

I believe the congregation to which you refer is Beth Chayim Chadashim of Los Angeles. This is a member congregation of the UAHC. It is also a congregation which has attracted members from its own area, heterosexual as well as homosexual.

I am enclosing herewith a section from a UAHC publication, "Great Jewish Debates and Dilemmas," by Albert Vorspan, our UAHC Vice-President and Director of the Social Action Commission of Reform Judaism. These pages deal with the question of homosexuality and will give you various Reform views, including three responsa.

You should know that there is a congregation in New York which is known as The Gay Synagogue. They do not open their membership to the heterosexual community. The UAHC has not approved the request of this group for membership.

I do want to clarify a few misconceptions in your letter. You refer to a female rabbi having been assigned by the UAHC to Beth Chayim Chadashim. This is not correct. In the Reform movement we do not "assign" rabbis. Rabbi Marder applied for the job, along with other colleagues, when it became available. Following an interview she was hired. This was a mutual choice on the part of the rabbi and the congregation. You will be interested to know that Rabbi Marder is the wife of a Reform rabbi and she has one child.

You make reference to our "outreach programs for mixed marriages by some rabbis." This is not the purpose of the UAHC Outreach program. Incidentally, the Outreach program is one which was adopted by the General Assembly of the UAHC. It is a program in which all of our congregations are involved. Out-

Mr. Arthur Schwartz
October 12, 1983
Page - 2 -

reach was designed to help create a warm and welcome atmosphere in the Jewish community and the synagogue for those who have chosen Judaism; it is hoped that the Outreach program will bring interfaith couples and their children closer to Judaism and the synagogue. It is an effort to retain the children and grandchildren of interfaith marriages as Jews. The Outreach program neither condemns nor condones the participation of rabbis in interfaith marriages. That is a choice of conscience for the individual rabbi.

I am, of course, sharing a copy of this letter with our mutual dear friend, Ely Pilchik, and this gives me an opportunity to extend warm good wishes to him and to you as well.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

ARTHUR SCHWARTZ

Rabbi Abraham M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

I have just received a mailing from the Reform Jewish Appeal, which triggered my writing this letter to you.

In recent weeks, the Los Angeles Times published a feature article on the existence of a congregation in the Los Angeles area which has as its congregants, evidently exclusively, only members of the male and female homosexual community in that area of Los Angeles.

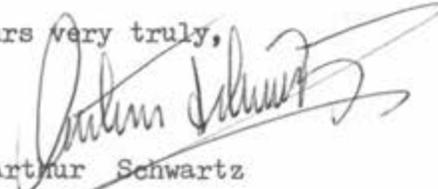
As a member of a family whose forebears founded Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in Newark, New Jersey, and as a member of Reform congregations through my adult life, I found this article particularly distasteful. The article included a statement that this congregation was a member of the UAHC, who had assigned a female Rabbi to lead the congregation.

I do not consider myself a religious scholar, but I am aware that the Torah does not condone homosexuality. Inasmuch as the Reform movement does practice, in some instances, "outreach" programs for mixed marriages by some Rabbis, perhaps the additional bending of the rules for the purpose of certifying a congregation of homosexuals (who also consider themselves Jews) does not seem to be such a great step.

My personal opinion on the subject is that I would not object to Jewish men and women joining regular Reform congregations, even though their psychological make-ups have caused them to become sexually homosexual. However, their setting themselves apart as a separate group, which is then apparently certified by the UAHC, is an action with which I strongly disagree and disapprove. I cannot find any redeeming value in this approval by the UAHC, as the sexual preferences of these congregants in this segregated congregation (segregated by their wishes) will certainly not lead to the discharge of our duty to "be fruitful and multiply", and only further legitimizes practices which are not considered wholesome by our culture and religious tenets.

I am copying my good friend Eli Pilchik, and would appreciate your response.

Yours very truly,


Arthur Schwartz

8 October 1983
22 Aspen Tree Lane
Irvine, California 92715

BETH CHAYIM CHADASHIM



MEMBER UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
6000 WEST PICO BOULEVARD • LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90035 • (213) 931-7023

September 1, 1983

Rabbi Leonard Schoolman
Director of Program
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10021

Homosexual Gay

Dear Rabbi Schoolman:

We recently received a copy of the letter from Dr. Paul M. Vanek to Dr. Robert M. Rankin, President of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco. We are writing to express our grave disappointment at the decision not to schedule a workshop on Judaism and homosexuality at the Houston Biennial. We are also, quite frankly, distressed at the patronizing tone of the letter, and at the suggestion that this topic would be of limited interest. While we appreciate the pressures of scheduling a very crowded program, we want to emphasize what Dr. Rankin has so eloquently stated, that this is NOT a merely academic subject of limited interest. In fact, homophobia within the Jewish community is still affecting the personal survival of a large number of your constituents. We doubt that you are at all aware of the countless numbers of Jewish young people who are thrown out of their homes when their parents discover they are gay or lesbian, or the number who are mourned for as if they were dead, or those who can't get adequate counseling in their own synagogues because of the lack of understanding, or most especially those who try to work for the Jewish establishment and are then dismissed when it is discovered that they are homosexual. One of our own members, for that matter, was fired from his cantorial job at a Reform congregation here in Southern California when it was discovered that he was gay. We see this as in direct violation of the resolution passed by the 54th Assembly of U.A.H.C. delegates in 1977, the resolution which states that "we oppose discrimination against homosexuals in areas of opportunity, including employment and housing." Surely a workshop on Judaism and homosexuality would give delegates in 1983 a better understanding of gays and lesbians in their own communities so that this type of discrimination may one day be ended.

Adding to our distress is the fact that this same prejudice and homophobia has recently been reflected in the newly-published Commentary on the Torah. Writing on the notorious passage in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus, Rabbi Bamberger finds "most perplexing, shocking, and pathetic . . . the occasional cases of married men with children who are arrested for molesting little boys." Don't you see, Rabbi, that this buys right into the myth that molesting little boys is a homosexual thing to do, but molesting little girls is not a particularly heterosexual thing to do-- it's just sick? You yourself admit that passages such as this "could be interpreted as condescending and pejorative" (in your January 10th letter to Aaron Cooper, Executive Director of the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations). Indeed it

could, and yet we have to live with the fact that that Commentary and that passage will remain as an essential element in Reform religious literature for decades to come. Is it any wonder that we are upset over what seems to be a casual willingness to ignore the whole issue at the Houston Convention?

Rabbi Bamberger apparently never engaged in any dialogue with the Jewish homosexual community in order to learn what is really going on in the lives and hearts of Jewish lesbians and gays, even though he concedes that "our greatest need at present is for more knowledge on the subject." But how can one gain knowledge unless there is an opportunity to learn, and what would provide members of the U.A.H.C. a better opportunity to learn the truth about Jewish homosexuals first hand than a workshop in Houston? We feel that the U.A.H.C. should live up to its 1977 Resolution urging "appropriate educational programs . . . to provide greater understanding of Jewish values as they relate to the spectrum of human sexuality." Surely the U.A.H.C. is responsible for setting an example by implementing that resolution. Even if a formal workshop cannot be scheduled in the up-coming Biennial, we urge that an informal time slot be permitted the panel who will be present in Houston, and that preparations begin now for formal inclusion in the next Biennial.

We are, very sincerely yours,

J. Thomas Johnson, President

Stanley R. Notkin, Secretary

Congregation Beth Chayim Chadashim

cc: Distribution list attached

Copies of this letter have been sent to the following persons:

Aaron Cooper, Executive Director
World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations
P.O. Box 881212
San Francisco, CA. 94188

Allan Goldman, President
Pacific Southwest Region Council
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
347 Conway
Los Angeles, CA. 90024

Dr. Robert M. Rankin, President
Congregation Sha'ar Zahav
P. O. Box 5640
San Francisco, CA. 94101

Evely Laser Shlenky, Vice President
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789 Knapp Drive
Santa Barbara, CA. 93108

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
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838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

Rabbi Lennard Thal, Director
Pacific Southwest Council
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6300 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite #1475
Los Angeles, CA. 90048

Dr. Paul M. Vanek, Chairman
57th General Assembly Program Committee
1303 Packard Street
Ann Arbor, MI. 48104

Robert Waterstone, President
Metropolitan Community Synagogue, Congregation Etz Chaim
19094 West Dixie Highway
North Miami Beach, FL. 33180

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Department of Rabbinic Literature and Homiletics
EUGENE MIHALY, Professor

Feb. 15, 1973

Dear Alex,

There undoubtedly should be a formal response from a responsible, representative committee of the CCAR regarding the very important questions you raise (along with a stream of response on a number of other important questions facing us). There is complete misery, confusion and bedlam in this entire area. Our men desperately need guidance but have no place to turn. The logical body is the Response committee of the CCAR. The committee is, however, neither representative - nor has it ever met to discuss procedure, a Reform approach to tradition, or even to consider any specific question with a view toward reaching consensus. The answers of the Response committee represent the view of one man - and on some of the most urgent questions there is no guidance at all. The considerable mess we are in regarding the problem of Inter-Marriage and a number of other less emotionally charged problems, is largely due to the fact that the CCAR does not have a vital, representative Response Committee which functions.

Now to the specific questions you raise:

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2.

The literal Halakha re homosexuality is very
regressive... It is, as you will know, a capital
offense to be punished by *sh. po* based on
Lev. 20:13 (cf. Lev. 18:22 and 18:7). The Talmud discusses
the issue in a number of places, primarily Sanhedrin
53a ff. Yevamot 83b, Keritot 20a ff. (also Nedavim 51a;
Kutubot, Sotah, Kiddushin etc.) All aspects of the
phenomenon are discussed - involving minors, voluntary,
under duress, various forms etc. etc. Maimonides in his
Mishneh Torah (Hil. Issurei Biah I.5, et. passim)
defines the Halakha *sh. po* *ves os sh. po*.
The traditional attitude toward lesbianism,
since there is no specific biblical prohibition,
though negative and censorious (to say the least),
is not quite as harsh. Again the Talmud
discusses this in a number of places both in the
Bavli and Yerushalmi. The Jerusalem Talmud
(Gittin 49c, bottom) even reports a controversy
between B. Shammai and B. Hillel whether such
a woman is *100 re* *sh. po* for the priesthood
(marrying a priest)

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3.

Again, Maimonides (Hil. Issurei Biak XXI.8) summarizes the traditional attitude as follows: (cf. Tur, Shulken Bruch, Even Ha'ezer 20.2)
"Women are forbidden to practice lewdness with one another (cf. Yevamot 76a; Shabbat 65a - 152 13 1117100)
It is like the deeds of the Egyptians concerning which we were cautioned, 'You shall not do as they do in Egypt where you once dwelt.' (Lev. 18.3).
Our sages said, 'What did they (the Egyptians) do? A man married a man, a woman married a woman and a woman married two men.' (Maimonides is quoting from the Sifra to Leviticus 18.3)
Even though this deed is prohibited (two women), we do not impose the punishment of stripes concerning it (/to /pda /lc) because there is no specific biblical prohibition against it. Furthermore, there is no intercourse at all (in the technical sense - /to 24.2 or /lc). Therefore, she is not forbidden to marry a priest, nor does she become forbidden to her husband (unlike a woman who transgressed one of the 1178)..."

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4.

Now, Erwin Herman is certainly correct in stating, as he is quoted in the National Jewish Post, "... we cannot say we are bound by Halacha ...". Nevertheless, as Jews and particularly as Rabbis we are obligated to confront our traditions, to struggle with it - and, at some level, consistently applied - discover a guiding principle which will help us in determining our attitude toward contemporary problems. This not only can be done. It must be done. Otherwise, we are submerged in the "is," mired in subjectivity, ~~and~~ the victim of every whim and foible. Furthermore - and this is central - the vital Jewish element is missing. We cease to function as Rabbis if we cavalierly dismiss our historic experience and do not wrestle with it as the essential first step in defining our attitudes.

This is a very difficult process. A thorough knowledge of the sources is required. But beyond ~~a~~ the knowledge, the *הנהגות* for Reform Jews

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must be a committed Reform Jew. (Both words are essential.) Furthermore, and this is indispensable, each question must be approached with *דבוקה שמי*, *דבוקה שמי* — with the awareness of standing in the Presence. At stake is the future of Judaism as a viable option for our children — indeed, the future of Israel. The particular issue ~~cannot~~ cannot be treated in isolation, in a vacuum. Each particular must flow from a consistent, thought-through, knowledgeable and responsible, overall concept of Torah, of how we relate to the historic experience of the Jew.

The biblical and rabbinic law concerning the homosexual (and to a lesser extent, the lesbian) is based on several assumptions: 1. That the homosexual acts out of volition; that he is a willful rebel; a sinner who has chosen, consciously, to flaunt the natural law and the law of God. 2. An aspect of the harshness is also due to the

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general tendency of the legislation in Leviticus and the rabbinic laws based upon them, to distinguish and to separate the Jew from their idolatrous neighbors (כִּי אֵינֶנּוּ לְכָל הָעָם כְּכֹהֵן וְלֵאמֹר אֵלֵינוּ). There is an aspect to these laws, in other words, which is part of the Rabbinic attitude towards idolatry and flows from the particular time-place, the historic situation in which these laws were formulated.

Consider, for example, the Talmudic law concerning the deaf-mute (שֵׁן אֵינֶנּוּ). He is treated in the sources in the same category as the demented and the minor (קַטָּן וְשֵׁן אֵינֶנּוּ). He was considered non-compos-mentis and the law reflects it. Maimonides, however, states the Halacha, that if the deaf-mute indicates by signs or other means that he understands, he is to be treated as normal and all the laws of the שֵׁן אֵינֶנּוּ apply. Knowing, as we do today, that impairment of speech and hearing from birth in no way reflects

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7.
Furthermore, the deaf-mute can communicate, mental retardation, it would be contrary to traditional halakha to apply the talmudic law to the deaf-mute. The attempt to operate with the literal halakha would be the most flagrant violation of halakha.

Similarly, we know today that in the overwhelming number of cases, the homosexual is not a willful, volitional rebel. He is either that way from ~~his~~ birth or became a homosexual in early childhood or adolescence. In any case, that is the way he is. At the very least, therefore, he would, even according to traditional halakha in the light of our present knowledge, have to be treated as an עוֹלָם — as one who acts under duress and merit all the sympathy, consideration, kindness that the halakha extends to the victim, the one who is forced to act under duress. Furthermore, we also

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8.
know today that the homosexual is not motivated
by idolatrous drives, ^(with rare exception) nor is homosexuality the
assimilative threat, ^(with rare exception) All these considerations
inevitably dictate that we place the homosexual
under a different halakic category than the
one applied by traditional halakha. The
halakha itself, if intelligently applied,
would demand this.

Our attitude toward the homosexual based
on the broad tendency of tradition as applied in
the light of our present knowledge would therefore
have to be as follows:

1. At the very minimum, he is to be treated
as the victim, the opik, and is to be accepted
without moral judgement, in terms of personal guilt,
or sin, and every form of sympathetic understanding
should be extended to him. We certainly would
not think of penalizing the deaf-mute or one

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EUGENE MIHALY, Professor

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suffering from some other physical or mental handicap or illness. At the very minimum, this must be our attitude toward the homosexual.

2. Homosexuality, whether between men or women cannot be considered as a normal, volitional option. One who chooses homosexuality or lesbianism out of lust, ~~to~~ in order to flaunt societal norms, as a form of willful experimentation is, from a Jewish point of view, committing a sin.
3. Since children can be seduced into homosexuality and through homosexual acts in childhood and adolescence can be influenced toward a mode of conduct which predominates all of their lives, it is the right of society, its obligation, to protect minors from homosexual seduction and molestation through legislation. It is also the moral obligation of parents to protect children from such influence.

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4. If we are not to judge the homosexual as a willful sinner, or as one who is morally unclean and depraved, we must extend to him, as we would to any Jew, the privilege of joining a congregation. The Jewish religious imperative demands that we welcome him and treat him ~~the~~ with the kindness, consideration and understanding extended to anyone who desires to join a synagogue. He merits, in fact, due to the stigma society has imposed upon him, an extra measure of compassion. Wherever possible, especially in larger Jewish population centers, we would do well to provide the necessary facilities, on the local level, so that the homosexual may be referred to a congregation where the membership is open, sympathetic, non-judgmental and the Rabbi is emotionally, attitude-wise and in his training equipped to deal with the specific problems of the homosexual. We might take steps to encourage congregations — through dissemination of literature for discussion groups, etc. — to face the problem and thus

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11.

prepare themselves to accept homosexuals into their religious fellowship. Rabbinic students should also confront the problem in the classroom with a view toward their being equipped to deal with such situations when they arise. (Perhaps this is now being done. I don't know.)

5. Any group of Jews have the right to organize themselves and to form a congregation. The goals of the group, the principle of organization and criteria for membership must, however, conform to and be in consonance with the legitimate purpose of the synagogue as defined by the historic Jewish experience - the aspirations, ideals, the ethical and moral values of Judaism. This is a thorny question with broad and complex ramifications and would require an elaborate responsum to clarify. There is undoubtedly considerable latitude in this area - even from the perspective of traditional halakha. Nevertheless, it is clear, that a congregation which uses the criterion of homosexuality as the basis for membership and as the basis for its organization is contrary to the fundamental religious spirit of Judaism. We have encouraged and subsidized congregations of blind Jews or deaf-mutes because special, trained personnel and equipment are required in order to fulfill the synagogue's legitimate functions. No such justification

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12.

exists with regard to the homosexual. He can pray with the larger congregation, study with them, participate in social action groups - share in the total religious life of the Synagogue. The homosexual has unique social needs and problems, it is true. But is this social need a legitimate basis for the organization of a synagogue? Is the identification "gay" a legitimate prerequisite for congregational membership? Each one of us has individual problems. Each of us can turn to the Rabbi for counsel and guidance, including the homosexual. Many congregations have special interest groups: Young-marrieds, Singles, Golden Age etc. If there is sufficient interest - and if the congregation and Rabbi are open and accepting - a special interest group within the broad umbrella of the synagogue consisting of homosexuals may, in certain geographic areas, be feasible. The answer to your question "Should we encourage the formation of such congregations for homosexuals" is definitely in the negative. The Synagogue should help in integrating the homosexual in the religious life of the community, not be a vehicle for isolating him.

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13.

6. A Rabbi is not obligated to serve any particular congregation. He is entitled to self-fulfillment in his professional work. In any case, if he does not feel rewarded in his professional work and if he cannot serve a particular congregation with enthusiasm, he will be ineffective. There are a number of highly qualified Rabbis, particularly in the Los Angeles and other metropolitan areas, who ~~are~~ can and will provide spiritual guidance for such groups because of their ^(the Rabbis') wonderful dedication and commitment to their calling. This should, however, be done as part of their rabbinic work within the framework of a synagogue which welcomes all Jews and not to a congregation which restricts itself to homosexuals.
7. If a "homosexual congregation" seeks "membership in the Union," it should not be accepted.
8. A "marriage ceremony" between homosexuals is absurd within the context of the Jewish concept of marriage and in terms of the Jewish ceremony which hallows

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14.

the union. As to a Rabbi's "blessing the relationship" between a man and a man or a woman with a woman, the Rabbi, within Jewish tradition, does not have magical powers of blessing. The Siphre on Numbers (VII.27) *וְכִי יִבְרַךְ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְּמַר אֲנִי*, "So shall they pronounce my name over the Israelites and I shall bless them," comments: "In order that the Israelites shall not say, 'Our blessings depend on the priests' Scriptures states, 'I shall bless them.' In order that the priests shall not say, 'we bless Israel,' the Torah emphasizes 'I shall bless them.' I bless my people Israel. Scriptures further states, 'The Lord God has blessed you in all the works of your hands.' (Deut. 2.7 - cf. Siphre Zuta, Naso 47.27) God blesses; not the Rabbi. There is a Midrash ~~on~~ *פְּתוּחֵי עֵץ* Gen XII. 2 *וְאַתָּה יִבְרַךְ* - God tells Abraham, "you will be a blessing" - and R. Berachyah comments: "Since it is already written 'I shall bless you,' why does Scriptures repeat again 'And you shall be a blessing'? But God said to Abraham, 'Until now I was obliged to bless my world, but henceforth the blessings are given over to you.' (Gen Rab. 39. 11, end). In other words,

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The power of blessing was handed over to Abraham and his descendants. In any case, the Rabbi's blessing is no more efficacious than that of any other Jew. The Rabbi does pray for and with many people on a variety of occasions. Whether he is ready to offer a prayer for two men or two women would depend on the Rabbi's inclination in a particular circumstance, the relation of the individuals involved, the Rabbi's perception of the particular situation, etc. etc.

Generally, I caution strongly against jumping on every avant garde bandwagon merely to be "with it." This is particularly important for those who bear the burden of responsibility of representing our national institutions.

Warmest regards and good wishes L. M. M. M.

113.3.2

A number of people have asked me concerning this problem. Do I have permission from you to send them copies of this letter? Shall I omit your name?
Thanks.
Gene M.

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

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NEW YORK
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40 WEST 68 STREET • NEW YORK, N. Y. 10023

TRafalgar 3-0200

May 9, 1973

Dear Alex,

Here is my response to your queries on homosexual congregations. I have copyrighted the material so that I may control its publication. Naturally, you have my permission to photocopy it for use at private discussions. If you will ever be publishing the rest of the answers you received, please be in touch and I will be happy, as always, to try to cooperate.

While I'm writing, let me take up another matter, raised by Nat Hess. He asked me the other day, just how many books the NY HUC-↓IR Library has. Thinking that an odd question I asked why he wanted to know. He said that at a meeting at the Union, when Dr. Elk talked about his visit to our building and said that I indicated we had 100,000 items in our library, there were

deisive comments from at least two members of the staff, indicating our library has only a fraction of that number. I have checked with Ed Kree, and the correct number is closer to 110,000. I think your colleagues should know that and hope you will share that fact with them.

More important, while it is possible that I was over-enthusiastic about my institution, may I suggest that it is not the proper thing for UATC staff members to put down the HUC-JIR before visitors? And, further, that, as a matter of principle in your administration, there should be no tolerance of private, in camera, sniping at the HUC-JIR. That is the way Cold War attitudes begin to beat home. The next thing we know, people begin to act on them. I am certain you have far more important things to accomplish in your twenty years at the Union than you have time for. Hence there is no energy to spare for old, useless antagonisms. Perhaps I over-react. But then again, I do not bother you often.

All my best -
Gene

Response to a letter from Alexander Schindler *

Eugene Borowitz

I do not believe homosexuals are interested in the help of the Union because they desire technical aid but rather because they seek some measure of formal Jewish acceptance. Since I take that to be the major issue in your questions, I must precede my answers with a statement of the religious basis upon which they rest.

First, as to traditional Judaism, I do not see in any balanced reading of the literature a basis for treating homosexuals other than as grave sinners who ought to repent their iniquity and live heterosexually. Considering the diversity of opinion on many other topics and the resulting possibility of utilizing lenient as against stringent judgments there, the degree of unanimity here carries with it special weight. Thus, from the standpoint of traditional Jewish law and teaching, to accept homosexuality as an equivalent, alternate life-style to heterosexuality is unthinkable. In my opinion there is theological reason for this but since the sources normally do not give the bases in belief for their decisions, such inferences must remain somewhat subjective and so I deal with them separately, below.

Reform Judaism is not bound to the enactments of traditional Judaism. Indeed, it is one of the chief glories of Reform Judaism that it encourages a clear break with tradition when it is clear that two Jewish values conflict and one deserves

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preference over the other, or when our modern sense of God's demands from us as members of His Covenant people is significantly contravened by a traditional practice. So, despite the unanimity of traditional Jewish teaching on homosexuality, Reform Judaism might see fit here to make a break with the past in the name of greater consistency or higher command.

The contemporary justification of homosexuality stems from an interpretation of the modern understanding of human sexuality and contends that homosexuality is not abnormal, or, more positively, that homosexuality is another way of being a person. If, then, Reform Judaism has respect for the dignity of all persons, it should have respect for the dignity of homosexuals and, in recognition of that fact, dissociate itself from the negative teaching of traditional Judaism in this area.

I do not think that we can here beneficently argue this interpretation of human sexuality. At the present stage of scientific knowledge there remains much conflict of evidence, analysis and opinion. I prefer then, while awaiting further data, to operate l'chaf z'chut, to grant, for the sake of argument, the maximal, personalist claim.

In the brief statement which follows I base myself upon the general theological position I have elsewhere outlined over the years.

As against some minority of Reform Jews, I am not of the opinion that everything which is good for people as persons is permitted to Jews. The word "Jew" is not synonymous with

the word "person"; and the Jewish people is not, in essence, the same as any group seeking to enhance personhood. To me, to be a Jew is to be a certain kind of person, one whose personhood is fulfilled in terms of the Covenant. That is, a Jew is a person whose existence is lived out not only in terms of his own needs and desires but in terms of God, whose image the Jew seeks to emulate, and in terms of the Jewish community's expression of its historic relationship with God. Thus the question of the acceptability of homosexuality in Judaism is dependent not on whether it enables some people to be persons -- a thesis I have accepted for the sake of argument -- but whether it is a way of life compatible with the Covenant between God and the Jews.

The Covenant is a relationship fundamentally concerned with time and the destiny of humankind. While it must be validated in the present and thus have immediate meaningfulness, it would probably have no meaning were it not for the past (in which it originated and was given content) and even more so, were it not for the future, to which it is directed. It is this latter feature which is critical to this discussion. The Covenant is centrally directed toward the coming of the Messiah. Thus Israel's faithfulness in the present, its contemporary doing of commandments and its immediate pursuit of justice are as much instruments toward inaugurating the coming Kingdom of God as they are intrinsically valuable. Hence it is a primary Jewish responsibility to endure in history until the Messiah comes. Jewish continuity through time is

fundamental to faithfulness to the Covenant. Thus, if there is no succeeding generation of Jews to carry on the Covenant, then all the previous generations of Jews have had their messianic efforts frustrated. Biology is therefore a major factor in Jewishness. Indeed the homosexual Jew is confronted by the question of his Jewishness as much by the factor of his birth into the Jewish people as by his upbringing in the community or his present choice. This sort of reasoning is the theological root of the notably intense Jewish attitudes toward sexuality, marriage, procreation and the family. Analogously, I take it to ^{be} the religious basis for the rejection of the sexual styles of the pagans among whom Biblical and rabbinic Jews lived. And I believe it to be the valid interpretation of Judaism today.

As I understand the Covenant, then, homosexuality cannot be considered, for Jews, a sexual option of equal status to heterosexuality. Or, more directly, I do not see how Judaism, understood as life under the Covenant, can welcome, encourage or honor homosexuality in the Jewish community. In sum, homosexuality may, for the sake of argument, be one way among others to be a person; Judaism, as I understand it, cannot consider it a way one ought to be a Jew.

Such are Jewish ideals. Reality poses some additional questions. It is clear that some individuals, born into the Jewish community, find themselves to be or choose to be homosexuals and they now want an open, accepted place in the Jewish community. Moreover, the present mood of urban, educated America is to tolerate, if not to encourage, living out one's

homosexuality. Hence the number of Jews who are or choose to be homosexuals is likely to increase and with it, the pressure for Jewish recognition. I do not believe that this reality or those numbers change what I understand to be fundamental to Jewish faith and practice. However, these factors raise the issue of what our practical responsibilities are to our homosexual kin and, within the scope of your questions, I shall try to respond.

On the basis of these considerations I answer your questions as follows:

1. Homosexuality is not a pattern of existence to which we should lend any official Reform Jewish credence or sanction. Hence the Union should not encourage homosexuals to organize Jewish congregations and should not help them to do so.
3. If such congregations are organized and seek membership in the Union, we should not admit them.
4. If the gender of persons involved in a relationship is largely irrelevant to its quality then surely a ceremony is even less important. The request for us to provide or conduct homosexual marriage ceremonies seems essentially a request for official Jewish recognition or sanction to homosexual marriage. Obviously, there is nothing to prevent the partners in such a relationship or the homosexual community from creating and conducting their own ceremonies with as much Jewish symbolism as they deem appropriate. Since I do not believe Judaism can consider such a marriage the equivalent

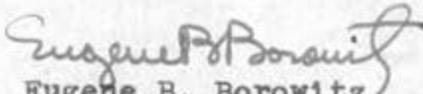
of a heterosexual marriage and since I do not believe that Judaism should encourage homosexuality, I do not believe that we should create or conduct homosexual marriage ceremonies.

2. I have deferred my response to the question about a "rabbi's obligation to serve such a congregation" so as to be able to say something about the issues posed by the realities of Jewish homosexuals.

First, however, no rabbi is "obligated" to serve any congregation; how much the more is he not obligated to serve one which, as I see it, is not reflective of Jewish ideals. Moreover, I do not think our Placement Service nor any of our institutional officials ought to use their resources or their station to seek rabbinic leadership for homosexual congregations. I believe the need to indicate the lack of Jewish sanction to homosexuality goes that far. But now a word of mitigation is in order.

As a matter of general Jewish teaching and particularly after the losses of the Holocaust, I believe we must always make every possible effort to understand, help, appreciate and encourage our fellow-Jews in their desire to be Jewish. I can therefore understand that any Jewish teacher, called on to teach Judaism to a group of interested Jews, would want to be of help to them. I can further see that some or many Jews will want to reach out with a positive sense of kinship to fellow-Jews who are seeking to affirm their Jewishness,

even though they are doing so through the Jewishly unusual medium of homosexuality. I would therefore be against vigorous acts of condemnation and protest of such homosexual Jewish congregations as come into being on their own. Rather, in humility before the extraordinary variety of forms that authentic human existence may take, I believe Jews ought to live in openness with homosexuals as persons, and, in consonance with our desire not to cut off any Jew today from coming to live fully under the Covenant, we ought to maintain as many Jewish ties as we can with our homosexual kin.


Eugene B. Borowitz