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Outreach, 1991-1994.

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MEMORANDUM

COPY

February 10, 1994

FROM: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

TO: Dru Greenwood

Enclosed, the latest issue of the United Israel Bulletin. The lead article therein is about Aime Palliere. You may recall my talking about that book at the recent Outreach Commission meeting.

Historically, it is a little bit inaccurate as far as I am concerned. In 1926 I was only a year old and couldn't possibly have written an "inspiring article" on Palliere's book. I wrote it in the early '40's, but it was the first article of mine that was ever published.

What I did not know is that Palliere was aware of that review. Note his introductory commentary to the 1947 article which included the United Israel Publication.

My father was interested in United Israel principally because it was an outreach organization intended to bring non-Jews to Judaism and to welcome them appropriately, but had some basic ideological reservations about the approach which this organization took. It was a little bit too "kooky," non-mainstream and hence, father ultimately disassociated himself from it. Still, David Horowitz, the founding guru of this organization still keeps sending me his bulletins.

Anyway, I thought you might be interested in reading this.



O when

February 3, 1994 22 Shevat 5754

Ms. Annie DeCourcy P.O. Box 391 Wolfeboro Falls, NH 03896-0391

Dear Annie DeCourcy:

Your wonderful expression of gratitude was totally unnecessary and absolutely beautiful. The thank you from the bottom of your heart was more than sufficient and means a great deal to me.

The cachepot is truly lovely and I thank you for your thoughtfulness.

Please do keep in touch and let me know how you are faring in your quest. I will be interested and also don't hesitate to write if you have any special questions to pose.

With every good wish and repeated thanks, I am Sincerely,

Edith J. Miller Assistant to the President () Whoward

January 21, 1994 9 Shevat 5754

Ms. Annie DeCourcy P.O. Box 391 Wolfeboro Falls, NH 03896-0391

Dear Ms. DeCourcy:

Your letter of January 16 has reached my desk and I hasten to respond. Please be assured we want to be of assistance to you in making contact with a synagogue where you might receive guidance in pursuing your interest in Judaism.

In looking at a map I located Wolfeboro and Wolfeboro Center and assume the Falls are nearby. The closest of our synagogues is Temple B'nai Israel in Laconia but they do not have a full-time rabbi, they are served by a student on a very part-time basis. I will, however, share your letter with Student Rabbi Rochelle Sabath.

Not too far away, albeit not as close as Laconia, is Temple Beth Jacob, 67 Broadway, Concord, NH 03301. I am sharing your letter with Rabbi Ned Soltz and you may wish to write or telephone him at 603-228-8581.

We have an Outreach Coordinator in our Union's Northeast Council office in Brookline, MA, Ms. Paula Brody. She works with area congregations as well as with people who seek to learn more about our faith. I am also sharing your letter with her.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions to pose.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Edith J. Miller Assistant to the President 01/16/94

Annie DeCourcy P.O. Box 391 Wolfeboro Falls, N.H. 03896-0391

Union of American Hebrew Congregations 838 Fifth Avenue New York, NY 10021

I am seeking a synagogue in my area that would be willing to accept at present, a non-Jew. How I live and what I wish to be are one in the same; however, I need the assistance and guidance of role models. May you be so kind as to help me.

Thank You,

Annie DeCourcy

ARCHIVES

Laconia. Rachelle Sabath

John





RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

Wheat

January 31, 1994 19 Shevat 5754

Mr. & Mrs. Larry D. Prins 13406 Vista del Prado San Antonio, TX 78216

Dear Larry and Donna:

I admire your determination to choose Judaism and I appreciate your forbearance. Sometimes, alas, institutional needs and personal needs clash and it is difficult to resolve them.

Nonetheless, I am sending your letter to Deborah Stein, who is the Outreach consultant for Reform Judaism in Texas in the hope that she will find that alternative road to Judaism which you seek, or perhaps even be able to persuade the San Antonio Temple to make an exception in your case.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

BCd: DEBBIE STEZN



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

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

We have been regular visitors at Temple Beth El in San Antonio for well over a year. We believe in Judaism. We have been living a Jewish life. In a recent sermon, the Beth El Rabbi described your "Call to Proslytize", as he heard you speak at a convention in San Francisco.

We enrolled in a conversion class at Beth El in January of 1993. We dropped out of class after two weeks for several reasons. The primary reason was that Donna has an incurable back problem. Sitting in class for two and one half hours caused intolerable pain. Secondly, in addition to sixteen weeks of classes, there is a rigorous schedule of required activities, which conflicted with my work schedule. Thirdly, there is required individual and group counseling. This may be necessary for young couples considering interfaith marriage. However, we found Judaism after a long search and our decision to "Choose Judaism" was not of a sudden nature. And finally, we felt out of place being middle aged in a class with primarily young couples.

Beth El has made it very clear that all prospective converts are required to successfully complete this course. Since this is the only Reform Temple in San Antonio, we have no other options.

Although we discontinued attending class, we have continued to study. We have read nearly all the required reading for the class (14 books) plus several others and our studies continue.

We are members of ARZA. We made a contribution to Beth El recently, which displayed our appreciation for allowing us to attend their services.

Page 2 - Rabbi Schindler

Several years ago, our only child converted to Judaism. However, he was in Houston, where the method for conversion was much less stringent.

We hope you are able to detect our sincerity. We feel Jewish, and in many ways consider ourselves Jewish, however, we would like to make it official.

Considering what we understand to be your viewpoint on conversion, we are hoping that you may be able to provide us with an alternative to consider.

We thank you for your time and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

MERICAN JEWISH

Larry D. Prins
13406 Vista del Prado

San Antonio, TX. 78216

Donna R. Prins

יניקג





RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

January 31, 1994 19 Shevat 5754

Ms Janet Kahn c/o Temple Israel 2215 Mahan Drive Tallahassee, FL 32308

Dear Janet:

AMERICAN IEWISH

Thank you for your letter of January 14th which reached me on my return to the office.

Needless to say, I was delighted with it. Thanks to your efforts, my intuitive perception was confirmed.

I also shared your letter with the members of our Outreach Commission, or at least its Executive Committee which met this past Sunday, and they shared my enthusiasm.

I was delighted to hear from you and to receive this good news. Thank you very much for your thoughtfulness in sending it to me.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler UAHC President 838 Fifth Avenue NewYork, New York 10021-7064 out of count

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

I have been actively involved in Outreach efforts for the past ten years, locally as congregational Outreach Chair for two congregations (Pensacola, FL and currently Tallahassee, FL), regionally as S.E. Regional Outreach Chair and nationally by serving on the Executive Committee of the UAHC Commission on Reform Jewish Outreach. The work is challenging and exceedingly rewarding.

In keeping with your vision proclaimed in 1978 and repeated again this year, I thought you may be interested in learning about what is happening in a rather small Jewish community in the South. Serving the adult population, Temple Israel of Tallahassee, a congregation of fewer than 350 families, has had on-going Adult Education classes, Torah study, and private studies with Rabbi Stanley Garfein for conversion purposes. On January 6, 1994, we held our first (to my knowledge) Introduction to Judaism class. Rather than serve only those already in our midst and those bound to us through intermarriage, we chose to advertise in the secular press hoping to reach unaffiliated Jews and possibly a FEW religiously non-preferenced.

We ran our advertisement for the 18-week course two times in the local newspaper and sent a flyer to members of the congregation. To us, the response was overwhelming. Thirty-eight people attended the Orientation and Registration meeting held in December and by the first class, we had sixty-two paid-up, enthusiastic registrants. Of these sixty-two, only approximately one-fourth are temple members, primarily interfaith couples. Of the remaining three quarters, over half are non-Jews and MANY have no Jewish ties (ie intermarriage). They state they've always been curious about Judaism. At least fifteen participants have already expressed an interest in conversion.

I concur our doors should not be closed, giving the impression that we are, to use your words, "an exclusive club for born Jews or that one must be married to a Jew in order to be welcomed by us". A simple advertisement stating OPEN TO THE PUBLIC may be all it takes!

Thank you for sharing your vision.

Sincerely,

Janet Kahn





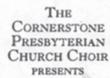
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Outreast.

January 27, 1994 15 Shevat 5754

Ms. Coventry Kessler 5 Herrick Place Durham, NC 27707

Dear Ms. Kessler:

As we do not have a UAHC Religious Practices Committee, two copies of your January 10 letter reached my desk. Please forgive this delayed response, but I have been travelling far and wide for some weeks now visiting a number of Union congregations since early January. This is my first opportunity to reply to you.

Rabbi Friedman was correct when he told you there in no ritual which provides for one to "officially" renounce their Judaism, be they a born Jew or one who has chosen to convert to our faith.

Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, of Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion, our seminary, has written a very fine article on "Being a Jew at Christmas Time." A copy is enclosed herewith for your perusal.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Rabbi Frank Fisher Rabbi John Friedman

loc. Dru

Lawrence A. Hoffman

Being a Jew at Christmas Time

Thank my fourth-grade teacher, Miss Schneider, for my introduction to Christmas. As public school teachers go, she was, I grant you, something of a religious fanatic (among other things, she held Gospel study classes in pupils' homes every Wednesday after school). I will never forget the day I sat on my front porch watching some twenty or so of my classmates follow Miss Schneider into the home of my neighbor and best friend just two doors down from me. Joining the class was "the thing to do," and I couldn't do it; I was Jewish. To be sure, with what can only be described as conversionary zeal, Miss Schneider tried regularly to "remedy" my religious status, a project that led my parents to remove me from her classroom by February. But in December, I was still a Miss Schneider ward. And that is where I encountered Christmas.

I was later to find out, however, that when it came to Christmas, all my teachers were more or less Miss Schneider clones. Every year, as autumn slipped steadily into winter, even the most humanly sensitive, Constitution-loving, and open-minded teachers became carried away by the spirit of what we now call, euphemistically, the "holiday season." By early November, the classroom was already being turned into a swiftly accelerating vehicle for welcoming Christmas. By late November, we had heard the Christmas story several times over. Red and green decorations floated lazily down from ceilings and doorways. A large decorated tree outfited the main hall, and a smaller one greeted visitors entering the principal's office. In art class, you painted Christmas scenes; in English class,

RABBI LAWRENCE A. HOFFMAN is professor of liturgy at the New York branch of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Among his latest works is a revision of Rabbi Morris Kertzer's classic, What Is a Jew?, an introduction to Judaism that will be released by Macmillan in the spring of 1993.

FALL 1992 357



ou composed Christmas stories; in music, you sang Christmas carols. A uge school-wide Christmas assembly, followed by a gala Christmas party, tarked the end of the first semester, but everybody returned that night to ear the school's crack choir present its annual Christmas concert.

As welcome as I was in my country, there were certain times when I susected that as a Jew I didn't quite fully belong. Heading up the list of such
mes was the annual Christmas fever that swept through almost everyone
knew, but passed me by. None of the Jews in my small town kept any
hristmas customs in those days. The close-knit Jewish community, tiny
nough to know everybody else's business, would have looked askance
such a thing. Having a Christmas tree, for instance, would have been
lewed as but one step short of apostasy. In larger communities though,
small minority of Jews did decorate their own trees, hang stockings and
live gifts. It seemed the American (if not the Jewish) thing to do.

It was, and still is, no picnic explaining to your children that Jews don't elebrate Christmas. They stare at you in disbelief. Everyone keeps Christmas, they plead. It is the topic of every television program, the display in very store window. The Radio City Music Hall features its annual Christmas spectacle and the Metropolitan Museum of Art displays Christmas tifacts. What do you mean, We don't celebrate Christmas? Does that make

s the Grinch? maybe Scrooge?

When my children were young, a well-meaning baby-sitter looking to be eative helped each child assemble a tiny Christmas tree, made of colored aper, cellophane, and fallen branches collected from the wintry outdoors. he children beamed at us with glee when we came home. What does a ibbl's family do with a pair of ready-made, personally constructed Christias trees? Certainly not call them Chanukah bushes and compound the n of syncretism, doing injustice both to Judaism and to Christianity at te same time (fine irony to the "Chanukah bush," given the fact that hanukah arose as a festival celebrating the Hasmonean fight to keep Juaism free of foreign religious influence). Patiently, quietly, and with all ne love we could muster, we explained to our children that as much as we dored the work of their hands, the trees had to go. We were Jews; Christnas trees were for Christians; it would be wrong for us to have them rrong because it was false to Judaism, and wrong because it made light f Christmas. Chanukah was important for Jews; Christmas was sacred for hristians. But you can't be both Jewish and Christian, and you can't have oth Chanukah and Christmas. It is one or the other.

Another year, Nick, our neighbor across the way, came to the door announce his plans to show up in everybody's living room some-

where around midnight, dressed in his Santa Claus suit. Did we want to be included in the list of stops? The kids would love it, he assured us. We thanked him, but reminded him we were Jews. He knew that, but explained that lots of Jews would be on his list. What does a religious commitment to Judaism have to do with keeping or not keeping Christmas? For that matter, what does Christmas have to do with Christianity? For Nick, as for his Jewish takers, Christmas is just a fun time with music, parties, and wishes for world peace. Go argue with that. Scrooge indeed!

For Jews like me who take Judaism seriously, however, that is not what Christmas is. It is a feast on the Christian calendar celebrating the incarnation of the son of God. I take seriously the religious significance Christmas has (or should have) for Christians. Since I'm not a Christian, it is self-evident to me that I cannot observe the occasion, not in good conscience,

anyway, even though life would be a lot simpler if I could.

Historians tell us that Christmas was not always the cultural fulcrum that balances Christian life. There was a time when Christians knew that the paschal mystery of death and resurrection was the center of Christian faith. It was Easter that really mattered, not Christmas. Only in the consumer-conscious nineteenth century did Christmas overtake Easter, becoming the centerpiece of popular piety. Madison Avenue marketed the change, and then colluded with the entertainment industry to boost Christmas to its current calendrical prominence.

To be sure, my Jewish festival of Chanukah, which falls about the same time as Christmas, is now being hyped as a sort of Jewish equivalent — as in "Chanukah bushes." It doesn't matter when Chanukah falls. Since it is pegged to the Hebrew calendar, it may occur any time from late November to late December. Regardless of which it is, people wish me a "happy holiday" around December 25, as if real holidays ought to happen then.

I have lit Chanukah candles happily and dutifully for almost half a century; some of my fondest family memories consist of standing with my arms around my children as we sang Chanukah songs in the flickering candlelight. But the religious part of me regrets the fact that fewer and fewer Jews observe the High Holy Days, Shabbat, and even Passover (which used to weigh in as everyone's favorite), while more and more identify Judaism as a gift-giving cult centered on Chanukah. In any event, the Chanukah hype won't work. It may sell merchandise, and even inspire Peter, Paul, and Mary to write "Light One Candle" — a terrific song, by the way — but it won't make Chanukah into a Jewish version of Christmas, and it won't address the alienation of so many Jews who genuinely like the Christmas they see and feel all around them: a Christmas that they cannot share.

Where I live, Christmas starts officially at the end of November, with Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. Cities outside New York schedule their own parades then, but Macy's version typifies the genre. It takes no semiotic genius to get the message. The parade route winds down Broadway following its own "Yellow Brick Road" to the shopping mecca on Herald Square. Bringing up the rear, but leading the way for the folk who follow the official parade route is Santa Claus, who will soon reappear daily at malls around the country promising goodies to good little children.

I am no Scrooge. I like Santa Claus too. I like the Christmas music — even the bad music — that surrounds the Santa ritual; I like the crisp winter weather, and the bell ringers, and all the rest of the paraphernalia that make most people look forward to December 25. I like my neighbors' wreaths and their Christmas trees, and the mistletoe, and above all, the genuinely religious Christmas carols that you can hardly hear any more because they are being replaced by soppy songs that melt down the Christian message of this holy day as quickly as snow in a heat wave. Great music is great music, after all; I enjoy it.

It is, in fact, my liking (or not liking) of Christmas that constitutes the key to the role of Christmas in American culture. By contrast, I neither like nor dislike Easter, just as I have no opinion of, say, Ramadan. As a Jew, I naturally evaluate my own holy days, but I generally feel compulsion to appraise the sacred calendar of others. Christmas is an exception to this rule. American mores expect me, even as a non-Christian, to welcome Christmas as a positive good in my life. Not to appreciate the Christmas spirit is considered a cultural sin. An examination of that sin will tell us a good deal about what Christmas has become.

have in mind three manifestations of Christmas in popular culture. The first two are modern-day fairy tales depicting the ultimate triumph of good over evil: the Broadway hit, Annie, and what, as I write, is being billed as "the summer movie of all time," Batman Returns. To say that both have been box-office bonanzas is to be guilty of understatement. They obviously touch something very deep in our collective cultural psyche.

In both, Christmas appears as a symbol of the myth of American virtue. The Batman theme is simple and direct: the forces of good arrayed against the forces of evil. Unlike real life, however, from beginning to end, and no matter how bad things appear in the middle, not a soul in the movie theater has any doubt about who the final victor will be. It is only a matter of time until Batman wins and Penguin loses. And at the end, the protagonist lives

happily ever after. That is the nature of fairy tales. They portray things as we wish they were, not as they are. They may be absolutely ghoulish in the hideous trials to which the heroes are exposed, but in the end, Cinderella marries the prince, Little Red Riding Hood escapes the wolf, Hansel and Gretel don't get baked in the oven, and Batman restores order to Gotham city.

What makes Batman interesting for our purposes is the fact that the hero's triumph is portrayed against the backdrop of Christmas. The entire movie is set in the Christmas season. In his last line of the film, Batman links his own success at foiling the Penguin with the underlying theme of Christmas. "Merry Christmas," he says, and good will toward men — and women." Christmas thus functions as a cultural trope for the way we wish things were, or better yet, the way we like to pretend things are. In the actual world bad things actually do happen to good people; real-life Penguins do prowl our land. The good-will quotient measured in the absence of ethnic, racial, and religious rivalries is rather low right now. But the myth of Christmas allows us to put aside untidy evidence from newspaper head-lines and to believe instead that all's right in Gotham. Christmas stands symbolically for a secular version of redemption: Jesus doesn't save; Batman does. If evil has been eradicated it must be Christmas, goes the logic, as in fact it is in Batman Returns.

The evidence from Annie is even more transparent. Annie is an orphan, who is adopted by Daddy Warbucks. Along the way, evil raises its ugly head in the shape of the manager of the orphanage and her brother, who virtually kidnap Annie by posing as her parents. But in the end, their scheme fails, and Annie returns to her wealthy benefactor. As in Batman, Annie too has been written so that it culminates in Christmas. In the very last scene, not only Annie, but all the other orphans celebrate a lavish party in Daddy Warbucks' mansion. If Batman is the myth of good conquering evil in general, Annie is the application of that myth to American values in particular. Daddy Warbucks is a self-made man, a shining example of what hard work and business enterprise will get you. Never mind the fact that he made his money as a war profiteer — the play passes silently over the significance of his name, "Warbucks." The point is that Warbucks made it on his own. He hobnobs with FDR and the White House crowd, gets J. Edgar Hoover to unleash the FBI in his search for Annie, and lives the life of luxury that is the stuff of the American dream. But the message of Annie is precisely that those dreams can come true, if only we are hard-working and virtuous. Annie, after all, escapes the orphanage.

Again, we are dealing with pure myth. In real life, almost no one is self-

made any more. When Annie came out, it is true, Wall Street millionaires abounded, and law firms were hiring first-year graduates at astronomical sums. But most of America was getting poorer, not richer. Homelessness on a scale unknown since the Great Depression was about to become the norm for millions. Nonetheless, Annie told us confidently that even the poorest orphan could become a Warbucks heir. American capitalism triumphed once again.

In Annie, Christmas functions artistically not simply as the embodiment of moral victory but as a potent symbol for material success. The last scene focuses on munificent gift-giving. There is absolutely nothing spiritual about the day. No one sings Silent Night, let alone Adeste Fideles; the birth of the savior is the farthest thought from anyone's mind. Christmas, pure and simple, is nothing but the myth of endless American wealth born of capitalist entrepreneurship. The myth of secular redemption has reached its pinnacle here.

Add to Batman and Annie the third piece of evidence: Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol. Dickens wrote his masterpiece precisely at the time that Christmas was becoming the cultural focus of the secular year. England had prospered from the Industrial Revolution, where, once again, the myth of capitalism was wrapped up in the tinsel of Christmas packaging. In realty, the terrors of the time are readily evident from almost every page of every book that Dickens wrote. But not here. The capitalist myth merges with Christmas as secular redemption allows Tiny Tim and his family to be saved from poverty (not from sin) and celebrate (a feast, not a sacrament) with Christmas plenty donated by none other than Scrooge himself. In his prerepentant days, Scrooge is the very antithesis of the capitalist ideal. He is a rich man like Daddy Warbucks, but he hoards his wealth and despises the poor. Naturally, he disdains Christmas too. But in the end, he is converted. Christmas is the symbol for good will in general, gift-giving in particular, and the triumph of the capitalist ethic as a general good for one and all.

I now understand my own Christmas dilemma. Christmas has been secularized, "capitalized," and mythologized. As most people keep it, and certainly as popular culture presents it, it is the myth of the America we all pretend we inhabit: a place where Penguins are foiled, Annies are adopted, and even the poorest among us celebrate the wealth that comes from good old-fashioned hard work and industry. Not to observe Christmas is to blow the whistle on the myth, to expose such naked realities as a trickle-down economy where nothing trickles down, in a country rife with social ills and economic deprivation.

he problem is that even in its secularized form, Christmas is not religiously neutral. It is still Christian. So as a Jew, I am in a bind. I am naturally attracted to Christmas as mythic wish-fulfillment, marked by smiling Santas, festive parties, and gifts for everyone. At its secular best, it is at least one day in the year when we remember what we still might be: peaceful people infused with good will toward all, and a generous country, where everyone has a dinner to sit down to - heady stuff! But my conscience rebels against adopting what is still, for me, a Christian feast with a Christian message. There may be two Christmases here, the age-old religious celebration and the modern secular one. But they are not easily separated. Religious Christians may well be uneasy about the triumph of the secular variety, but at least they don't have to worry about sliding back and forth between the secular and religious landscapes. They can enjoy the American myth that the secular holiday presents and simultaneously observe the religious event for which Christmas was formulated in the first place. That is a luxury I cannot afford.

On the other hand, I, along with most other Jews I know, have come to terms with our Christmas dilemma. By no means do I yearn to celebrate Christmas. As the public pomp and ceremony become somewhat overwhelming, I slip into the role of a visitor to a foreign culture. I appreciate, even enjoy, much of the Christmas ambience; I share my Christian neighbors' happiness, as they share mine when my own holy days roll around. The academic part of me wonders how the religious message of Christmas got so overwhelmed by its secular mythology, and the religious part of me feels a little sorry that it happened that way. There are Jews who keep a Passover seder, but with no idea that the event has any religious significance beyond the family's getting together. There is nothing wrong with family gatherings, but the life of faith is impoverished if the Passover meal is no longer rooted in the religious verities that have animated it through the centuries. I imagine the same must be true of Christmas for Christians. There is nothing wrong with sleigh bells, Bing Crosby, and Christmas pudding, but I should hope Christians would want more than just that, and as Christmas becomes more and more secularized, I am not sure they get it.

In the end, the problem of Christmas is not mine any more than Christmas itself is. The real Christmas challenge belongs to Christians: how to take Christmas out of the secularized public domain and move it back to the religious sphere once again.



December 14, 1994 11 Tevet 5755

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

Dear Sam:

On my return from the Union's recent Board meeting and attendant engagements, I found your note awaiting me. Thank you for sharing your letter to the editor and also for writing about my father, z.l., in your Post piece. I do appreciate your thoughtfulness.

There are so many critical programs to be undertaken by the Union we simply can't move forward to do each and every one. Thus, inserting an ad in the New York Times inviting non-Jews to consider Judaism is out of our league, we don't have the funds required to undertake such a project properly.

This does not mean that I have given up on our wider mission. Perhaps you haven't heard about our Taste of Judaism pilot project (see description enclosed). The funds for this do not come out of our congregational dues but are privately raised and the pilot project is not too costly because it involve advertising only in local and regional papers.

I love your "only" \$40,000. for a page in the New York Times! Would you like to underwrite such an ad? Or perhaps you know of an "angel" who would like to fund such an ad. Given the climate in our congregations and the effort being made to alter the MUM Dues Program (and incidentally your own congregational president signed the petition being circulated), it would not sit well to expend such a large amount for reaching out to non-Jews. We have much too much yet to be fulfilled in serving our congregants and reaching out to unaffiliated Jews!

Rabbi Samuel M. Silver December 14, 1994 Page -2-

Thanks for inviting me to Delray Beach. My calendar is already booked into 1996 at this time so I can't even discuss the possibility of a visit to Temple Sinai.

Fond regards from house to house.

Sincerely,

AMERICAN JEWISH

Alexander M. Schindler

.

Encl.

PABBI SAMUEL M. SILVER
TEMPLE SINAI
2475 W ATLANTIC AVE
DELRAY BEACH, FLORIDA 3344E
407-276-6161

Letter to the Editor

Dear Friend,

The piece by James T. Moore in your 29th of May issue was fascinating.

A non-Jew, he lauds Jewish people and seems to be sighing something to the effect, "Oh, I wish I had been born Jewish!"

Chances are that Mr. Moore is of the opinion that he can't turn Jewish. Or he probably believes that he wouldn't be welcomed should he opt to go Jewish.

Chances are that many Jews are of the view that Judaism is not open to newcomers.

Actually, Judaism is hospitable to those who seek to join up. And the truth is that every year some 2,000 people, men and women, opt to go Jewish.

Chances are that many Jews are of the view that Judaism is not open to newcomers. Actually, Judaism is hospitable to those who seek to join up. And the truth is that every year some 2,000 people, men and women, opt to go Jewish. For the most part, the converts have been motivated by matrimony.

They become maritally linked to Jews and decide that one home is just big enough for one faith and then they decide to become Jewish.

Some of the synagogue leaders, B'nai Briths, Federations, Hadassahs and other Jewish organization are people who began life as gentiles and then voluntarily decided to adopt Judaism.

As a result of this phenomenon, I had a dream. In my dream I created something called Gentiles for Moses, an obvious counterpoint to Jews for Jesus.

In my dream I visualized a full page ad in newspapers, with legends like this:

Do you believe that Jesus was born of a virgin?
Do you believe that Jesus was resurrected?
Do you believe that Jesus exorcised demons?

Do you believe that the death of Jesus brought forgiveness to all those who believe in his divinity?

Do you believe in Original Sin?

If so, you are an adherent of a fine, monotheistic faith called Christianity. If you have some doubts about these beliefs, but would like to cling to monotheism, you might want to consider an alternative: Judaism. Judaism is hospitable to newcomers. We don't recruit, but we are happy to accept those who are seeking spiritual anchorage and haven't found it elsewhere.

Sometime after I had that dream, I learned that the leader of the American Reform Movement, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, had proposed at a huge convention of his people that it is time for Jews to reach out for converts.

He made it clear that the tactics of some of the Christian missionaries weren't part of his plan. He is raising millions of dollars for a fund to make it known to non-Jews that Judaism is willing to enfold them, if they are seeking some satisfactory faith outlook.

I wonder whether you who read this newspaper have any reactions to my dream and to Rabbi Schindler's proposal. If so, let me hear from you.

— Rabbi Samuel V. Silver Temple Sinai of Palm Beach County 2475 West Atlantic Avenue Delray Beach, FL 33445; 407-276-6161.

DFAR ALEX,

ANY PGORESS IN YOUR FFFORTO RAISE FUNDS TO INVITE GENTILES TO CONVERT?

My idea is that there ought to be a full page ad in the NY Times inviting gentiles to consider going Jewish.

The Times tells me that a page costs only \$40,000.

Then the ad could be replicated with and with news releases sent throughout the country.

I like my name: Gentiles for Moses, because it's an in-the-face thrust at Jews for Jesus.

I take tt you don't read Gabe Coben's Jewish Post.. Some months ago I had the pleasure of doing a piece in my digest of the Yiddish press of your father, of blessed memory.

Are you coming to Florida? I'd like to have you'n my pulpit for a drush or a pulpit dialogue.

Regards from bouse to house. Yours,



COPY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

Outrack

December 14, 1994 11 Tevet 5755

Mr. Jerome Kapner 2365 Harbour Oaks Drive Longboat Key, FL 34228

Dear Jerry:

Just a note to let you know how good it was to see you and especially to see you looking so well.

I also read the attached materials which came from Joanna Luria Mintzer, the daughter of your lovely companion.

Though I agree with the general principle that it is best to raise a child in one faith (was it not Ignatius Loyola who said, "Give me a child before the age of 6 and you can have him for the rest of his life?"), nonetheless, I have the most serious reservations about the concept of a pledge. That is exceedingly troubling to me.

As I understand it, the issue in this particular congregation has been referred to its Religious School Committee for reworking - - not the policy that children should be raised in one religion, but the policy about how this issue is discussed and conveyed to others with a somewhat greater sensitivity than the present policy prescribes.

Again, let me say how nice it was to be with you. Rhea joins me in sending you both our warm good wishes.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

MEMORANDUM

December 12, 1994

FROM:

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

TO:

Dru Greenwood

COPY:

I would be interested in your views on the enclosed matter. While I agree with the basic premise that a child is best raised in one faith, I feel a bit queezy about the pledge and how it was worded.

Please return this to me when you have read it.

alex,

As we discussed, I agree with your assessment. Joanna's statement bout The opportunity ariel has to "live The dialogue from The marrow out" is particularly troubling to me. You should know That The policy is back in The religious senoul committee for reworking—not The policy That children should be raised in the religion, but The policy about how its'

Union of American Hebrew Congregations discussed and

838 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212) 249-0100



JEROME KAPNER

2365 HARBOUR OAKS DRIVE LONGBOAT KEY, FLORIDA 34228

Dec. 6,1994

Dear Alex:

I found the attached very upsetting. Joanna Luria Mintzer is the daughter of Hortense Mintzer, my companion since Ruth died.

I don't expect any action from you or the office, but I feel you should know how one congregation attempts to solve the assimilation problem.

Joanna Luria Mintzer (she has not taken the name of her husband, Don Ferrell), has a number of degrees, the highest being Master of Arts from Newton Theological Seminary. She had been working towards Master of Divinity, but it was not awarded to her because her thesis was on the Holocaust. She had Elie Weisel as a patron during those years and has retained her deep interest in the Holocaust ever since.

She was a principal speaker in Holland at a convention of an international organization involved in the Holocaust, a year ago and this year was invited back to speak in Germany.

I mention this to point out that this is not an ordinary person. She will undoubtedly find some Congregation in the area, for she does want her daughten to be versed in the Jewish faith.

It seems a shame that we may lose people like this.

Sincerely

Joanna Luria Mintzer Donald R. Ferrell 130 Gates Ave. Montclair, NJ 07042 201-744-7130

July 29, 1994

Dear Steve,

As you know we have just recently become new members of the synagogue. We were sincerely looking forward to enrolling our daughter Ariel Ferrell, who is 8 years old, and entering third grade, in Ner Tamid's Jewish religious school. As you know Don is an ordained Protestant clergy and a pastoral associate at the First Congregational Church of Montclair, where he occasionally preaches. Of course Ariel and I both attend Church on occasion and Ariel participates in the informal children's program when she is present.

Consequently, after seriously studying the goals, policies and plans within the School Brochure, (which we only just now received) we found that we could not in good conscience sign the three point pledge which stipulates that no child may be a student in Ner Tamid's program if he or she is attending any other school where non-Jewish religious instruction is given. This came as a deeply disturbing and shocking philosophical position that neither Don nor I can endorse given our deeply felt and lived professional and personal commitment to inter-faith dialogue and education. We were all the more stunned that you, given your years of dedicated work in the field of Jewish-Christian dialogue and community out-reach, would espouse, what seems to us, such a narrow and exclusionary principle vis-a-vis the education of so many children now being raised in inter-faith families. We have difficulty understanding how being educated in the history, faith and tradition of two of the world's great religions could be seen as a detriment to a solidly grounded Jewish education. On the contrary we see it as as an extraordinarily deepening opportunity and challenge and even privilege to live the dialogue from the marrow out, so to speak!

We would very much like to discuss this issue with you in the profound hope that it is not only negotiable but that it is a policy whose purpose is highly suspect. Perhaps no one else has raised the question before? But clearly for us, it presents a major stumbling block to our ultimately feeling at home within the Ner Tamid community. I do hope we can reach an

understanding.

We will call you from Vermont where we will be vacationing starting Sunday July 31. We understand that you are on vacation until August 2. Also the Adult education committee asked me to speak with you about Michael Kogan, head of the Religion Department at Montclair State, as a possible resource for a scholar in residence for the Temple. I also suggested Eva Fleischner whom I know you know and also Susannah Heschel would be another possible resource. At any rate, we came eager and ready to share our selves with Temple Ner Tamid and I am deeply disappointed to think that our daughter with her unique and, what we firmly believe is an extraordinarily rich and multi-layered religious education, would be deprived of what Ner

We look forward to deepening the dialogue with you as we have done in the past.

Sincerely,

Jovens

Don

copy - Cantor Siskin



Joanna Luria Mintzer 130 Gates Ave. Montclair, NJ 07042 201-744-7130

July 28, 1994

Dear Cantor Siskin,

We are new members of Temple Ner Tamid. Enclosed please find the religious school registration form for our daughter Ariel Ferrell. She is 8 years old and will be entering third grade at The Montclair Kimberley Academy this fall, 1994. She is very bright and a quick study; but she has had no previous formal Jewish religious school education, and very little exposure

to written Hebrew. She will be a beginner.

Our home religious life is built upon an inter-faith marriage: I am Jewish and a theologian and my husband is an ordained Protestant clergy, an associate pastor of the First Congregational Church of Montclair and a practicing Jungian psycho-analyst. Jewish-Christian dialogue plays a vital and central role in both our professional and personal lives and Ariel breathes it in. She is not attending any Christian religious education school on a regular or formal basis, but she does, on occasion, go to Church with my husband as do I, especially to hear him preach. We have enclosed a copy of a letter we sent to Rabbi Kushner regarding Ner Tamid's policy of prohibiting any child from attending Jewish religious school if he or she also receives a non-Jewish formal religious education. As we explained to the Rabbi we can not in good conscience endorse such a policy.

Clearly we need to discuss this serious matter with both of you in depth. If our position violates your understanding of the rules of attendance at Temple Ner Tamid's school, we would appreciate hearing from you and/or Rabbi Kushner to discuss this further. We would be deeply regretful if we had

to withdraw Ariel from school and cancel our membership.

Draid Harrell

We sincerely hope that we can reach some genuine understanding and agreement such that we can look forward to Ariel enjoying a constructive, stimulating and satisfying Jewish education under your supervision.

Sincerely,

copy - Rabbi Kushner

Joanna Luria Mintzer 130 Gates Avenue, Montclair, New Jersey 07042

9-23-94

Dear Steve,

After painful consideration an and I have decided that Ariel's attendance at Ner Terrie's Religious School would not be in her best interest. We deeply appreciate the fire and energy you and the wereport of Nour Board Horse Po our conseans. We aspending appreciate very amplex and emotionally impleased that recessing surfaced in our discussion. We telt your genuine morus our core our decisions offers to accommodate no write not sourting the integrity of your position. unfortunately we too connot refine our one inver tentus now raylf me overlock the undicity obsessed of the other people present which was deady threated glyein zur possibled minestroorp troubled by our perspecture, we want brush person source so of heing brush dem to the wind water since was since was since we as the common to

AMERICAN JEWISH

DEAR JOANNA & DOW NEEDLESS TO SAY, I'M SORRY WE WERE
UNABLE TO WORK THINGS OUT, YOUR
LETTERS INDICATE A MEASURE OF DISAPPOINTMENT DUD FOR THAT I DIT TRUY
PEGRETFUL, UN PORTUNATELY, WE CANNOT
BE ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE. THE
SYNDGOGUE, IN ON EXPRESSION OF ITS
IDENTITY, MUST CREATE DEPINED BOUNDARIES.

I DO, INDERED, WISH YOU MUCH COOD FORTUME IN YOUR PURSUIT. MAY GOD WHICH OVER YOUR HOME.

Joanna Luria Mintzer 130 Gates Ave. Montclair, NJ 07042 201-744-7130

November 14, 1994

Dear Jerry,

Enclosed you will find copies of the written correspondence that went between Temple Ner Tamid of Bloomfield NJ and our family regarding their written policy of prohibiting Jewish instruction to children who are also attending formal non-Jewish education elsewhere. In our particular case, even living with a parent who is an ordained clergy and theological authority in Protestant Christianity would constitute "formal" education since Don could not refrain from being who he is, living his faith and speaking to Ariel of it. Given that both of us are theologians whose lives, both personal and professional, center around the free and vital exchange of ideas concerning God and faith and things essential to Judaism and Christianity, Ariel would and is of course continuously exposed to and engaged in dialogue with us(in so far as an 8 year old can participate). We of course believe it only enriches her sense of religious depth and the multi-valent vitality of the symbolic life that points to but can not ultimately name the Ineffable.

Temple Ner Tamid is a Reform Synagogue, which is struggling to deal with a 15% inter-faith family population. Their Rabbi, Steven Kushner is active in Jewish-Christian dialogue efforts, which is how we came to know him over 10 years ago. As I was looking at Temples, I thought his would offer an open, dialogical and dynamic sense of community and would be a congenial place for our daughter Ariel to get a solid Jewish education. Needless to say, I was shocked and greatly disturbed to experience the shadow side of their outwardly enthusiastic Jewish community. We unfortunately discovered that there was no room or will or energy to engage in dialogue of any kind regarding how an inter-faith family can best live the ambiguity of their realities, the places of mutuality as well as the substantial differences, which are of necessity threatening, challenging, and emotionally as well as intellectually disarming. Although Steve seemed to be somewhat open to the initial exchange, he did warn us that he thought his Cantor, who is the director of the education program, would have no tolerance for our situation or for inter-faith matters in general. He also warned us that he felt the Board

would not be open to much dialogue. The policy was set.

Temple Ner Tamid understands itself to be creatively dealing with the problem of inter-marriage by strongly encouraging the non-Jewish partner to relinquish all religious intention, and give over to the Jewish partner all religious authority in raising the child. They have on their board a woman whose job it is to act as a liaison between the partners and the Temple to ease the pain of relinquishment. She is a trained social worker! They firmly believe that a child who is raised "as both" bares an impossible burden, a confused identity, and can not successfully hold the two faiths in dialogue. They even went so far as to say it was tantamount to child abuse to force upon a child such a burden which they naturally assumed was rife with conflict and antinomy and family dissention. This of course is not true in our particular case. They believe that the parents must chose at the outset, the child's religion, be it Jewish or Christian, and follow one or the other. The rabbi will not preside over the marriage of a Jew and gentile even if they both want a

Jewish wedding. The philosophy of the Temple is "We are in the business of making Jews. Give us your child and we will make a Jew of her!" Their educational program is intense indoctrination and there is no room for dialogue nor is it their theological or philosophical understanding that any other faith has religious authority or standing or a truth position! This was repeated firmly in front of Don as we met with the Rabbi, Steve Kushner and six members of his board for an hour and half in September of this year.

Of the seven Temple board members present, the Rabbi and to a certain extent, the vice-president of the Board, were the only ones who tried to keep an open mind. The rest of those present grew more and more vehemently opposed to the possibility of Ariel being educated in their program if Don were

an active religious authority in her life.

As you know Don is an extremely liberal thinker who is more sensitive than most to Jewish concerns, who has devoted his intellectual inquiry to the study and teaching and the rewriting of Christian thinking and Christian texts to excise all unconscious, implied and stated Christian anti-semitism and teachings of contempt. He is both a student and teacher of the Holocaust, devoted to preaching and teaching in the Christian community to alerting his fellow Christians to their guilt and responsibility for Christian anti-semitism in the world. As a trained psycho-analyst he is extremely sensitive to the unconscious issues that contaminate the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, and to the family dynamics that can arise in an inter-faith marriage.

At the close of the meeting, the Rabbi stated that they could not control what went on in the privacy of our own home, nor was it their province to do so, consequently they would trust us not to send Ariel to a formal church school while she was enrolled in the Temple's school, if we would sign the pledge to that effect. In that case she would be welcome in their school. However, it was clear to both Don and me, that the feeling of the other board members, including the Cantor, was that the way we were choosing to educate Ariel was anathema to Jewish tradition and to the fostering of a true Jew and that Ariel's presence in the school would present a very threatening reality to them and the other students and set a very bad precedent. We did not in the least feel welcome in that community. So we chose to withdraw Ariel from the school and our family from the Temple in general, which we came to experience as highly fundamentalist, doctrinaire and completely out of touch with the pluralistic reality in which we all live, as if to be knowledgeable about any other faith other than Judaism would or could somehow dilute one's Jewish identity.

This is only a brief summary of that meeting and its consequences for us. For me it was deeply upsetting. I was truly surprised by the gross intolerance of the community policy and the underlying attitude of arrogance and ignorance and intellectual laziness. Beneath that of course lies something more tragic: the terrible sense of endangerment and threat that they feel in relation to the Gentile world. This is a Jewish problem. But exiling an interfaith family because they want their child to experience and know the reality of both worlds is not a creative means of "making Jews". I fear I have not made the whole thing clear enough for someone who does not know Don and me intimately. Perhaps you can fill in the blanks. I am certainly available to

discuss this further if need be.

Warmly,



December 24, 1992 29 Kislev 5753

Ms. Coventry Kessler 5 Herrick Place Durham, NC 27707

Dear Ms. Kessler:

My travels have been extensive, as you know, and this is my first opportunity to reply to your letter of December 2. I regret the delay.

You are seeking a judgment from me which is not mine to make. Neither I nor any fellow human being can rule that one is a "good or bad Jew." That determination is God's to make.

As for the Christmas tree, it IS a symbol and as such has special meaning to non-Jews. As a Jew, the symbols in my home are those of the Jewish people and while I can enjoy some of the festivities and trimmings of Christmas with non-Jewish friends, they are not a part of my home or family traditions.

With kindest greetings and every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Rabbi John Friedman





RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

December 9, 1992 14 Kislev 5753

Ms Coventry Kessler 5 Herrick Place Durham, NC 27707

Dear Ms Kessler:

Your letter of December 2nd has reached our office during Rabbi Schindler's absence. He is in Florida for the meeting of UAHC Board of Trustees and will be remaining in the Florida area for some speaking engagements following the Board meeting. Thus, he has not yet seen your letter, but it will be brought to his attention immediately on his return and I am certain you will hear from him at the earliest possible moment.

With kindest greetings, I am

Sincerely,

Edith J. Miller Assistant to the President

cc: Rabbi John Friedman

A.M. SKIER AGENCY 209 MAIN AVENUE HAWLEY, PA 18428 (717) 226-4571 OR (800) 245-2666

Hove to answer Outher war

November 2, 1992 6 Heshvan 5753

Ms. Coventry Kessler 5 Herrick Place Durham, NC 27707

Dear Ms Kessler:

Please forgive this delayed response to your thoughtful and beautifully written letter of October 21. The dilemma you pose is not one which can be answered effortlessly; as you have anguished over it for these many years, please know that gave it a great deal of serious thought before seeking to respond.

Yes, there are aspects of Christmas which are truly universal and perhaps even secular. But it is a Christian holiday based on a major event in Christianity and can well be described as a holy day. And here, I must note that I have never approved of comparing Christmas and Hanukkah nor do I condone the view that they compete with each other. They happen to fall at the same period of time and both have a theme of "light." But, they are religious celebrations, based on widely differing events, and as dear as Christmas is to our Christian friends and neighbors, so Hanukkah is dear to the Jewish people. I might also note that I do not countenance Christmas trees and decorations in a Jewish Certainly children in the home receive a mixed message from such decorations, even youngsters such as your Dylan and Gabe who have been brought up in a Jewish home, educated in the synagogue, and called to the Torah as B'nai Mitzvah.

I do, of course, appreciate your attachment to the Christmas tree and your looking upon it as a non-religious symbol. I feel for you and sympathize with your sense of loss at not having a tree in your home. Nonetheless, it does symbolize a Christian religious holiday and, in fact, there are many Christians who feel that some of the festive aspects of this holiday, such as the tree, decorations, wreaths, etc. take away from the true religious aspects of this special day.

Ms. Coventry Kessler November 2, 1992 Page -2-

Be that as it may, you have chosen Judaism and it is obvious that in addition to creating a lovely Jewish home you have taken an important place in the life of your synagogue and community.

Since your husband is so strong in his opposition to a Christmas tree and/or celebration in your home, I would think you might seek to respond to your heart's desire and well understood emotional ties to childhood joys by finding other means of marking this day. After all, an important aspect of Judaism is Sholom Bayit, peace in the home. Do you have Christian friends in Durham? Nearby? You might plan to spend time with them on Christmas, or even before by helping them decorate their tree and sharing in their celebration and festivities.

Your letter was thoughtful and I do feel your pain, but I hope that you will find a way to recall childhood joys in a venue other than your own Jewish home.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Rabbi John Friedman

bcc: Dru Greenwood

5 Herrick Place Durham, NC 27707 October 21, 1992

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

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

I hope you can help me with a problem that, although it should be small in the scheme of things, has caused a great deal of anguish over the past 13 years.

When my husband, who is Jewish, proposed to me in 1970, he did so on the condition that we never celebrate Christmas. With a deep twinge--for I dearly loved that holiday--but no argument, I said yes: because I was crazy about my husband-to-be, because my twin infant sons needed a father (which Frank was willing to be), because I was totally alienated from my Protestant Christian background and knew I would not return.

After we married, Frank, the boys, and I celebrated the Jewish holidays. Then several years later, with no prompting from my husband, I converted to Judaism. Although the religion appealed to meand still does—I also wanted to honor Frank's parents because they had been so generous in accepting me and my sons. I rationalized the conversion to myself by saying, "I might as well since I can't have Christmas."

For most of the year I was happy to be part of a Jewish household, taking our sons to the synagogue, teaching the Yiddish I had learned from my mother-in-law, telling them stories I knew, reading Jewish authors, helping them become proud of their Jewish heritage. The day Dylan and Gabe became b'nai mitzvot was one of incredible happiness for Frank and me.

Yet as the years progressed, I also found it harder and harder to skip over this holiday I loved so much from my childhood. Each December I grew more and more depressed and ended up so resenting Chanukah—the competing holiday—that I once sneaked half my children's Chanukah books out to a dumpster and ripped them to shreds. December became agony.

A kind Hillel rabbi emphasized that it was not wise to celebrate Christmas in our home--it would "confuse" our boys--but perhaps I could go home to my family. This was complicated because my parents were dead and my only brother lived across the country. Finally, after much pleading with my husband, he agreed that I could do a few things with the boys--hang stockings, give a few presents--provided that the holiday did not take over Chanukah. On one point he was adamant: there would be no Christmas tree.

This unorthodox solution worked well for a time. It left me much happier within the synagogue where I subsequently taught Sunday School for several years. I quieted any qualms about the supposed religious inconsistency by realizing that Christmas in my house had never been a religious holiday, celebrating it made me feel much better, and finally I felt deep in my heart that it is such a grand, kind, Dickensian day that anyone who wants to should be able to enjoy it. And it helped to know, although in synagogue you only whisper about it, that there were other Jewish families enjoying Christmas too. Christmas stayed a minor event in our house; we indeed had no tree and my husband made it a point not to participate. At the same time, we did as much as ever for Chanukah and the other Jewish aspects of our lives.

But my husband grew less and less gracious about our agreement as time passed. At the same time I grew furious that we couldn't have a Christmas tree, which precipitated our big blow-up. As anyone who grew up with Christmas can tell you, the Christmas tree is Christmas, and having the day without one is like Passover without a Sedar. I asked for a tree. Frank threatened to leave if I got one. I had to choose: him or a Christmas tree. Christmas Eve that year was so painful that I vowed never again to spend it under the same roof with my husband. At the same time, I felt guilty, wanting something that made my husband so unhappy. The following year I saved up the money and visited my family -- and spent a lot of time missing my husband and kids. Last year, in the flush of excitement over our middle son's bar mitzvah, I thought I could just slip past Christmas and ignore it, then found myself hysterical on Christmas Eve, running away from home for the evening, quite worrying both Frank and my parents-in-law. Frank and I then realized that the situation had grown so painful that we had to get help before another Christmas arrived; we are now seeing a therapist to see if we can work out a solution.

The reason I write to you is this. Frank feels that Christmas is the archetypal Christian holiday and a tree its archetypal symbol. In part he defines himself as a Jew by his refusal to celebrate the day. He has other reasons too, such as being embarrassed in front of his parents, who always derided Jews with Christmas trees, and the more common rationalization, that it will confuse children about who they are. But what it boils down to is this: Jews shouldn't celebrate Christmas. And since I converted, I am bound by this obligation.

Rabbi, after I married Frank, I did my best for many years to give up Christmas. And I have participated in Jewish life more than many converts, studied much, even at one point considered pursuing graduate work in Jewish studies. Standing in synagogue, singing in my cracked Hebrew, at times fills me with joy and peace. But I also know that Christmas and Christmas trees will never go away for me.

So, Rabbi Schindler, I ask you and the UAHC, since you set policy for Reform Jews, is it true that you cannot be a good Jew if you celebrate the secular Christmas? Our rabbi, John Friedman of Judea Reform Congregation, Durham, assures me that once you convert to

Judaism, you cannot unconvert. But what is the point in identifying as a Jew if I must see myself as a bad one? If being a good Jew requires abstaining from Santa Claus and decorated pine trees, perhaps I must reconsider my conversion and renounce it. As you no doubt are aware, a large number of Jews (who participate in Jewish life), especially in small communities in the South, also have Christmas and a tree, but it is something they only admit to other Jews in whispers and with great guilt. If it is true that celebrating a secular Christmas does not necessarily make you a bad Jew, then I wish that fact acknowledged so that I and others like me no longer must live under a burden of guilt and secrecy. But to say I must remain a part of the Jewish community yet see myself as a failed member of it is intolerable.

Please do not engage in pilpul, begging the definition of what is good, what community means, what is wisest for the children, or reiterate the religious nature of Christmas, or even declare that every person must rely on God's guidance for what is good, but answer me forthrightly and directly, as one who shapes policy for Reform Jews: Can you celebrate a secular Christmas and still be a good Jew?

Thank you for your kindness in listening and considering my question.

Sincerely,

oventry Ressler

cc: Rabbi John Friedman



Con

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

December 29, 1993 15 Tevet 5754

Mr. Peter Howard Ohio State University Room 935 Taylor Tower 50 Curl Drive Columbus, OH 43210

Dear Peter:

Thank you so much for sending me a copy of your Outreach Program Analysis prepared for the Ohio State University Forensic Speech and Debate Team. I was very much intrigued by your presentation. I certainly didn't know that. I was following the Jeremiad pattern. I had never even heard of this rhetorical device and so mine wasn't a conscious effort. It came quite naturally to me, as it were.

But it was effective as you perceived. The Outreach program is well established by now and has gained a momentum all its own which requires no further fueling from me.

In a sense, I suppose, I was fortunate in that the times were right for such an Outreach effort. Nonetheless, I suppose I ought to accept credit for perceiving it to be a proper time and delivering a message (marginally noted, against the advice of my senior staff) that I had long felt to be important.

Again, my thanks for your helpfulness.

Cordially,

Alexander M. Schindler

CC: MELVIN MERIANS LARRY BUSH DRU GREENWOOD

From the desk of Peter Howard

December 22, 1993

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

Dear Rabbi,

I am a member of the Ohio State University Forensics Speech and Debate team and a former active member of NFTY. As a member of the speech team, I compete in tournaments in a multitude of events. One of the events is Rhetorical Criticism. For this speech, I decided to analyze the Reform Jewish Outreach Movement. Now that the Forensics season is underway, I have completed a first draft of the speech and taken it to a tournament. I received second place in the event, and as a result, I qualified the speech for the National Forensics Association national tournament in April.

My speech on Outreach takes the form of a Rhetorical Criticism. Rhet Crit (as we call it) is an event in which the speaker has ten minutes in which to deliver a speech that critically analyzes a rhetorical artifact and draws several conclusions based upon the analysis. The analysis is done within the framework of a published, known rhetorical method. I chose your address to the UAHC board of trustees on December 2, 1978 as my artifact and I analyzed it within the context of the Jeremiad, a rhetorical form that is used within the speech. From this analysis I was able to draw several conclusions about the speech and the form.

I have enclosed both a copy of my speech and a further description of the event in the form of an excerpt from the Ohio State Forensics Team Handbook. Please feel free to read both at your leisure. I would be grateful for any feedback from you.

Thank you.

Peter Howard

Rhetorical Criticism by Peter Howard

In the 1970's sitcom "Bridgette loves Bernie", young newlyweds struggled with the problem of interfaith marriage. As a reaction to the pressure from their parents and communities, Bridgette loses faith in Catholicism and Bernie no longer practices Judaism. This situation is no mere fiction. The American Jewish Community has been faced with the prospect of losing many of its members through assimilation and intermarriage. To combat this loss of members, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) delivered a call to action to the UAHC board of trustees on December 2, 1978. In the speech, Schindler sought to bring those who were on the verge of losing their Jewish identity through intermarriage, neglect, or apathy back into the Jewish community. Schindler's speech merits our analysis today because the Outreach movement for which the speech served as an impetus is now a large, important and new direction for the American Jewish community. As such the speech represents a significant rhetorical event. To examine Schindler's speech, we will use Kurt Ritter's American Political Rhetoric and the Jeremiad Tradition: Presidential Nomination Acceptance Addresses, 1960-1976, as found in the Fall 1980 Central State Speech Journal. Ritter's method suits this analysis because Schindler is confronted with a situation in which only a rededication to the Jewish faith would save the community-- a situation that called for a jeremiadic rhetorical response.

In order to see how the Jeremiad is used, we must first examine Ritter's method. Next, we will apply it to Rabbi Schindler's speech, and finally we will be able to draw some critical conclusions about the speech and jeremiadic rhetoric.

The Jeremiad is one of strongest rhetorical forms in American communication. In his book The American Jeremiad, Sacvan Bercovitch traces the original Jeremiad to Puritan sermons. The very name of the jeremiadic form is a reflection of the frequent use of the prophet Jeremiah in these sermons which were prolific in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. As America developed, the jeremiad evolved into a rhetorical form that used the religious qualities of the American dream to emphasize political calls to action.

Ritter describes the modern jeremiad as having five sequential elements. The first is the development of a sense of crises or impending doom by the rhetor. Second, the rhetor will expound upon a common value or principle and link the crisis facing the audience to a failure to uphold this principle. Third, this crisis will be portrayed as a test of character, a test of the belief in the common value. Fourth, the rhetor will call upon the audience to examine and revitalize its commitment to the principles it has violated. The crisis is depicted as a failure of individuals, while the system is glorified as the solution. Finally, the rhetor will end with a dramatic call to action that transmits a sense of urgency. Urgent adaptation of values outlined is painted as the only means of survival. If successful, jeremiadic rhetoric fosters revivalist movements to rededicate the populace to common values that traditionally defined the community.

These five elements of the Jeremiad are enacted in Schindler's speech. He begins by establishing a sense of crisis, the first element of the jeremiad. Painting the picture of intermarriage and how it is a threat to the survival of the Jewish people, he signals that the tide of intermarriage is a threat to the future of American Judaism. He says: "The tide is running against us. This is the reality we must face." He continues by citing statistics that show how one out of

three Jews intermarries. Schindler draws upon the emotional tie to fears of persecution and loss of community to make the threat even more substantial.

Next, Schindler continues by examining the roots of the intermarriage problem. Reflecting Ritter's second element, departure from values, he identifies traditional values that have not been upheld. He addresses Jewish education as one value that could be improved upon. However, he does not focus here. Instead, he finds the problem in the Jewish community's response to the intermarriages themselves. Alienating the non-Jewish partner in a mixed marriage is the prime reason that intermarried couples turn away from the Jewish community. Schindler says: "By not opening up our arms to these new spouses, as we should to every member of the Jewish community, we loose both the new spouse and the born Jew." This is a failure to uphold the value of acceptance of others into the community, a value that had traditionally been strong.

Enacting the third element of a jeremiad, test of character, Schindler paints the struggle as a test of character to the Reform movement. Despite the negative effects of intermarriage to the Jewish community, Schindler says that it is not an impossible obstacle to overcome. He challenges the very fabric of Reform Jewish thinking, its creative unfolding of the Halacha, traditional Jewish law. Schindler asserts: "If we put our best minds to it, we will find many other ways which can bolster our efforts in this realm." This is a test of character to the Reform movement.

The fourth element of the jeremiad, revitalization, is enacted as Schindler puts forth a plan to revitalize the Reform movement. To stem the "tide running against us", Rabbi Schindler articulates a two pronged appeal to Jewish values. First, he asks each individual to "...begin by removing the 'not wanted' signs from our hearts," and welcome intermarried couples into the

community. Returning to the ancient value of acceptance of a non-Jewish spouse is one way to proceed. Then he calls for the creation of Outreach, a revival of the Reform Jewish value of innovation and creative problem solving. The Reform movement was created in response to the dilemma of reckoning the American lifestyle with a Jewish lifestyle. Applying this heritage to the modern problem invokes the values of the past to solve the problem of today.

Finally, the fifth jeremiadic element of a call to action is present in Schindler's conclusion. He requests that the board of trustees pass his resolution on Outreach and invokes an urgent call to action. Extolling the traditional values of Judaism, Schindler shows how the past provides a archetype for today's actions. Just as the Maccabees and Jews of Roman times actively engaged in activities similar to the proposed Outreach program, so to must the Jews of today actively court those who wish to become Jewish in order to maintain their numbers. Schindler closes by stating that "...we... possess the water which can slake the thirst" and demanding that we "...offer it freely, proudly—for our well-being and for the sake of those who earnestly seek what is ours to give." If the Jewish community will act on its collective values, it will survive.

Having applied Ritter's method to Rabbi Schindler's speech, we can now draw several critical conclusions about the speech and jeremiadic rhetoric.

First, we can see that Schindler was successful in his use of the jeremiadic form. This speech resulted in the creation of the Outreach program within the Reform Movement. Outreach has become a national commission which has a presence in 53% of reform synagogues in America, with 90% of all synagogues having had at least one outreach program in 1990, according to the Outreach census of 1991. The census also concludes "It is clear that in the thirteen years of its existence Reform Jewish Outreach has made a substantial impact."

Schindler's jeremiad led to the establishment of a part of the reform movement- its Outreach program- that is growing every day and will be an integral part of the community for years to come.

Next, we can see that the jeremiad, though of Puritan origin, is not confined to Christian use. Sacvan Bercovitch effectively chronicles the adaptation of the Jeremiad from the Puritan to the political pulpit. This study shows that the jeremiadic form also translates across religious traditions. Schindler uses the jeremiad successfully within traditional Jewish messages. The jeremiad has potential for any such tradition.

Finally, this understanding gives insight into the jeremiadic form. This study suggests that what makes the jeremiad effective is not its origins in or reliance upon the Puritan vision turned American dream. Judaism is not derivative of either. Rather, the jeremiad's effect is realized through tapping into any community's sense of self. In other words, we can see that the Jeremiad is a form that transcends culture, but its contents must be culture specific. As diverse ethnic groups struggle to maintain their culture in a society that views itself as a melting pot the jeremiad will be an increasingly visible rhetorical strategy. However, as our diversity is embraced, the "American jeremiad" may be diminished in importance and effectiveness.

Having looked at Rabbi Schindler's speech to the UAHC board of trustees on December 2, 1978 using Kurt Ritter's method of jeremiadic form, we have been able to draw conclusions about schindler's success and about the jeremiad, a rhetorical form that transcends its Puritan origins and crosses cultural boundaries. If Bridgette and Bernie had had access to an Outreach program, Bridgette might have been accepted by Bernie's parents regardless of her faith, and

Bernie may have remained strong in his Jewish faith. Thanks to Outreach, *this* is no longer fiction.



RHETORICAL CRITICISM

What is Rhetorical Criticism As a Forensics Event?

Rhet Crit as a forensic event is entirely different from Rhet Crit as an art form, a research technique, or a scholarly pursuit. Why? Quite simply, because you are not only criticizing something, you are delivering that criticism aloud to an audience--some of whom will be ranking and rating you at the end of the round. This means that

not only must you demonstrate scholarly effort, you must also demonstrate good speaking skills and, most importantly, <u>you must demonstrate that you have analyzed your audience</u> just as you would for any other speech.

The question then becomes, what is your audience looking for when you deliver your Rhet Crit? Two big things:

1. TERRIFIC TOPIC CHOICE.

You wouldn't do a Prose cutting that wasn't entertaining (well, you might, but for the sake of argument let's say you wouldn't) and you wouldn't choose an Informative topic that wasn't interesting. Nor would you pick out a Duo that was overused. Likewise, you should choose as a Rhet Crit topic something that will be entertaining and/or interesting for the audience to learn about that they haven't learned about before.

But there's more. You wouldn't choose a Persuasion topic that wasn't important. Therefore, you must choose a Rhet Crit subject that has value. What are the criteria for determining the importance of a Rhet Crit topic?

- A. Historical Importance. A speech that changes history is a good topic for Rhet Crit.
- B. Theoretical Importance. A speech that, by studying it, tells us more than we knew before about the process of persuasion, is a good topic for Rhet Crit.

Finally, you must choose a topic that is <u>rhetorical</u>. Remember, now, that anything can be considered rhetorical but that classically the word "rhetoric" referred to spoken discourse. There are lots of people at tournaments who will cheer you when you announce that you are criticizing the rhetorical impact of Carol Burnett's plastic surgery on the theatre going public, but there will be those who won't. From an audience analysis standpoint, for now the big money seems to be on the nondiscursive forms of rhetoric.

MARVELOUS METHOD.

When you eat Chicken McNuggets and say they're lousy, you are perceived by others as having studied either chicken in general or McNuggets in particular

- 1. Name of the method and its author.
- 2. Brief explanation of the method. Must be clear and concise.
- 3. Justification for using this method.
 - a. THIS IS CRITICAL.
 - b. What is the fit between the act and the method that makes it useful?
- D. Preview speech structure.
 - Will almost always be:
 - a. explanation of the method
 - b. application of the method to the act
 - c. critical conclusions based on the application of the method to the act.

II. Body

- A. Explain the components of the method and as clearly and as briefly as you can.
- B. Apply each part of the method to the artifact. Each component of the method should be clearly demonstrated and supported with quotations and paraphrasing from the act being studied.
 - C. Criticism. You have a wealth of options. Tailor to the speech.
 - 1. How does the act measure up to the standard (method)?
 - 2. How did this affect the impact of the act?
 - a. historical impact
 - b. rhetorical impact
- 3. What critical lessons can we learn about this rhetorical act from this analysis?
- 4. What critical lessons can we learn about this type of rhetorical act?
 - 5. What critical lessons can we learn about this particular method of analysis?
- 6. What critical lessons can we learn about a society that responds to this kind of rhetoric in this way?
- 7. What critical lessons can we learn about rhetorical criticism/theory?

These are just some of the possibilities depending on your purpose.

III. Conclusion

- A. Summary of speech
- B. Refocus on purpose and essential critical conclusions.
- C. Clincher--ties back in some way to the attention getter.

and as having formed a basis for judging those McNuggets. When you criticize rhetoric, however, you are not perceived by your audience as being a learned rhetorical theorist. You are perceived instead as an amateur, an undergraduate student who is competing in a forensics event. Therefore, you are not expected just to proclaim a rhetorical event wonderful or hideous based on your own standards of excellence. Rather, you are expected to utilize a method, or critical tool developed by someone with a Ph. D. to help you analyze and evaluate the speech.

There are lots of methods, some of which are covered in a later section of this handout. The important thing is that you justify the method you have selected. It would not be appropriate to criticize Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech (done to death) using a theory designed solely to evaluate speeches of ancient Roman orators.

It is no surprise, given all of the above, that the most often asked questions among Rhet Critters at the first tournament of the year are: 1) "What's your method?" and 2) "Why are you using that?"

Here are the National Forensic Association rules for Rhet Crit:

"Each contestant will deliver an original critical analysis of any significant rhetorical artifact. The speaker should limit quotation from and summary and paraphrase of the analyzed artifact to a minimum. Any legitimate critical method is permissible as long as it serves to open up the artifact for the audience. Notes, not manuscript, are permitted. Time limit: 10 minutes maximum." (We do not use notes.)

General Outline for Rhetorical Criticism

- Introduction
 - A. Attention getter.
 - B. Statement of the artifact to be criticized
 - Who did it?
 - 2. When? What date? In what historical context?
 - 3. Who was the audience?
 - a. Physical--people who actually witnessed the event.
 - b. Rhetorical--people whom the rhetor was trying to
- influence.
- c. Their disposition toward the topic/occasion/speaker.
- 4. What was the purpose of the speech?
- 5. Why is it important to criticize this communication event?
 - a. Historical importance.
 - b. Rhetorical importance.
- C. Statement of the method to be used to criticize the act.



December 29, 1993

FROM:

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

TO:

Larry Bush

The enclosed may amuse you. Obviously, I wasn't conscious, in delivering my original Outreach speech, that I was following a rhetorical form typical of the Puritan sermons of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

December 29, 1993

LUFT

FROM:

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

TO:

Dru Greenwood

The enclosed may amuse you. Obviously, I wasn't conscious, in delivering my original Outreach speech, that I was following a rhetorical form typical of the Puritan sermons of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.



December 29, 1993

FROM:

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

TO:

Melvin Merians

The enclosed may amuse you. Obviously, I wasn't conscious, in delivering my original Outreach speech, that I was following a rhetorical form typical of the Puritan sermons of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.







RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

Cukend

December 28, 1993 14 Tevet 5754

Rabbi David S. Goldstein Touro Synagogue 1501 General Pershing Street New Orleans, LA 70175

Dear David:

AMERICAN IEWISH

Someone sent me a copy of the column you wrote on "Conversions to Judaism: We Need Much More Of It."

Thank you so much for your supportive words. I am profoundly grateful.

Hopefully, life is treating you well. I continue to hear good things concerning you from my friends in New Orleans.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



Commission on Reform Jewish Outreach

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS - CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

William & Lottie Daniel Department of Outreach

SERVING REFORM JUDAISM IN NORTH AMERICA

838 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10021-7064 (212) 249-0100



December 27, 1993

MEMORANDUM

To: Arlene Chernow, Rabbi Janet Marder, Rabbi Lennard Thal

From: Dru Greenwood

As you can see from the enclosed correspondence, Alex and I have been in correspondence with Herbert Rubin about Outreach. There is a possibility of funding. Alex suggested that if any of you were planning to be in Tucson before March that you might want to meet with Mr. Rubin to discuss our Outreach program. If that works out, please let me know. Many thanks.

6 G.

Chairperson
Hams Gilbert
Co-Chairperson
Rapp: Lesile Gutterman

Vice Champersons Elizabeth Linkon Pameia Waechter

Dru Greenwood



Commission on Reform Jewish Outreach

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS - CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

William & Lottie Daniel Department of Outreach

SERVING REFORM JUDAISM IN NORTH AMERICA 838 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10021-7064 (212) 249-0100

> December 27, 1993 13 Tevet 5754

Mr.Herbert Rubin 4890 North Territory Ave. Tucson, AZ 85715

Dear Mr. Rubin:

Rabbi Schindler just told me about his conversation with you concerning Outreach and the possibilities for extending our reach even farther.

I have asked Arlene Chernow, who is our Outreach staff member in the Pacific Southwest, to send you some materials on regional Outreach efforts, so that you can see the kinds of exciting programs that are currently being provided by Reform congregations.

Again, I look forward to speaking with you when you return to New York in March.

All the best for a happy and healthy 1994.

Sincerely,

Dru Greenwood

Chairperson Harris Gilbert Co-Chairperson Rapp. Lesile Gutterman

Vice Chairpersons Elizabeth Linkon Pamela Waechter

Director Dru Greenwood

December 7, 1993

FROM:

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

TO:

Dru Greenwood

The enclosed is self explanatory. Please note his penultimate paragraph in which he wants to learn some more of what we do in the realm of Outreach. Please send him a brief note with some enclosures. In the meantime, I am having Lydia Neumann try to get a line on Rubin - just possibly he might be able to help us. Since he spends most of the winters in Tucson, he well may be able to do something, or at least he may have friends who are capable of helping us.

Thanks for everything.







RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

December 7, 1993 23 Kislev 5754

Mr. Herbert Rubin 4809 North Territory Avenue Tucson, AZ 85715

Dear Mr. Rubin:

Thank you for your encouraging letter which is all the more welcome because of the many brick bats which are flying my way also.

I do not consider your numeric projection as "incredible". This precisely the kind of dream that I dream, and in one way or another, I have been pushing forward with my idea over the years. You might look at the current copy of Reform Judaism in which one of our officers, David Belin of De Moines, Iowa, postulates a like projection. (In case you do not have the latest copy of Reform Judaism on hand, I enclose it herewith).

I am also sending a copy of your letter to Dru Greenwood, our Director of Outreach so that she can tell you what we have been doing over the years and what some of our projects still in waiting, are.

I hope that once you are back in New York, you will take occasion to stop in and say hello. Unfortunately, I don't plan to be in Tucson. About the closest I will come is to Scottsdale sometime in the second week of March.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

encl.

cc: Dru Greenwood

11/25/93

TO: RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

FROM: HERBERT RUBIN

DEAR RABBI.

MY WIFE AND I WERE DELIGHTED TO READ IN THE SUNDAY TIMES ABOUT YOUR REACH OUT PROGRAM. IT'S ABOUT TIME.

SINCE ADULTHOOD, IT HAS BEEN MY CONVICTION THAT THE JEWISH RELIGION HAS WONDERFUL ASPECTS TO IT, THAT ITS TRADITIONS AND ESSENTIAL HUMANITY HAS A GREAT DEAL TO OFFER NOT ONLY TO PEOPLE RAISED IN THE FAITH, BUT TO INDIVIDUALS IN GENERAL.

IN MY VIEW, EVERY RELIGIOUS GROUP NEEDS NEW BLOOD IN ORDER TO THRIVE. VIRTUALLY ALL RELIGIONS PROSTELIZE; JUDAISM BEING A NOTABLE EXCEPTION, AND FOOLISHLY SO. JUDAISM HAS A GREAT DEAL TO OFFER IN TERMS OF PHILOSOPHICAL OUTLOOK, THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND GOD, AND MOST PARTICULARLY ITS EMPHASIS ON THE HEAR AND NOW RATHER THAN THE HEREAFTER.

IT CERTAINLY HAS STOOD THE TEST OF TIME, AND DESERVES TO BE A PART OF THE LIVES OF A GREATER NUMBER OF OUR FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS.

FURTHERMORE, THE COUNTLESS TRAGEDIES SUFFERED BY JEWS THROUGH THE AGES WOULD IN ALL LIKELIHOOD NOT HAVE OCCURRED, OR TAKEN PLACE ON A MUCH LESS FREQUENT AND SMALLER SCALE IF THERE WERE, SAY, 140,000,000 JEWS IN THIS WORLD INSTEAD OF 14,000,000.

WHAT'S 140,000,000 PEOPLE IN A WORLD OF BILLIONS? REALLY NOT THAT MANY. BUT THE POWER OF SUCH NUMBERS. THE APPLICATION OF SUCH TALENT AND DEDICATION WOULD NOT ONLY CHANGE FUTURE JEWISH HISTORY, IT WOULD IN ALL LIKELIHOOD PRECLUDE THE SUFFERING THAT HAS ACCOMPANIED JEWS THROUGH THE PAST TWO MILLENNIUMS.

IF YOU CONSIDER THE NUMBER I'VE POSTULATED AS INCREDIBLE, THEN I POINT TO THE GROWTH OF THE MORMONS WHO IN 150 YEARS HAVE ACHIEVED NUMBERS EQUAL TO OR GREATER THAN OUR FAITH WHICH HAS EXISTED FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.

I WOULD BE INTERESTED IN KNOWING MORE ABOUT YOUR IDEAS, AND HOPE YOU WILL CONTACT ME.

ALTHOUGH MY HOME IS IN N.Y., I WILL BE AT THE ARIZONA ADDRESS FOR MOST OF THE WINTER.

SINCERELY,

HERBERT RUBIN

4809 NORTH TERRITORY AVE.

TUCSON, AZ. 85715

602 299 1096





RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

November 23, 1993 9 Kislev 5754

Rabbi Jonathan H. Gerard Temple Israel P.O. Box 254 Dover, NH 03820

Dear Jonathan:

About the best alternative to "conversion," that we could come up with is the phrase "Jews by choice". In essence, that is what is involved here. People chose to be Jews. To some extent, I suppose, this is applicable even to born Jews since they, too, in this day and age can either chose to be active Jews or choose to opt out without deserting the Jewish people.

As far as the Cohen-Zevin volume is concerned, I really know little about it. Accordingly, I am going to send a copy of your letter to Dan Syme in the hope that he can enlighten you.

Please give my warm good wishes to your father and by all means talk your 17 year old into becoming a rabbi. One of my daughters is at HUC and nothing is more wonderful than to see than one of our children who has internalized those values which we strive to give them in the choice of his or her profession.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

CC: RABBI DAN SYME

TEMPLE ISRAEL

P.O. Box 254

Dover, New Hampshire 03820

Rabbi Jonathan H. Gerard

(603) 742-3976

November 17, 1993

Dear Alex,

Last week my Confirmation class discussion wound its way to a consideration of your call for a more active role in encouraging converts to Judaism from among the "unchurched." (I appreciated the corrective letters in this week's Forward. They had not done your talk justice.) Anyway, my students raised a problem with the term "conversion." "How can you call it conversion when the person had no religion to convert from?" asked one student. "What would you prefer to call it?" I asked. We could not find a word we could unite around enthusiastically, but the kids thought "assignation" preferable to "conversion". (How about "promotion"?) Well, you are better with words than everyone this side of Abraham Joshua Heschel, so I leave it to you to consider whether some alternative term is desireable.

By the way, I am again using the UAHC's *Adventures in Living Judaism* pamphlet series, written by Martin Cohen and Zevin. You published only parts 1 (Identity) and 2 (Survival)—but never did 3 (Values). Martin Cohen tells me that it sits in a warehouse on Long Island (whatever that means). Do you know anything about this? Is there any way I could get a copy of it, even in galley form, to use experimentally? I've been dying to see it since Martin first told me about it—but he is somewhat vague about who "owns" it. I've tried to get some information from Seymour Rossel, but he has none.

Anyway, happy turkey. I hope all is well with your family. We are well. My father found a new career in his retirement (storytelling), but is now beginning to slow down more significantly. (He'll be 70 Dec. 3.) After ten years here in Dover the congregation and I are in the process of negotiating a continuing contract, but that will mean their coming to terms with giving me some health coverage and RPB contribution. We'll see. My 17 year old Daniel says he wants to be a rabbi. I think he'd be a good one.

Sincerely,

A member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations "Who is wise? One who learns from all people." -- Pirke Avot

November 23, 1993



FROM:

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

TO:

Rabbi Daniel B. Syme

Please note Jonathan's letter.

Please enlighten him. My own memory on this score is only

vague.







Owhead

November 9, 1993

From: Rabbi Alexander N. Schindler

To: Dru Greenwood

The enclosed correspondence from Rabbi Henry Cohen and my response are self-explanatory. I enclose his course outline and would be grateful for your review and reaction to the possibility of a new book, "Why Not Judaism?"

Thanks.





RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

^ PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

November 9. 1993 25 Heshvan 5754

Rabbi Henry Cohen Beth David Reform Congregation P.O. Box 287 Gladwyne PA 19035

Dear Henry:

It was good hearing from you and I am intrigued by the thought that you might wish to do a sequel to Why Judaism to be entitled Why Not Judaism? I appreciate your having shared with me the course outline which would serve as an outline for the text.

I will study the outline and discuss it with our Outreach and Publications Divisions. Needless to note. I will certainly get back to you before too long. Right now, I am still trying to get caught up with the post-Biennial responsibilities and the flood of correspondence which my call for proselytizing has brought forth.

I am delighted that you are enjoying your position as Rabbi Emeritus, you certainly are managing to keep busy and that is great.

Rhea joins me in sending fondest regards from house to house.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



Nov. 1, 1993

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

Dear Alex:

I've been folowing the NY Times report of your Convention talk on OUTreach, and I was impressed by your interview on NPR. This prompts me to let you know that, now that I am emeritized, and will in January be teaching the Intro course for Outreach in Philadelphia, I am considering writing a kind of sequel to the out-of-print Why Judaism that will make a more convincing case that could be called: WHY NOT JUDAISM???

To give you an idea of my approach, I am enclosing an outline of the course(which could be the outline of a text), as well as a talk I plan to give in San Juan in February. (My one and only disciple is Bradd Boxman who has invited me(along with other colleagues) to be scholar-in-residence in St. Thomas with a side-trip to San Juan.)

I mentioned my tentative plans to Stuart Benick, who suggested I let Dru Greenwood know of my proposal, to see if the national office of Outreach might have some interest in what I am doing. So, I am enclosing copies to them.

I hope you will send me your reaction.

I am enjoying my emeritization. I've done the required courses....now for the electives....

All the best...

Lousey

November 4, 1993



Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

TO:

Dru Greenwood

Please note what Burt Greenspon has to say about Outreach. He obviously doesn't know what we are about and perhaps you could enlighten him by sending him a note.









RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT
838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

November 4, 1993 20 Heshvan 5754

Burton E. Greenspon, Esq. 419 Wood Acres Drive East Amherst, NY 14051

Dear Mr. Greenspon:

I am grateful for your letter of October 29th and the many good thoughts which you have to offer. I would really urge you to get acquainted with some of the programs which we have developed, which alas, are not carried out in every single congregation. But the resources are there. At least some of the things which you recommend have been implemented.

I urge you particularly to get in touch with Dru Greenwood so that she can tell you what we have done and what we are doing in the Outreach area. Dru is our Director of Outreach and she can be reached here at the Union, although I am going to send her a copy of your letter - even as I am going to share it with the Education program so that they might learn from and be stimulated by some of your thoughts.

I am also going to ask Dru Greenwood to get in touch with you just to tell you what we have done to "spread our successful concepts about."

Again, my thanks for your thoughtfulness.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Dru Greenwood

ON OUTREACH

I was surprised to learn that 85% of American Jews belong to a synagogue at one time or another and yet only 30% hold memberships at any one point in time. An awful lot of people pass through without being touched. That troubles me. Emotionally, we are not reaching these people. In the business world if you can't maintain the loyalty of your customer base, you go out of business.

Before this weekend I had never heard outreach touted affirmatively. The idea of suggesting that one consider converting to Judalsm is a bit of anathema to us all. When my congregation started Stepping Stones last year, the rules were firm. No one could participate if they were members at another synagogue or church. We wanted to persuade all of the local synagogues to participate...and we were afraid to offend. Maybe we should reevaluate our position?

There were a startling number and variety of outreach programs being implemented all across the country. When we find some winners, I hope someone will spread the successful concepts about. It is also clear to me that we ought to do more focus group analysis. We simply ought to ask people in these programs what works and what does not.

As you can see, the weekend left me somewhat overstimulated. I hope I have reciprocated in some small measure for the memories I took away with me.

Sincerely,

Cd: DRU RREEN WOOD

BURTON E. GREENSPON, ESQ.

419 WOOD ACRES DRIVE EAST AMHERST, NEW YORK 14051

October 29, 1993

Rabbi Alexander Schindler Union of American Reform Congregations 838 Fifth Avenue New York, New York 10021-12121

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

I had the privilege to attend the biennial just concluded. I offer the following thoughts in grateful appreciation for the experience.

On Continuing Education

I think that most Jews presume that learning is good. In each congregation there is a small chug (or potential for its formation) of intellectually self-motivated people. Like the "wise" child at the seder, they always know the right question to ask. But what of the child too slow to ask? How do we reach out to him?

Some ideas, a few of which have already been implemented in various congregations:

1. Back to Basics- When it comes to Judaism, all too many of us are either functionally illiterate or only marginally educated. In my youth we were taught broad universal truths. Services were in English and largely nonparticipatory. Yamulkas were forbidden. After confirmation, Reform Jews became occasional Jews, relying on the High Holidays and Zionism for Jewish identity and returning to the Temple life when and if the children needed a religious school.

I believe that there are adult Jews who can be inspired to become Jewish-by-choice. However, to close the sale we must recognize that they are embarrassed by a genuine lack of knowledge and are fearful of being intimidated by more knowledgeable participants. We should not be reluctant to recruit people to learn. A Cleveland congregation advertised its Back to Basics program in the Temple bulletin and the response was dismal. The same ad was placed in the local secular newspaper and found a strong

response. Obviously, if you're not involved in Judalsm, you're not likely to read the Temple topics and even if you did you would assume that the message was addressed to those who are "involved".

We must remember the first rule of modern communications theory. Is the message being received and understood? If not, you can't expect any kind of response. I strongly believe that these types of programs need to be expanded.

- 2. Parent Learning Tract As you know, Stepping Stones has a parent track. Can we find a way to apply the principle to the existing hebrew school experience? If the parents are motivated enough to pay for hebrew school, maybe they can be persuaded to join in, especially if its part of the required curriculum. The boy scouts require parents to help make the model cars. The little league requires parents to stripe the field. Why are we so timid?
- 3. The Keva Program This program sounds like it may have some real potential. However, I would recommend shifting the staff's focus from validation of credentials to creation and distribution of materials. I like the teacher track concept because it sets a goal and we Americans like definitive goals. There is an additional benefit in that the pupil becomes the teacher and the cycle of learning continues. Philosophically, this is very appealing. It also helps create resources we don't have in great abundance right now. However, the congregations could use some course ideas and materials. The central office should act as a clearing house of information amongst the congregations. I would leave the validation of credit hours up to the congregations.
- 4. Process vs. Product The process of being educated is in large measure more important than the product, especially if you recognize that you're on a road that ends only at the grave. The process... this experience creates the bonding to peers, to community and to Judaism. However, some suggestions with respect to products that worked elsewhere would be helpful to all of us. Personally, I believe that some degree of Kavanah must be generated to inspire one to put in the effort needed to "get" the Keva. I favor projects which mix the concepts. For example, study the Megillah, write a parody and produce the production. A similar effort can be made with respect to a Shabbot service.





RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
*PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

September 14, 1993 28 Elul 5753

Mrs. Lewis C. Hecht 2612 Lynnhurst Drive Vestal, NY 13850

Dear Jean:

Thank you for your very thoughtful letter. You've raised many serious issues to which I'd like to respond personally.

Your description of the Jewish home you and your husband created for your daughters is very moving. They surely carry with them a deep love and active knowledge of their Jewish heritage that will remain with them always. You gave them a precious gift.

Just as the UAHC camp and youth group programs, powerful as they are in building Jewish identity, do not provide an inoculation against intermarriage, neither can Outreach carry that burden. Outreach was never designed to stem the tide of intermarriage. Rather it was intended to reach out to those who are intermarried and invite them to make Jewish choices for themselves and their families. Those Jewish choices include conversion to Judaism, which is an outcome that Outreach encourages. Have you seen the enclosed pamphlet prepared just last year by the Outreach Commission?

The fact is that we live in a larger American society where interfaith marriage has become common among all religious groups and where conversion is a path chosen less often than in the past in all religions. Living in an open society as we do, where the individual's freedom to choose is valued, we can no longer compel such decisions as choice of career or choice of mate. I think we would not have it any other way.

September 14, 1993 Mrs. L.C. Hecht Page 2

The purpose of Outreach is to open the treasures of Judaism and Jewish life to those who wish to explore it and claim it for their own. We welcome non-Jewish spouses because our tradition calls us to welcome the stranger who dwells among us. The desire of an individual to become a Jew is nurtured by that closeness and we see more and more non-Jews converting to Judaism several years after marriage. Although it may be that a strong program of Outreach may weaken the prohibition against intermarriage, the alternative would be far worse, driving away many who otherwise would join us.

The vast majority of young Jews who intermarry today do not do so as a rejection of their Jewish heritage, but out of love for their partner. We have a responsibility to reach out to them in love. Outreach, far from weakening Jewish identity, seeks always to strengthen and support it in the Jewish partner, the not-yet-Jewish partner and in their children as well.

All good wishes for a shanah tovah.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Schindler of American Hebrew Congregations

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

Dear Rabbi:

As we are preparing to send in our registration for the biennial, I decided to write to you about something that has been concerning me for some time. As the immediate past president of Temple Concord in Binghamton and a member of the Pennsylvania Council board, I have seen first-hand the impact that Outreach has had on our congregations. After looking at all sides of the issue, I am beginning to have serious doubts about the program for several reasons.

First, I do not think that Outreach has done anything to stem the rate of mixed marriage, but it does seem to have caused the rate of conversion to drop. We have made non-Jewish spouses feel so welcome, that there is no longer any needed for them to convert.

Second, as our children are growing up in congregations surrounded by the Outreach program, I believe they are now getting a message that says that a mixed marriage is acceptable, because we will help you to fit into our congregation regardless of your selection of spouse. They never hear that marriage to a non-Jew is not what we want for them.

I believe that in our efforts to be liberal Reform Jews, we have neglected to inculcate our children with the idea that a mixed marriage is not what we want for them. When we send our kids off to top-notch liberal colleges and universities, we have them prepared for everything, except for the task of selecting a spouse. I believe that my husband and I did more than most in trying to give our daughters a strong Jewish identity. Both Amy and Sara attended Camp Harlem and Camp Kutz. They were active NFTY participants, and Amy went on the 6-week NFTY Israel trip, while Sara is in Israel now in the NFTY College Academic Year program. Despite all this, Amy is engaged to a wonderful young man who is not Jewish.

After much soul-searching, I have decided that the thing we did wrong was not to bring them up in an environment where it was just known that marriage to a Jew was what was expected of them. We feel that this would violate our liberal views. I am not naive enough to believe that a change of attitude by Jewish parents will end the mixed marriages all around us; however, I believe it would stem the tidal wave confronting us.

As you prepare your remarks for the biennial, I think that this issue has to be addressed. We have to balance the Outreach program against the need for strengthening our Jewish identity so that we will still be a viable community in another two generations.

Best wishes to you and your family in the coming year, and I look forward to hearing you in San Francisco.

Very truly yours,

Jean M. Hecht (Mrs. Lewis C.)

Jean m. Heely



Quhrant.

May 18, 1993 27 Iyar 5753

Dr. Egon Mayer, Director Center for Jewish Studies 33 West 42nd Street, Box 465 New York, NY 10036-8099

Dear Egon:

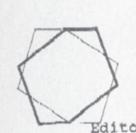
AMERICAN IEWISH

Your letter is great! Thank you for writing and for sharing your comments with me, I much appreciate your having written as you did. I hope the Times prints the letter!

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander NM. Schindler



The Graduate School and University Center of The City University of New York

Center for Jewish Studies / Box 465 Graduate Center: 33 Wust 42 Street, New York, N.Y. 10036-8099 Editor

The New York Times 229 West 43rd Street New York, N.Y. 10036 Send ac Blinde.

May 18, 1993

Dear Editor:

The Jewish holiday of Shavuoth, which begins the evening of May 25th honors the memory of the legendary Ruth the Moabite, that paragon of all converts to Judaism. In light of this occasion, it is only fitting that two factual errors in your otherwise sensitive portrayal of Jewish converts and conversion ("Embracing Judaism as Personal Choice: Members of Minority Groups Convert," May 17th) be corrected.

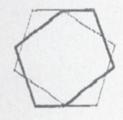
The article suggests that most converts choose to become Jewish through the Orthodox or Conservative branches of Judaism. In fact, according to the findings of the 1990 National Jewish Population survey, cited in the same article, most conversions (44%) take place under Reform Jewish auspices, 30% under the auspices of the Conservative movement and 21% under the auspices of the Orthodox. The great majority of those converting under any of the branches join Reform congregations.

None of this should be surprising, since it is only the Reform movement which has had an organized program for attracting and educating converts to Judaism. Reform Judaism has been doing this since the establishment of its outreach program in 1978.

Further, the article erroneously asserts, "The lengths of these (conversion) course vary from three months for Reform conversion to more than a year for Orthodox conversion," implying that what distinguishes these programs is educational rigor. In fact, the critical emphasis of Orthodox conversions is on ritual correctness not educational rigor. Orthodox conversions can and do take place within days or just a few months of a prospective convert's expression of intention — provided that one finds the right rabbi. While it is fair to say that Orthodox and Conservative conversions usually take longer, this is often due to the absence of consensus in those movements as to what constitutes an appropriate course of training for a convert to Judaism and who will take responsibility for it.

Egon Mayer, Ph.D.

Director, Jewish Outreach Institute



The Graduate School and University Center of The City University of New York

Center for Jewish Studies / Box 465 Graduate Center: 33 West 42 Street, New York, N.Y. 10036-8099 212 642-2180 FAX 212 642-1988

Legitur lette.

FAX REPORT
SENT TO: Rabbi Alex Schrindler
SENT FROM: Egon. Mayer
DATE: 5/18/93
MESSAGE:
This is self explanatory For your files
- Gar

Outrade

April 27, 1993 6 Iyar 5753

TO: Rabbi Allen I. Freeling, University Synagogue

From: Edith J. Miller, Assistant to the President

cc: Rabbi Daniel B. Syme

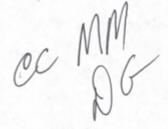
Thank you for sharing University Synagogue's policy statement on the role of non-Jews in the synagogue. It was received during Rabbi Schindler's absence from the city and so I write to acknowledge receipt of your memo. Needless to note, it will be brought to his attention when he returns to his desk next week.

This is a subject which is being discussed in many quarters and is of great interest. I have shared a copy of the policy statement with our Director of Outreach, Dru Greenwood, for the Outreach Commission is particularly interested in this subject. I have also shared it with the Chairman of the Board, Melvin Merians.

Thanks for your thoughtfulness in bringing this document to our attention.

Warm regards.





MEMORANDUM

TO : Rabbis Alexander Schindler, Daniel Syme, Joseph Glaser

and Rabbi Lennard Thal

FROM : Rabbi Allen I. Freehling

RE : Participation of Non-Jews in Synagogue Life - an adopted

policy statement

DATE: April 20, 1993

For a number of years, especially because the number of non-Jewish congregants here continues to increase, I have asked our Board of Trustees to formulate a policy regarding areas in which these members may and may not participate, so we'll not be in a position of dashing expectations sometime in the future. Generally, the elected leadership chose to remain silent on the issue.

Then, when the Summer 1992 issue of REFORM JUDAISM was published, Cantor Frailich decided to take the initiative by drafting a policy statement. (I believe that he deserves much credit for involving himself in this vital subject with such sensitivity)! After he and I had an opportunity to refine it, the matter was brought before our Board for debate and adoption a month ago. Now it is a stated policy which the entire Synagogue Family may use as a guideline.

Realizing that every congregation faces questions such as those which prompted us to take these positions, the president of our Synagogue, Jim Banks, agreed with me that we ought to share this document with you. Perhaps it might serve as a prototype for our peers to consider when adopting their own policy in this vital area of congregational life themselves.

This comes with our warmest best wishes, as ever.

Fondly

Allen I. Freehling, Ph.D., D.D.

Rabbi

Enc.

A POLICY REGARDING THE PARTICIPATION OF NON-JEWS IN SYNAGOGUE LIFE

Original draft was submitted by Cantor Jay I. Frailich on June 17, 1992-incorporating revisions by Rabbi Freehling on the same date. After minor revisions, the policy as stated below was adopted by the Board of Trustees on March 8, 1993.

At University Synagogue, we acknowledge the fact that there is an increasing number of member families in which one of the spouses is not Jewish. The participation of non-Jews in Synagogue life raises several questions that need to be answered with sensitivity and forthrightness. The primary issues are those of membership, leadership, and ritual.

In the Summer 1992 issue of <u>Reform Judaism</u>, an article by Rabbi Nina Mizrahi entitled "Non-Jews In The Synagogue" states: "Rabbi Leslie Gutterman, co-chair of the (Union of American Hebrew Congregations) Outreach Commission asserts that congregations should set boundaries (for the participation of the non-Jewish member) in a manner that is meaningful within a context that preserves Jewish authenticity. He believes that most non-Jews understand and respect such a requirement, as they, themselves, are choosing a personal boundary by not becoming a Jew. Not to have clearly delineated policies about membership, leadership, and ritual participation sends a mixed message to Jews and non-Jews alike about who we are and how we operate."

MEMBERSHIP

The By-Laws as revised and restated on May 20, 1990 and stated below affirm our basic membership policy. There is no need to further revise this statement.

Article III

Section 1. Any person of the Jewish faith, 18 years or over, may become a member by submitting a written application and complying with dues requirements set forth in Article III, Section 4. In the case of a couple, the requirements relating to being of the Jewish faith shall be deemed satisfied if at least one of the two persons is of the Jewish faith.

LEADERSHIP

- 1. Non-Jewish members may not serve on the Synagogue's Board of Trustees nor hold Synagogue office.
- 2. Non-Jewish members may serve or "chair" any committee subject to the stipulation stated above.
- 3. Non-Jewish members may become full members of Affiliate groups.
- 4. Non-Jewish members may serve on the Boards of Affiliate groups and hold office, with the exception of the office of President.

RITUAL

With regard to non-Jews participating in ritual practice, our policy is based upon the concept of inclusiveness. Especially in life-cycle ceremonies involving children, we acknowledge the support and encouragement of the non-Jewish parent. Therefore, we provide many opportunities for ritual and liturgical involvement.

Simultaneously, there are certain ritual practices that are "covenantal." These acts imply a specific commitment to the practices and beliefs of Judaism, and they should only be performed by Jews. Our policy is guided by both of these precepts.

FOR ALL SERVICES

- 1. Non-Jews may sit on the Bema.
- 2. Non-Jews may read from certain liturgical portions during a service as determined by the Rabbi and/or the Cantor. Care should be taken that the reading is of a more "universal" nature rather than "particular."
- 3. Non-Jews may open and/or close the Holy Ark.
- 4. Non-Jews are permitted both publicly and privately to pronounce the "Hamotzi" (the blessing over bread which is the Jewish "grace" before a meal).

FOR FRIDAY NIGHTS

1. Non-Jews may read introductions to the blessings over the Shabbat candles and/or the Kiddush during Friday Evening Services, but they should not recite the blessings. When there is a Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrant, the non-Jewish parent may read the introduction and the child should recite the blessings.

FOR SERVICES WHEN THE TORAH IS READ (E.G. BAR/BAT MITZVAH)

- 1. Non-Jews may participate in the Hakafah the ceremony of walking the Torah around the sanctuary; however, they should not carry the Torah during this ritual.
- 2. During the "Chain of Tradition" ceremony during Bar/Bat Mitzvah Services, the Torah (representing Jewish tradition) is passed from generation to generation. When there is a non-Jewish parent or grandparent, one Jewish person representing each generation (one grandparent one parent) should participate.
- 3. Non-Jews may not be called to the Torah for an Aliyah because this is a highly significant covenantal act. (An aliyah involves being called to the Torah and reciting the Blessings that are said both before and after the Torah is read).
 - a. If desired, a non-Jew may accompany a Jewish spouse to the Torah during an Aliyah, but he/she may not recite the Blessings.
- 4. Non-Jews are not permitted to read or chant from a Torah scroll: however, they may read an English translation of the scriptural portion.
- 5. During a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service there is an opportunity for the parents of the child to speak. This applies equally to Jewish and non-Jewish parents alike without exception.

Heeding our Reform Movement's call to set boundaries, we are following the command of God, Who spoke to the Israelites just before the revelation on Mount Sinai saying: "You shall set boundaries for your people round about." (Exodus 19:12)

By doing this, we open our doors in welcome and acknowledge with love the presence of non-Jews in our Congregation, while keeping in mind the purpose of this Congregation:

1. To worship God in accordance with the faith of Judaism;

2. To cultivate a love and understanding of the Jewish heritage;

3. To stimulate a sense of kinship within the Jewish community;

4. To strengthen the bonds of loyalty among Jewish people everywhere; and,

5. To help the world acknowledge God's rule by performing acts of righteousness and lovingkindness.







RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

What

March 2, 1993 9 Adar 5753

Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman Temple Emanu-El 8500 Hillcrest Road Dallas, TX 75225-4204

Dear Shelly:

Your letter of February 11th reached me after I went off to Israel, hence my late response.

By all means, let us get together to discuss this matter. There are no issues of principle which divide us and so an agreement on details can be reached.

I felt that Walter Jacobs initial presentation was entirely too exclusionary, at least in its tone. His subsequent responses to the several questions which were raised were much more open.

But let us get together soon.

We should do everything possible to avoid a conflict between the laity and the rabbinate. That has been a goal of my striving all along, especially in re officiation.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



February 11, 1993 20 Shevat, 5753

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

Dear Alex:

Thanks so much for the warm welcome at the Executive Committee of the UAHC Board. I was privileged to be a part of the deliberations and look forward to my full participation as CCAR President.

I am writing to you because I feel that our movement is at a juncture, an essential and critical one. I cannot agree with you with regard to what you expressed at the end of the Executive Meeting on Monday. We need to continue as we have until now welcoming non-Jews married to Jews. Non-Jewish parents ought to participate in life cycle moments (naming and blessing, brit, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, etc.). But it is essential to retain some differences. To remove all differentiations and grant them full membership would be to diminish our particularism and covenant responsibilities and privileges (as Jews) in a scary way. In my mind, removing all differentiation is to reduce further the impulse toward conversion. Some become Jewish so as to become full partners in the covenant, its responsibilities and privileges. Now we would say "Don't worry" - you are fully part of us even though you have not affirmed it. Simply to retain differences in governance will not suffice. The "seyag la Torah" is being torn asunder.

I have worked with many children of mixed married families. Most were delighted that their non-Jewish parents would participate in certain ways. Their parents were honored and embraced. The children were not lessened nor diminished in any way.

I cannot ask nor will I or Temple Emanu-El permit a practicing Christian to be a full participant in the Torah service. I would be pleased to share my and our thinking on this with you. There are real differences. We must not minimize differences in order to be respectful and accepting.

Alex, you are the leader of our movement. Those of us who do not officiate at mixed marriages but try to reach out effectively and caringly to our mixed-married families are being pushed from every side. Just as many congregations now



Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman

Rabbi Alexander Schindler Page 2 of 2

request panels of only rabbis who will perform mixed-marriage ceremonies (I am sorry that no one from the UAHC staff was at the Placement Commission meeting on Tuesday) those of us who do not are coming under attack. We have been loyal to your call for outreach. Some of us now feel that in return you as the major and most respected spokesperson for our movement are pushing us to a further blurring and possible obliteration of all boundaries. If that happens, will there be any more room in our movement for us? For mixed marrieds - yes - but for us - no.

I am appealing to you. We need to counsel carefully. I know you care. I am proud to look to you as our national leader. But you must listen to our cries and appeals as well. We are now the ones being cast aside - it is only a matter of time.

In profound respect,

Sheldon Zimmerman Rabbi

SZ:ss







RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

January 5, 1993 12 Tevet 5753

Mr. Jack Rainsberger Box 7000 - NNCC 7588 Carson City, NV 89702

Dear Jack:

I can imagine how dismayed you were when you discovered what was withheld from you these many years. Please don't be too harsh in judging your forbears. Leading the life of a Jew was never easy. We were subject to constant persecution culminating, as it did, in the Nazi era when 1/3 of our people, 6 million, including women and little children, were exterminated. Your forbears wanted to protect you as it were. That, undoubtedly was their motivation.

Insofar as I am concerned, your Jewish antecedence confers on you the presumption of Jewishness, but of course that Jewishness has to be confirmed with acts of identification with the Jewish people and the study which you suggest is just about the best way of gaining that knowledge.

I am sending a copy of your letter to our Regional Director in the Pacific Southwest in the hope that he might be able to provide you with some materials and also refer you to the rabbi nearest to the community in which you live.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Rabbi Lennard Thal

.

December 26, 1992

Union of American Hebrew Congregations
Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America
United Synagogue of America

Dear Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler:

I've recently discovered that my maternal grandparents were Jewish. For reasons apparently known only to themselves, they decided against practicing this faith, or even acknowledging it. My mother, again for unknown reasons, continued in this deception, keeping the truth even from me. It also seems that my paternal grandmother and my father also practiced this deception.

None of them joined, or attended, any other religious services.

I've no idea of just where this leaves me in the eyes of Judaism, none of these people left any record (birth certificates, and so on), that, I suppose they thought, could be used against them, but I find myself very angry with these people. I've never known a religious core, and at my age, 53, I'm not too sure that I'm capable of developing one. I would, however, appreciate learning more about Judaism, and would be grateful for any suggestion you'd care to give for study, or information you'd care to share.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Jack Rainsberger
Box 7000 - NNCC 7588
Carson City, NV 89702

memo

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS 838 FIFTH AVE., NEW YORK,N.Y. 10021 TEL:(212) 249-0100

MISS JANE EVANS

DATE:

Leo Back did not agree that one had to be Tewish to belong to a congregational newery strongly that anyone who desired to join one of our congregations should be welcomed as a natura sequence of saying " house shall be a house of prayer for all people

Confronti

September 24, 1992 26 Elul 5752

Ms. Barbara A. Friedlander 10497 Shadyside Lane Cincinnati, Oh 45249

Dear Ms. Friedlander:

Thank you for your thoughtful letter. I admire your evident commitment and am pleased that you have given voice to your concerns.

You have articulated several different issues currently of great importance to our movement. That the face of the world is changing, in particular our Jewish world, is clear. When the intermarriage rate is 50%, two-thirds of new marriages involving a Jew are intermarriages. While we do not condone intermarriage, it is a fact of life, one to which we must respond. That is why I called for a UAHC Outreach program in 1978, to retain or bring intermarried couples and families into Judaism.

The related issue that you have raised, the role of non-Jews in temple life, now being examined by your temple, is a complex one. Given the diversity of the Reform movement and the autonomous nature of our synagogues, there is no uniform practice throughout the movement. Many Reform congregations, however, do maintain distinction in the area of ritual participation and governance between those who are Jews and those who have not chosen to become Jews. As in other area of choosing a congregation with which to affiliate, you might look into the policies of other Reform temples in your area to find one that better meets your needs.

With kindest greetings and best wishes for a sweet New Year, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

BARBARA A. FRIEDLANDER

10497 Shadyside Lane Cincinnati Ohio 45249

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

September 9, 1992

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

By Burger & we

I am not sure you can help me with this problem, but as the President of U.A.H.C., I am hoping you can give me some direction or understanding. My temple is currently examining issues of the non-Jew in the Temple; our Rabbi is totally accepting of any and all people to belong, and to participate fully in any aspect of Temple life regardless of whether they are actively practicing another religion at the same time. I don't understand this; how can we build a solid Jewish faith for our children to believe in when our Temples are full of non-Jews (which to me indicates an acceptance of intermarriage).

I grew up in the Reform Youth Movement. I was President of my youth group, went to Kutz, etc., and I take my belief and feelings in Judaism very seriously. Although I dated non-Jews, when it came to making the serious commitment of marriage, I married a "nice Jewish boy." Matter-of-fact, I knew my husband was for me during a Rosh Hashanah service when we were both saying the same prayers; it was part of a commonality. We now have two young sons who I want to grow up with the same ties to their faith as I have. I am extremely active in my Temple; we celebrate Jewish holidays, and my oldest son attends the Temple Nursery School, but I am frustrated.

I cannot find a Temple that feels "Jewish." How can I explain to my boys that they should believe in Judaism. and marry Jewish girls when they grow up, when next to them at Hebrew School will be children from mixed marriages - apparently proving that intermarriage does work. In a world where Jews are a minority, it was always comfortable to go to Temple and be with one's own. We certainly have friends who are not Jewish, but at times, it is comforting and familiar to be with people who share your heritage and religious beliefs, and who know what it is like to be a Jew in a Christian world; a world which now seems to have extended right into our Synagogues. My Rabbi has indicated that perhaps I should leave if I am not happy, and join a Conservative or Orthodox Shul, but to me that is no answer.

I am a Reform Jew and I want my boys to grow up in the NFTY Movement. I realize the world is changing, and for Judaism to stay alive in the '90s, it needs to be more flexible, but what will there be left if our Temples are dominated by non-Jews. There must be alternatives. I am not sure what you can do to help me, but I am hoping there are still Rabbinical leaders who believe in Jews and Judaism.

I trust this letter will be held in confidence. Thank you for listening.

Very Truly Yours,

Barbara Friedlander

Barbara Frontando.