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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.

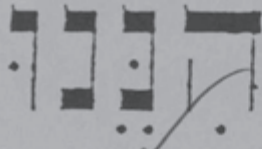
I am concerned not only with the religious aspect of homosexuality itself, but also with the position your religious denomination takes regarding human rights for gay men and lesbians. Could you please send me the most recent statement by your denomination concerning these issues. Also, could you address 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.

Handwritten signature

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...

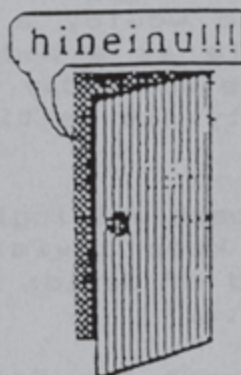
I declare myself the compassionate ally of every person heterosexual and homosexual, Jew and non-Jew, who is wrestling with the shame, the confusion, the fear, the endless torment involved in the inner struggle for sexual identity. It is a struggle that includes, but also goes beyond, civil liberties.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



Handwritten: HANOVER

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.

Handwritten: Please return - Joe seems to think there was an endeavor to preempt

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.

Handwritten: yes, but I'm not sure - R

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

EMANUEL CONGREGATION

5959 North Sheridan Road

Chicago, Illinois 60660

(312) 561-5173 Study

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

JAЕ/hmp

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 Kee*

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

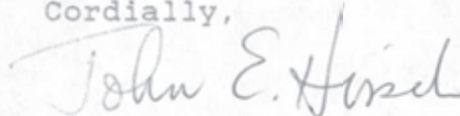
Mayor Koch and Governor Cuomo calling for stiff penalties for violence directed at anyone because of religion, race, ethnic origin, sex, or sexual orientation merely because the words "sexual orientation" were included? That bill will come up again soon, and its opponents are again threatening to defeat 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

Alfred

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

the AABC
representatives on
the joint study
Commission are
pressing hard for
ordination of gay
rabbi's. I
think we are
gradually
selling the CRP
& IHUC. So why
should we be defensive?
We (meaning I) knocked
ourselves out for Israel already. JS

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

הגוד 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

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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Cincinnati, OH



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

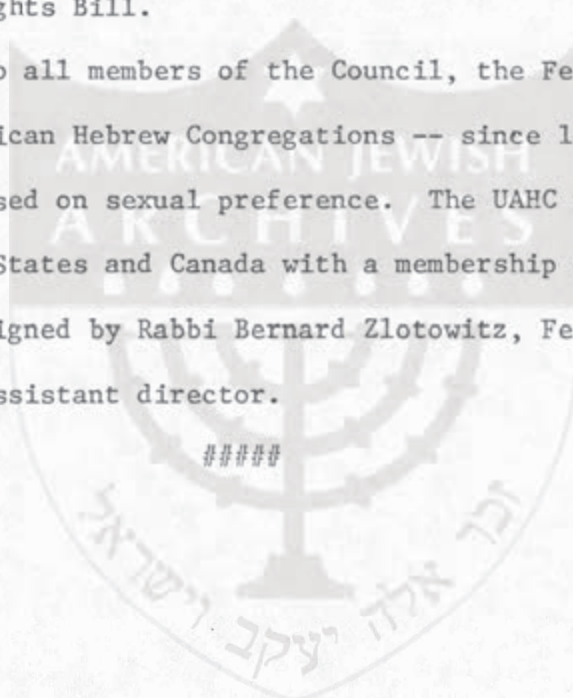
The New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, representing some 60,000 congregants of more than 30 Reform synagogues in New York City, this week urged the City Council to pass the so-called Gay Rights Bill.

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. Rothshild, Jr.

Handwritten:
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 Cjr*

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 homophobia 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

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TWX
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(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.
Page Two
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

Mr. Charles Rothschild, Jr.
Page Three
December 1, 1986

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."

Mr. Charles Rothschild, Jr.
Page Four
December 1, 1986

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 trustess, 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.

Page Five

December 1, 1986

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 martial 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 that 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.





איחוד
ליהדות
מתקדמת
באמריקה

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:

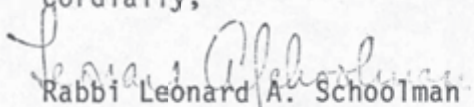
I think we need to put our heads together on the matter of the article on homosexuality in the Leviticus Commentary.

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 OCAR 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

*Ashe
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 you taking the time to trouble to articulate your view. On most, the specifics you mention, I do agree with you.

Dear Joel,
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 constituents such as "brothers and sisters" is an endorsement; it's certainly 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
answer -
+ 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!*

LA's the Place



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 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2:00 to 7:00 p.m. | Study Kallah at HUC-JIR, Los Angeles (A variety of themes led by faculty). | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7:30 p.m. | First Timers Dessert and Coffee. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 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. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | b) Coping with Synagogue Change. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | c) Seminar on Estate and Tax Legislation. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | d) Establishing a Certification Program for Reform Mohalim—limited to physicians and rabbis. I am a rabbi _____
I am a physician _____
(indicate specialty) _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | e) NFTB/JCS Programming Seminar | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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

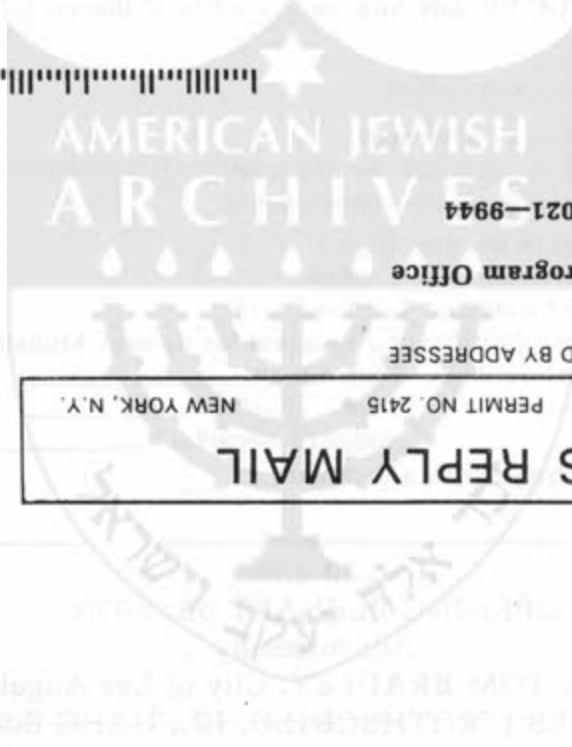
- | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--------------------------|
| 10:00 a.m. to 12 Noon | Focus on Current Issues | |
| | f) Insights into Youth Suicide. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | g) Cults & Missionaries. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | h) Programming for Interfaith Couples (Affiliated and unaffiliated, parents of couples, pre-college students of interfaith couples). | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | i) Toward an Understanding of Our Homosexual Brothers and Sisters. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | j) Can a Modern Reform Jew Pray? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | k) Responding to our College Students Needs. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | l) Israeli Opportunities and Aliyah Seminar (Reform Kibbutzim, Har Chalutz, Youth Israel programs, Aliyah, Religious Pluralism). | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12 Noon to 1:30 p.m. | Lunch for Presidents of Medium Size Congregations (250-899 member units). (Further details will follow.) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12 Noon to 1:30 p.m. | Lunch for Presidents of Small Congregations. (Further details will follow.) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Please indicate size: Members: 121-249 <input type="checkbox"/> Under 120 <input type="checkbox"/> | |

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1: (continued)

- | | | |
|-------------------|--|---|
| 10 a.m. to | Presidents of Large Congregations (900 +) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5:00 p.m. | <i>(Including lunch. Further details will follow.)</i> | |
| 1:45 to | Curriculum Implementation Workshop | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5:00 p.m. | My congregation uses NEW curriculum_____ | |
| | My congregation does NOT yet use NEW curriculum_____ | |
| 1:45 to | Leadership Development Seminar. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5:00 p.m. | My congregation has had a UAHC Leadership Seminar_____ | |
| 1:45 to | Leadership Workshops | |
| 3:15 p.m. | Youth <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Israel Programming |
| AND | Parenting Programs <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Responding to Disabled Needs |
| 3:30 to | Finance (Medium Size Congregations) <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Caring Community |
| 5:00 p.m. | Programming for Small Congregations <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Programming for Senior Members |
| | Special Education <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Day School Seminar |



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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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "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*



**Veterans
Administration**

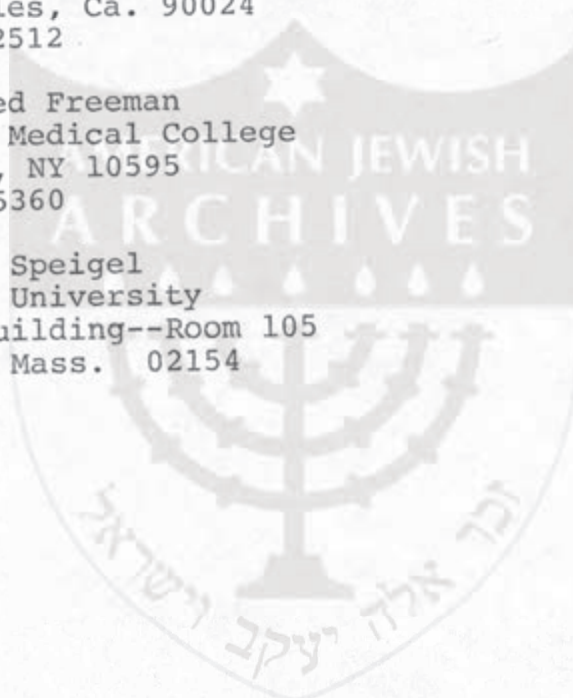
In Reply Refer To:

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,

Stanley M.

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

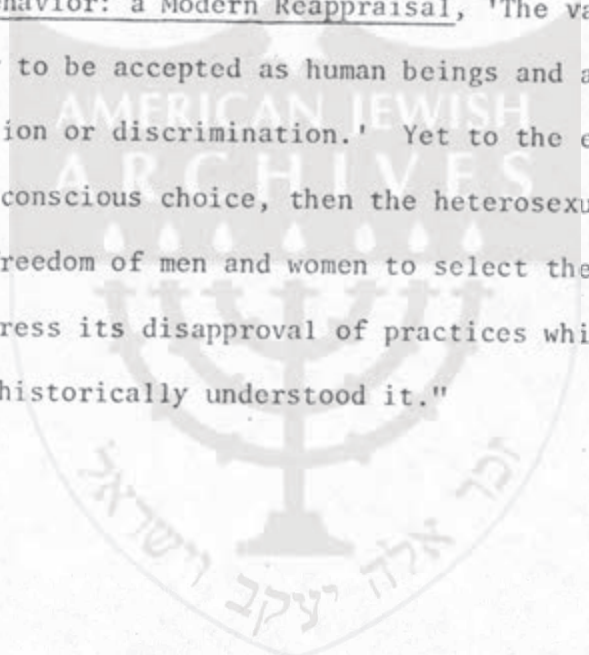
Paragraph 3, line 4 --delete comma after 1974

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

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,

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.



איחוד
ליהדות
מתקדמת
באמריקה

Memo RABBI LEONARD A. SCHOOLMAN

From the desk of

3/16/84

9:15 AM

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

Krantz - leave as is

- no change result of
political pressure.



HEBREW UNION COLLEGE—JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
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(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 ~~EXACTLY~~ 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

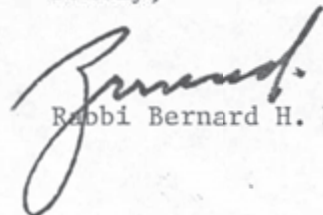
prefer us to steer away from such usages. If we don't keep our distance from that, then this portion of the essay should be submitted to several independent psychiatric experts for some sort of "Din Torah." In paragraph six, I find the language of the second sentence much superior to Bamberger's, "no 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

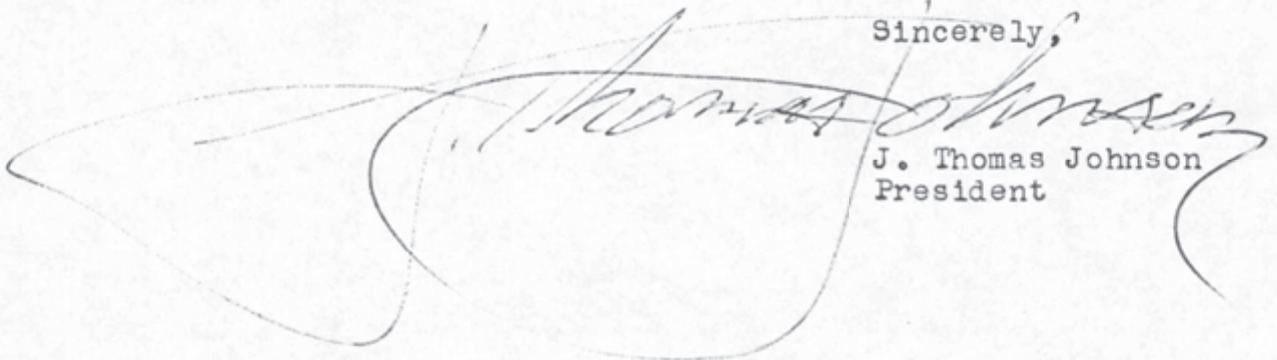
Rabbi Leonard Schoolman
Director of Program
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10021

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.

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

▲ 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 once 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

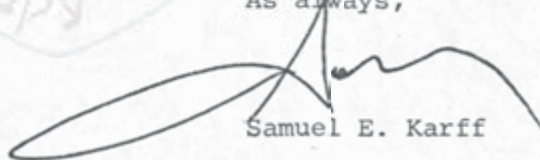
Dear Lenny:

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Samuel E. Karff', written over a faint circular stamp.

Samuel E. Karff

Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

שער זהב



x-Vanek Plant Ltrman
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,
Herzman, 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,

Greith

*P.S. Be Haim'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

Honorable

March 14, 1984

Dr. Eugene Mihaly
HUC-JIR
3101 Clifton Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio 45220

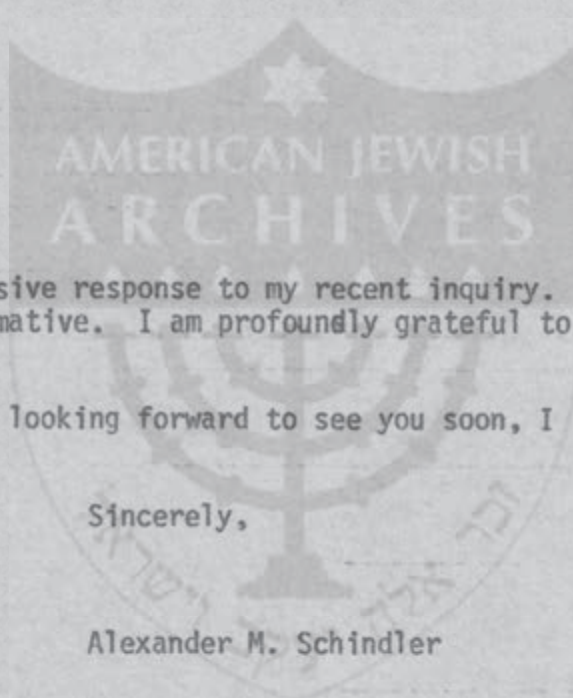
Dear Gene:

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

March 2, 1984

Personal and Confidential

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

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.

*Thanks for
effective response
to my recent
inquiry*

35 rubers

*Alan Schindler
Rabbi*

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 *אנוכי*; 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 might 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 & Edie
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 judgement, 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 nattered 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.

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

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

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:
4m-
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

Indicating Campaign
should not
be Bar to
and no fine



Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

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} 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
1 Kislev 5747

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

Dear Jack:

AMERICAN JEWISH

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

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
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Rabbi Martin S. Weiner, Treasurer
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Rabbi Murray I. Rothman, Financial Secretary
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

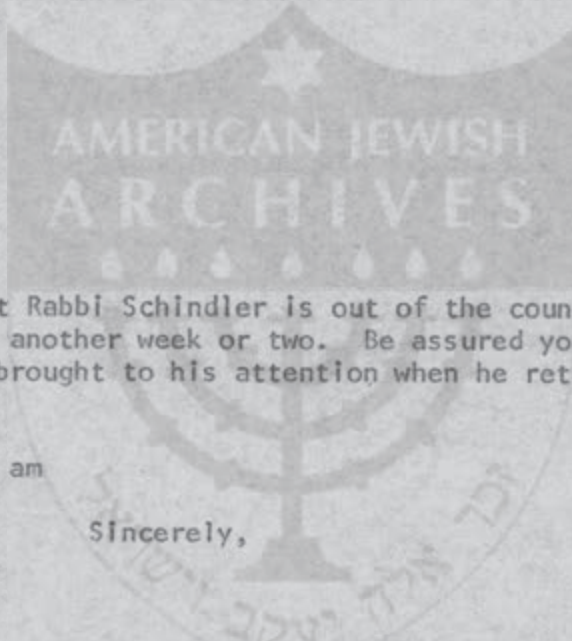
Dear Ms. Orvis:

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,

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 NCRCR 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,

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 correspondence 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

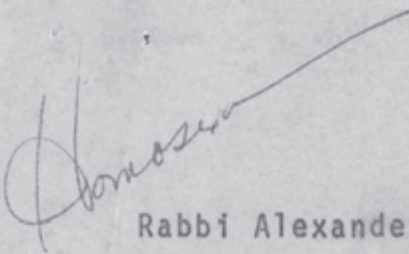
Dear Friend,

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.

AMERICAN JEWISH

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

Homosexual

Excellent 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-

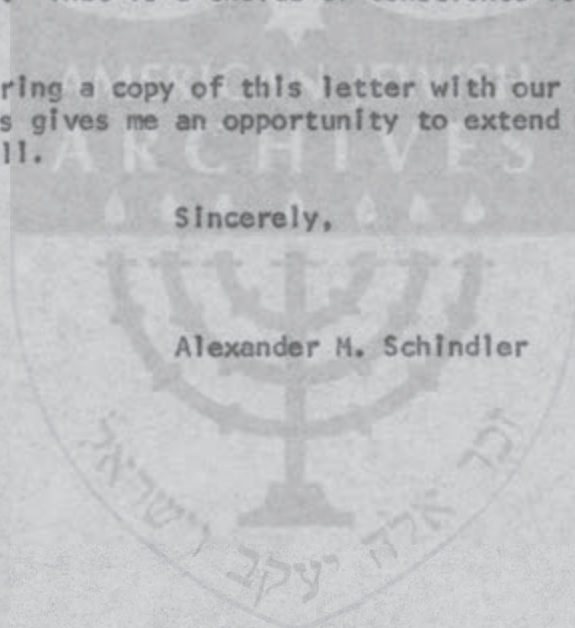
Mr. Arthur Schwartz
October 12, 1983
Page - 2 -

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 Wilchik, 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

Evelyn Laser Shlensky, Vice President
Pacific Southwest Region Council
789 Knapp Drive
Santa Barbara, CA. 93108

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

Rabbi Lennard Thal, Director
Pacific Southwest Council
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
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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NEW YORK
LOS ANGELES
JERUSALEM

CLIFTON AVENUE - CINCINNATI, OHIO 45220

Department of Rabbinic Literature and Homiletics
EUGENE MIHALY, Professor

Feb. 15, 1973

Dear Alex,

There undoubtedly should be a formal responsum from a responsible, representative committee of the CCAR regarding the very important questions you raise (along with a stream of responsa on a number of other important questions facing us). There is complete niyod, confusion and bedlam in this entire area. Our men desperately need guidance but have no place to turn. The logical body is the Responsa 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 Responsa 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 problems of Inter-Marrying and a number of other less emotionally charged problems, is largely due to the fact that the CCAR does not have a vital, representative Responsa Committee which functions.

Now to the specific questions you raise:

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Department of Rabbinic Literature and Homiletics

EUGENE MIHALY, Professor

2.

The literal Halakha re homosexuality is very
regressive... It is, as you will know, a capital
offense to be punished by *st. 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 2a ff. (also Nedarim 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 *st. po* *nes* *or* *st. 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* *st. po* for the priesthood.
(marrying a priest)

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EUGENE MIHALY, Professor

3.

Again, Maimonides (Hil. Issurei Biah XXI.8) summarizes the traditional attitude as follows: (cf. Tur, Shulken Aruch, Even Ha'ezer 20.2)
"Women are forbidden to practice lewdness with one another (cf. Yevamot 76a; Shabbat 65a — 152 13 1117104)
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 (1.60 p. 10 / k) because there is no specific biblical prohibition against it. Furthermore, there is no intercourse at all (in the technical sense — 16 21, 2 or / k). 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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Department of Rabbinic Literature and Homiletics

EUGENE MIHALY, Professor

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 tradition, 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 *הנהגה* for Reform Jews

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Department of Rabbinic Literature and Homiletics
EUGENE MIHALY, Professor

5

must be a committed Reform Jew. (Both words are essential.) Furthermore, and this is indispensable, each question must be approached with *piut sheni*, *נצחית תורה* — 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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Department of Rabbinic Literature and Homiletics
EUGENE MIHALY, Professor

6.

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 (כְּלָמַת הָעַמִּים). 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 (שָׁמֵן). He is treated in the sources in the same category as the demented and the minor (קָטָן וְשָׁמֵן). 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 שָׁמֵן apply. Knowing, as we do today, that impairment of speech and hearing from birth in no way reflects

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Department of Rabbinic Literature and Homiletics

EUGENE MIHALY, Professor

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 gillul — 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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Department of Rabbinic Literature and Homiletics
EUGENE MIHALY, Professor

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 officer, 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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9.

suffering from some other physical or mental handicaps 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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10

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 subsidize 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 ~~can~~ 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 relationships" 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) *וְהָיוּ הַיָּדָיו כְּמַלְאכֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם*, "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, Nasso #27) God blesses; not the Rabbi. There is a Midrash ~~on~~, however, on Gen XII. 2 *וְהָיוּ בְרָכָה* - 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. 1, end). In other words,

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15

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. 11.3.2

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.

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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-112 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

derivative comments from at least two members of the staff, indicating our library has only a fraction of that number. I have checked with Ed Kieve, 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 beneficially 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^s 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 ^{be} to 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.

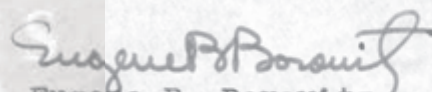
2. I have deferred my response to the question about a "rabbi's obligation to serve such a congregation" so as to be able to say something about the issues posed by the realities of Jewish homosexuals.

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.

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Eugene B. Borowitz

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