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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES
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MS-630: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler Digital Collection, 1961-1996.
Series A: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1961-1996.

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Outreach [Philadelphia/Pennsylvania Federation], 1979-1990.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the
American Jewish Archives website.

Pa Coenue

March 13, 1990
16 Adar 5750

Dear Mrs. Folkman:

It was good of you to share your thoughts on synagogue affiliation in response to my article in REFORM JUDAISM. I thank you for taking the time to express your concerns.

Yes, we are all aware of the fact that it can be expensive to become a temple member. However, I know that our Reform congregations will do their utmost to accommodate the financial situation of prospective members. Where there is a need and the family makes it known to the rabbi or president I have found that our congregations are most understanding and they do their best to provide membership at a rate which the family can afford.

Many of our congregations are on a Fair Share Dues Plan. This is by way of seeking to create a sliding scale dues program which brings in the highest sums from the affluent and lower dues for families which simply cannot meet the ideal dues the congregation seeks to maintain the programs and services we have all come to expect from our synagogues.

We have a UAHC regional office in Philadelphia. You might wish to discuss the matter of your children and grandchildren and the congregations they have found to be too expensive with our director, Rabbi Richard Address. He will do his best to work with you in an effort to match your family to a nearby congregation. I am assuming that you are in a location not too far from Philadelphia and we do have many synagogues in the area. He is a caring and understanding person and you would do well to chat with him. I am sharing this letter and your complaint with him so he is apprised of the situation.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

212 Suffolk Rd
Slouctown Pa 19031
March 8, 1990.

Dear Rabbi Schnidder:

I have read your article "A Time to
Reach Out" in the Spring issue of Reform
Judaism 1990 Spring edition

The Out Reach program is a wonderful
idea, but are we pricing our young
marrieds out of the Synagogue?

My husband and I and our three
children all grew up in Reform Synagogues
in the Philadelphia area. Now it is time
for our grandchildren to attend Sunday
School, but \$1500 memberships plus
Sunday School seems prohibitive.

Realize it takes a great deal of
money to operate a Synagogue but at the
same time the costs are high to keep
a family.

In our case both husbands and
wives are employed which means two
car payments. Mortgages, insurance
laps etc. Where are the funds for
Synagogue memberships to come

from.

Ours are not the only young people
in this position.

I am truly concerned about the Jewish
education of our young children.

Yours very truly
Regina J. Solkman
(Mrs. Milton)



Outreach Pa

temple



Suite 300
116 Greenwood Ave.
Wyncote, PA 19095
215-887-4300

DR. ROBERT A. ALPER, RABBI

October 29, 1986

Rabbi Simeon J. Maslin
Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel
York Road and Township Line
Elkins Park, PA 19117

Dear Shim,

I was recently sent a copy of your September 18th letter addressed to Lydia Kukoff and Steven Foster with copies mailed to the local and national leadership of the Reform Movement.

In light of the fact that you refered to my name and reputation at several points, I forwarded the letter to my attorney for review. He, in turn, sought review from the libel expert in his firm, and they shared with me their opinion that your letter appears to have been written with intent to defame and is, therefore, "actionable".

A public confrontation between rabbis is in the best interests of neither the rabbis nor the community. The Jewish press can be exploitative, as in the article about me in the Jewish Times (for which I wrote an immediate public apology which you failed to acknowledge in your letter) and the painfully damaging quotations from you in the recent Exponent feature on rabbinic stress.

It is therefore not my intention to add to community controversy through untoward publicity and/or legal action. Yet I must tell you in the strongest possible terms that neither my name nor my reputation will ever again be defamed with so gentle a response as a simple letter.

I deeply regret that your method of venting anger over the UAHC's brochure was one of a national character-assassinating paroxysm rather than mensch-like, direct dialogue. I suspect that a more reasoned approach would have permitted a

satisfactory solution to the controversy with far fewer wounds.

Finally, I cannot conclude without conveying a deep, personal sense of hurt over your attack upon Sherri's professional qualifications on the basis of the fact that she is a Jew by Choice. Throughout my Rabbinate I have referred conversion candidates to your words in Gates of Mitzvah as a way of assuring them of our tradition's abhorrence of such distinctions. In my 14 years in the Rabbinate this is the first time such blatant prejudice has come from a colleague.

Shim, I will not tolerate your behind-the-scenes assaults on my character and my reputation. I think it is fair to say that we are each disappointed in the way the other conducts himself professionally, but we are very different people with distinct styles and rabbinic successes. It is my hope that the new year will provide renewed resolve to refrain from purposeful and malicious defamation of character.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Alper,
Rabbi

RAA/hs

cc: Rabbi Richard Address
Rabbi Steven E. Foster
Rabbi Joseph Glaser
Ms. Lydia Kukoff
Rabbi Alexander Schindler ✓
Rabbi Sanford Seltzer
Mr. Horace Stern

RABBI STEVEN E. FOSTER
TEMPLE EMANUEL
51 GRAPE STREET
DENVER, COLORADO 80220

October 3, 1986

Outreach

Rabbi Simeon J. Maslin
Keneseth Israel
York Road & Township Line
Elkins Park, PA 19117

Dear Shim,

I am as disturbed as you after reading your letter and the implications that it clearly outlines about the brochures that were sent out of the Union office. I hope you will give me a little time to check with Lydia and see to it that your concerns are raised at the next meeting. I, like you, am not going to dictate to others about whether they should or should not officiate at intermarriages. My own position is clear, and I am a signatory to the brochure that was published last year. But I am concerned that the perception is being driven home that the Union is the kind of front for referrals for intermarriages. I honestly don't believe that was the intention of Sherri and Richard when they began this process, but I would like to dig into it a little deeper and try, as best I can, to ameliorate the problem. I really am grateful to you for raising the issue, and I can assure you that I will be in touch soon.

With every good wish to you and yours for a happy, healthy new year.

Sincerely,

SEF
Steven E. Foster
Rabbi

cc: Lydia Kukoff
Richard Address
Rabbi Joseph Glaser
Rabbi Alex Schindler ✓

*cc: Don Syne
Put front*

September 30, 1986

26 Elul 5746

Rabbi Jason Z. Edelstein
Temple David
4415 Northern Pike
Monroeville, PA 15146

DeAR Jason:

Richard Address will undoubtedly respond to your letter of September 22. However, since you shared a copy with me I wanted you to know that the Pennsylvania Council Outreach brochure has been a source of distress to me and others of the UAHC. It is being withdrawn and no additional copies will be mailed out or given to anyone.

You should also know that this matter is being handled on a staff level.

With thanks for your understanding and fond good wishes for the New Year, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



Temple DAVID



COPY

Rabbi Jason Z. Edelstein, D.Min.

September 22, 1987

Rabbi Richard Address
Pennsylvania Council
Philadelphia Federation
2111 Architects Building
117 South 17th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Dear Richard:

The pamphlet describing the services offered by the UAHC - Penna Council Center For Outreach And The Family is a shocker. It is astonishing to learn from the pamphlet that the UAHC in Philadelphia now facilitates intermarriage: "Among the services offered are: information (on) finding a rabbi for a marriage or an intermarriage."

It is no wonder that we have a problem with detractors who question our Jewish authenticity and who accuse us of aiding and abetting assimilation. Being all things to all people makes us into grand facilitators. And that is the tone of the pamphlet. It projects an image of support for everything, a common posture these days. I believe it is inimical to Jews and incompatible with Judaism.

If the UAHC is now willing to facilitate intermarriages, it ought to say so officially. If the UAHC is opposed to intermarriage, as is presumably its current position, no agency of the UAHC should be offering information on finding a rabbi for an intermarriage.

The pamphlet is an embarrassment. For me, and I trust for many others in the movement, outreach is becoming outrage. I cannot support what it now seems to be. On another level the amorphous nature of outreach is a reflection of just how confused Reform Judaism is these days. What do we stand for other than for individual freedom? That reason for being is no different from what is promoted by the therapy culture. Is Reform nothing more than pop psychology with a Jewish flavor.

Rabbi Richard Address


-2-

September 22, 1986

Sorry, but none of the pamphlets will be distributed at Temple David. I am even sorrier to know that our congregation is an unwitting and unwilling partner in the center's program. It is sad and I feel deeply chagrined.

Best wishes for the New Year.

Cordially,



Rabbi Jason Z. Edelstein

JZE/erw

Encl.

Copies sent to:

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Rabbi Joseph Glaser
Rabbi Jack Stern





איחוד
ליהדות
מתקדמות
באמריקה

Memo

FROM

OK read
Jenna

Richard Address

has been out of
Tson

wants to discuss

Brochure will no longer
be circulated — —

told him you spoke to Art
& he & Art will chat. — —

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

September 29, 1986
25 Elul 5746

Rabbi Richard Address

Thank you for sharing with me your Outreach materials. While I admire your overall program I must tell you that I have the most serious reservations about the reference to referrals for Inter-faith marriages. This will do the Outreach Program great harm and will provide justification for those who want to scuttle this Outreach Program by means of compelling rabbis to perform inter-faith marriages.

I discussed this matter at great length with Art Grant and he will be in touch with you to relay my feelings. These things are best done face to face rather than by mail.

Warm regards.





איחוד
ליהדות
מתקדמת
באמריקה

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE—JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

2111 ARCHITECTS BLDG., 117 S. 17TH STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA. 19103 (215) 563-8183

PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL

Rabbi Richard F. Address
Regional Director

September 19, 1986

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

Dear Alex:

The enclosed material represents the Pennsylvania Council
1986-1987 Outreach Program.

We would appreciate your reaction to this material.

All good wishes for a Healthy, Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Richard F. Address
Regional Director

RFA:er
enc.

*Glue to see your fully
letter.*

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

Dear Simon —

I saw copy of your letter to
Foster + Kukoff + I am
as disappointed about these
matters as you are. By all
means pursue the matter
via the Tax. Force — but I
will deal with this matter

In a staff level please follow
the steps to do so.

May I take this occasion to
wish you + yours a [K DLS]

Truly

Lucas

Art
+ Penny

9/24

Simeon J. Maslin, D. Min., D. D.
SENIOR RABBI

Reform Congregation
KENESETH ISRAEL
York Road and Township Line
ELKINS PARK, PENNSYLVANIA 19117

FYI

September 18, 1986

Rabbi Steven E. Foster
Congregation Emanuel
51 Grape Street
Denver, Co., 80220

Ms. Lydia Kukoff
6300 Wilshire Blvd., Ste 1475
Los Angeles, Calif., 90048

Dear Lydia and Steve:

I want to call your attention, and through you the Joint Commission on Outreach, to what I believe is a flagrant violation of the mandate of the Commission. As a supporter of the "patrilineal" resolution and of Outreach generally, I found myself in Snowmass defending the work of the Commission to colleagues who stated unequivocally that various Outreach programs were subverting their efforts at encouraging endogamy and conversion prior to marriage. Some went so far as to suggest that there was a "Union plot" to force rabbis into officiating at mixed marriages and that this was the hidden agenda of the Commission's programming. As opposed as I am to rabbinic officiation at mixed marriages, I am not a party to the paranoia that causes colleagues to see plots and conspiracies where there is simply disagreement. But....

Just this morning I received a parcel of brochures and fliers from our Philadelphia Federation, UAHC, office for distribution to my congregation. I am enclosing a copy of each. Let's begin with the brochure. Note the first of four provocative questions on the left page. By itself the question is equivocal; in combination with the first statement under INFORMATION on the center page, its meaning is clear: the Philadelphia UAHC office states officially, for mass distribution, that it will provide information about rabbis who will officiate at intermarriages. This is reinforced by the assurance, under REFERRALS, that the UAHC will provide information to "help you connect with those that are exactly right for you."

The signatories to the pamphlet are Rabbi Richard Address and Ms. Sherri Alper. That Rich Address officiates at mixed marriages is his business, as long as he does not use his UAHC position

Copy

of trust to push that position. As for Sherri Alper, she is the wife of Rabbi Robert Alper who has just established an "alternative" congregation where he will be in a position to expand his activity as a specialist in mixed marriage. To the distress of virtually the entire Delaware Valley Reform rabbinate, Rabbi Alper recently gave a highly publicized interview to the Jewish press ridiculing normative congregations.

The brochure was accompanied by the enclosed flier describing the new offerings of the Outreach program. It introduces Sherri Alper as the contact person for these offerings. One program offered is for the parents of intermarried children; six groups are announced. Of these six the first four are conducted by Rabbi Robert Alper and Sherri Alper and by Rabbi Mayer Selekman and Ann Selekman. Both Rabbi Alper and Rabbi Selekman are outspoken proponents of rabbinic officiation at mixed marriages, and both do the major part of their officiating outside their own congregations on the basis of fees. There is considerably more to be said about both Rabbi Alper and Rabbi Selekman as representatives of the Delaware Valley rabbinate in this most sensitive area of Outreach. For insight into this aspect of the problem, I suggest that you contact any of the other Delaware Valley rabbis, both those who do and those who do not officiate.

You will notice that there are additional offerings by Sherri Alper. Sherri is herself a Jew by choice, and although I would certainly hope to make no distinction between a born Jew and a Jew by choice, I wonder at the wisdom of a Confirmation Class Workshop on Interdating and Inter marriage offered by a person who was not Jewish at that age. Most of the parents in my congregation would prefer that their children not interdate; what statement are we making about this through Sherri Alper?

The main point, however, is that the Philadelphia office of the UAHC is now on record as being the place to contact if you want to find a rabbi for an intermarriage. This is a flagrant violation of the position of the CCAR and the mandate of the Outreach Commission. Reform rabbis have the right to officiate or not to officiate at intermarriages, but the UAHC and its Outreach program must not be used to steer people to rabbis whose careers are focused on such marriages.

Page 3

My best wishes to you, Lydia and to you, Steve,
and to your families for a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Shalom,

Simeon J. Maslin

SJM:mb
encls.

cc: Rabbi Richard Address
Mr. Horace Stern
~~Rabbi Alexander Schindler~~
Rabbi Joseph Glaser
Rabbi Sanford Seltzer



Gershon

Dr. Matti Gershenfeld

January 10, 1985

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
UAHC
838 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

I am writing this letter in reply to your letter of December 28, asking for the source of my statement at my talk for the Executive Board of B'nai B'rith Women. You ask what is my source for stating that the rate of mixed marriages is now 40-50%.

Basically, there were two sources. One is the article by Dr. Schiff from the Board of Jewish Education in greater New York. (I am enclosing a copy of that with some other information you might find useful.) The second source of study is from the Federation of Jewish Agencies in Philadelphia. They have just completed a survey of the Jewish population in the Philadelphia area. In the preliminary report, (the full report will be presented on January 15th) their data indicates the rate of intermarriage in the Philadelphia area is 40-50%. So much for the formal data. At an informal level, when I talk to people (Hillel directors) they too speak in terms of 40-50%.

Certainly, this is not "hard data". But as a gusstimate, it seems the figures most used. I hope this is helpful.

Best wishes,

Matti K. Gershenfeld

Matti K. Gershenfeld, Ed.D.
Adjunct Professor, Temple University

MKG/prl
enclosure

cc Lyndia K

WHY THE NEED FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

VITAL STATISTICS

Source of information:

Dr. Alvin I. Schiff

Exec. V.P. Board of Jewish Ed
Greater New York

1 out of every 3 Jewish children
will be brought up by only one
natural parent.

1 out of every 2 Jews who marry in
the 1980's will be divorced by 1990.

1 out of every 3 children born to a
Jewish mother or Jewish father will
have a non-Jewish parent.

1 out of every 2 Jewish college
students who marry in the 1980's will
marry out of the faith.

1 out of every 5 married Jewish
couples will have no children.

1 out of every 3 couples will have
only 1 child.


1 out of every 2 Jewish families will
not be affiliated with a synagogue or
with any Jewish organization.

2 out of every 5 Jewish children
will receive no Jewish education and
will not have a bar or bat mitzvah.

Approximately 40% of young
adults in missionary and cult groups
will be Jewish by birth.

More than 5 million of us are Jewish

The USA's 1982 Jewish population is estimated at more than
5.7 million, 2.5 percent of the total. New York had the most
Jews, nearly 2 million;
Wyoming had only 310.
Here's a breakdown



State	Estimated Jewish population	State population	Jewish percentage
Ala.	8,900	3,917,000	0.2%
Alaska	960	412,000	0.2%
Ariz.	48,285	2,794,000	1.7%
Ark.	2,885	2,296,000	0.1%
Calif.	775,005	24,198,000	3.2%
Colo.	44,365	2,965,000	1.5%
Conn.	102,075	3,134,000	3.3%
Del.	9,500	598,000	1.6%
D.C.	30,000	631,000	4.8%
Fla.	478,180	10,183,000	4.7%
Ga.	38,655	5,574,000	0.7%
Hawaii	5,625	981,000	0.6%
Idaho	505	959,000	0.1%
Ill.	266,985	11,482,000	2.3%
Ind.	25,610	5,468,000	0.5%
Iowa	7,470	2,899,000	0.3%
Kan.	11,260	2,383,000	0.5%
Ky.	12,265	3,662,000	0.3%
La.	16,625	4,309,000	0.4%
Maine	7,800	1,133,000	0.7%
Md.	195,915	4,283,000	4.6%
Mass.	248,545	5,773,000	4.3%
Mich.	85,735	9,204,000	0.9%
Minn.	33,790	4,094,000	0.8%
Miss.	3,080	2,531,000	0.1%
Mo.	85,835	4,941,000	1.7%
Mont.	840	793,000	0.1%
Neb.	7,850	1,577,000	0.5%
Nev.	19,200	845,000	2.3%
N.H.	5,380	936,000	0.6%
N.J.	435,105	7,404,000	5.9%
N.M.	5,305	1,328,000	0.4%
N.Y.	1,872,150	17,602,000	10.6%
N.C.	14,740	5,953,000	0.3%
N.D.	1,085	658,000	0.2%
Ohio	138,795	10,781,000	1.3%
Okl.	6,660	3,100,000	0.2%
Ore.	11,940	2,651,000	0.5%
Pa.	415,125	11,871,000	3.5%
R.I.	22,000	953,000	2.3%
S.C.	8,760	3,167,000	0.3%
S.D.	605	686,000	0.1%
Tenn.	18,100	4,612,000	0.4%
Texas	73,960	14,766,000	0.5%
Utah	2,300	1,518,000	0.2%
Vt.	2,465	516,000	0.5%
Va.	59,265	5,430,000	1.1%
Wash.	21,885	4,217,000	0.5%
W.Va.	4,295	1,952,000	0.2%
Wis.	31,295	4,742,000	0.7%
Wyo.	310	492,000	0.1%
Totals	5,724,600	229,307,000	

Source: American Jewish Year Book, 1983

By Marcy Eckroth Mullins, USA TODAY

December 28, 1984

Professor Matti Gershenfeld
Couples Learning Center
Benson East, Suite A13
Jenkintown, PA 19046

Dear Professor Gershenfeld:

I read in the JTA that you had made a presentation to the Executive Board of B'nai B'rith Women as part of their new program on "The Image of the Jewish Woman: Myth and Reality." According to the JTA you gave a number of figures in connection with mixed marriage, noting that the rate is now 40 to 50 percent. I would be very grateful if you could let me know the source of your figures. As you know, this is an area of concern to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Gutman Pa. Council

Dear Sirs,

I am a college student at SUNY-Binghamton and I am writing an article on your new program to attract converts to Judaism. I would appreciate any literature and/or information you could send me.

Thank you.

Jay Jaffe

SUNY-Binghamton

Box 6279

Binghamton, New York

13901

Houston speech (Reform Jewish Outreach)
Seltzer's 20 questions
program ^{responses} sent ^{sent} intermarriage

sent 10/13/82

Mrs. Richard M. Stern

10-12-82

Edie dear -

I think this
inquiry belongs to your dept.!
a good, good year to all of you.

Fondly,

Enla

Jay Jaffe
5010 1/2 Binghamton
Box 6278
Binghamton, N.Y.
13901

Miss Edith Miller



Union of Amer. Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Ave.
New York, New York
10021

~~CONF~~

Outreach

June 14, 1983

Mrs. Rita Mocarski
1267 Yale Drive
Yardley, PA 19067

Dear Mrs. Mocarski:

Thank you for your recent letter and the copy of your letter to Rabbi Sanford Seltzer. I found them both to be of interest.

Enclosed herewith is the speech I delivered to the UAHC Board of Trustees in December, 1978. It was this address which placed Outreach on the UAHC agenda. A reading of my words will give you an idea of my own thoughts on the subject of choosing Judaism. I think you will find it to be of interest.

With all good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Encl.

1267 Yale Drive
Yardley, PA 19067
June 8, 1983

Mr. Alex Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

*Please send me
a copy of my
Houston talk.*

Dear Mr. Schindler:

A friend of mine, who has been encouraging me to pursue my conversion to Judaism, suggested that I write to you. She said that you had given various talks suggesting a somewhat more aggressive policy for encouraging those who show an initial interest in conversion. I wonder if you would be so kind as to send me a copy of one or more of your papers which indicates your position in this area.

Conversion is important, not only for me, but for my children whom I would like to raise as Jews. As I thought you might be interested in my particular case, I am enclosing a copy of a letter I just wrote to Rabbi Seltzer of the Outreach Program. I had written to Mr. Vorspan and he referred me to Rabbi Seltzer. To give you a little background, the letter discusses my ideology because I don't seem to fit very well either in Reform or Orthodoxy. Another obstacle to conversion is my messianic opinions, which, while not alien to Judaism, are suspect when held by a former Catholic.

I don't think I'm different from other Christian converts to Judaism in this respect, except for being more open about my feelings. I have not been able to shed Jesus completely, and it would be dishonest to say that I have. I have stripped him of his Hellenistic clothes and put a yarmulke on him. I know of converts to Judaism who dealt with the same basic problem by keeping it to themselves and hoping the rabbis wouldn't ask any difficult questions.

As I suspect this is a widespread problem for many who would like to convert, I would like to see the matter handled -- are Jews prepared to accept as Jews persons who may have an opinion that Jesus and Mohammed are prophets? If so, then I think Judaism could absorb as much of Christianity and Islam as it desired. Jews could become The Assimilators. I'd like to see that happen. If you would like more detail on my ideas in this area, I would be happy to send it to you. It's quite an interesting "vision".

In the meantime, I would appreciate any suggestions you might have as to what I am to do with all this love I have for the religion of the House of Jacob.

DiWi

Rita

Mrs. Rita Mocarski

1267 Yale Drive
Yardley, PA 19067
June 7, 1983

Rabbi Sanford Seltzer
Task Force on Reform Jewish Outreach
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
1330 Beacon Street, Suite 355
Brookline, Massachusetts 02146

Dear Rabbi Seltzer:

Thank you for responding to my letter to Mr. Vorspan. I agree that it would be nice to meet in person. I'm a native of Medford, and my parents still live there, so maybe we'll get to meet this summer.

In the meantime, please understand that I'm still pretty new to Judaism. I don't know where to get copies of the platform documents you mentioned. I would be most interested in seeing the current one.

I don't know exactly when I decided to become a Jew. It was about two years ago, more or less, but the decision was firm. I have not been ambivalent about Judaism, only occasionally ambivalent about Reform Judaism because of what I perceived as an excessively casual attitude toward Torah. I didn't exactly choose Judaism as my faith; I chose One God and Torah. I assumed Judaism and the faith of the T'nach were synonymous. But in Judaism, I found much ritual that wasn't in Torah -- most of it very beautiful and spiritual, some of it just tedious. I also found some very important, in my opinion, mitzvot which had been shelved, and which, in my opinion, needed to be dusted off.

Obviously I am not in a position to write the philosophical foundations of Judaism. My philosophy, however, is a composite of the following teachings. I think it is a good one and I would like the UAHC-CCAR to consider it.

"Be mindful of all My mitzvot and do them, so shall you
consecrate yourselves to your God. I, the Lord, am your God."
(Gates of Prayer)

"Every one of Thy righteous ordinances endures
for ever."
(Psalm 119:160)

"The Torah of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul."
(Psalm 19:7)

"You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor
take from it; that you may keep the commandments of the
Lord your God which I command you."
(Deuteronomy 4:2)

"For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off...it is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it."
(Deuteronomy 30:11-14)

There is nothing I can add to this, except to agree that the Torah is perfect and it is do-able. Like any Jew who is serious about Judaism, I would want to work towards its perfection, to enhance its beauty, its desirability, its integrity, and its accessibility. Whether or not I can convert officially, Judaism is my religion. I will teach it to my children and, God willing, to my grandchildren.

As a prospective Jew, I would like to feel as though I have the same creedal options and freedom of conscience as any other Jew. I don't think a commitment to the Law restricts freedom of conscience. Laws like the Sabbath and blood restrictions are infinite and absolute. I don't think it's necessary to legislate Sabbath prohibitions all the way down to pushing elevator buttons. If elevator buttons, what about keylocks, what about turning doorknobs? One wonders if a Passover lamb could be eaten, by today's laws of kashrut. How much blood remains when a lamb is roasted whole? Perhaps Torah was composed as it is in order for each person to observe at a level comfortable to himself. To teach that any of the mitzvot don't have to be observed is to weaken the whole structure of Torah. We must do them as best we can -- not the most and not the least, but the best. Moses said "it's not too hard", so if it is too hard, we're doing it wrong. These are my parameters.

There is no question as to Christian influence in my approach to Judaism. Christianity is where I'm coming from, and it's had its effect. Rabbis can't expect from potential converts the innocence of a babe at its Bris. But I only accept those teachings which are truly Jewish, truly compatible with the T'nach.

It was easy to dump the Catholic Church. I did that almost instantaneously as soon as I discovered the Sabbath was not Sunday. It is not as easy to let go of Jesus. After all, he had been the central religious figure in my life for 33 years. Maybe if he said, "I am God incarnate, and I am here to turn over the Torah to popes," I would still be a Catholic. To my absolute astonishment, I found in the pages of the Gospel an orthodox rabbi, reciting the Shema, and stating, point blank, "I did not come to abolish the Law." I could no more understand why the Church taught that he was God than I could understand what Jews found objectionable about him. I decided to see just what Jesus looked like through Jewish eyes.

I read a book by a Jew who was impressed with the Koran. He regarded it as inspired Scripture and was promoting the Koran's teachings about Jesus. This author is still a Jew, seeing no reason to leave Judaism in order to believe in two more prophets. One does not believe in Malachi and leave Judaism to join the church of Malachi. It is an equally ridiculous notion that a Jew would have to leave Judaism in order to believe in a messiah of, to, and for the Jews.

In other writings, I found a rabbi saying, "This Jesus was as faithful to the law as I would hope to be. I even suspect that Jesus was more faithful to the law than I am — and I am an Orthodox Jew." In Jewish History books (Jews, God & History, History of the Jews, Basic Judaism) I found a remarkably warm treatment of the person of Jesus. I found a rabbi who wrote, "Christian hostility to Torah strikes me as alien to the teachings of Jesus." I would be happy to provide you with copies of these articles. I found comfort in reading these words because it was supportive of what I read in Christian Scripture; I saw it as the Rabbis saw it. It is, obviously, not the way Christians see it.

I read an article by a rabbi in an ecumenical journal suggesting that there was more than one messianic spot to fill and that Jesus could have been a likely candidate for Mashiach ben Joseph. There was to be a good and holy Jew, the son of Joseph, who was to be killed by the Romans, and suffer martyrdom in fulfillment of the Suffering Servant prophecy of Isaiah 53. In my opinion, these teachings contained everything pointing to Jesus except his Social Security number. It was from the Talmud (Mishna, Vayosha 24). It sounded plausible.

Then I read that Rabbi Stephen S. Wise had once recommended the acceptance of Jesus as a prophet, and that apparently something along the same lines has arisen from time to time since then (see enclosed). Now, at this point I was encouraged. I felt if a rabbi could regard Jesus as a prophet, I could become a Jew regarding Jesus as a prophet, right? Wrong! These opinions are only for those already Jews.

When I was discouraged by the Conservative rabbi, my friends told me that discouragement was their responsibility, and that by the third discouraging visit, they would accept me. I didn't go back to the Conservative rabbi, but I've been talking to my Reform rabbi for about a year. We've become very good friends, and he agrees with me that "it's not fair." Conversion of me, as far as this rabbi is concerned, is against his principles. He said he'd officiate at my funeral, but if I were to remarry, not at my wedding. He's really been wonderful, but, of course, his being wonderful has only added fuel to the fires that have attracted me to Judaism.

I want to be a Jew almost more than anything else I can think of. I have ruled out every other religion. I will practice Judaism even if I can't be an official Jew. My rabbi suggested the "Ger Toshav" status, but since it really isn't an official designation these days, I wouldn't find that particularly satisfying.

You suggested my concepts were Christian Ecumenism. Maybe, but they are still very Jewish. I have noticed some ecumenical prayers in our prayer book:

"You are One and your Name is One. May your truth unite all the world into one holy bond of friendship, and may our love for one another be our crown of glory and armour of strength."

"May every heart which seeks your presence here find it, as did our people in the Temple of Zion, that this house may be a house of prayer for all peoples."

There is One God, there is one Torah, there is one human authority (the Levitical priesthood). Furthermore, the New Testament and the Koran are supportive of Torah. I don't see a single element lacking for Judaism to become a world religion. It has been suggested that Mashiach ben David is the people of Israel, perhaps specifically the descendants of Judah, the Jews. I find that equally plausible.

My recommendation, then, and I think the Outreach Program in the absence of a priesthood is as good a place as any for a decision, is to require only membership in the Covenant for both a born Jew and a prospective Jew. Not only is this consistent with Isaiah 56:6, but there are ancient precedents. Conversion was easy for Ruth. She married a Jew, lived as a Jew, loved her people, loved her God. Though there was no formal conversion, it is agreed that her confirmation was "forsake me not to leave you; your people shall be my people and your God my God." I am prepared to make that same declaration of faith to you; I have already done so to others. Can you offer me any hope?

שלום

Rita

Rita M. Mocarski

cc: Mr Albert Vorspan

Emil G. Hirsch was equally outspoken. He wrote that he found nothing new in the New Testament or teachings of Jesus that had been rejected by Jews. He criticized the flaws in Jesus' character, the shortcomings of Christian theology, and the teachings of Paul, the true founder of Christianity. Hirsch assailed Christianity as an other-worldly religion as contrasted with Judaism's this-worldly "social discontent."⁷²

Isaac M. Wise and Bernhard Felsenthal were battlers in a more practical way. Both sought to counter the notion of America as a "Christian country," and both sought to end Bible reading in the public schools.⁷³

And yet, the Reform movement did labor passionately to improve interreligious relations. Kohler urged the study of Christianity and Islam, and introduced courses in the New Testament and Church history at the Hebrew Union College. Wise wanted Christians to come to synagogues to learn about Judaism and dispel misconceptions. The Pittsburgh Platform—elaborating on the views of Maimonides and Menahem Meiri—acknowledged that Christianity and Islam, as daughter religions of Judaism, had "a mission to aid in the spreading of monotheistic and moral truth." And the Columbus Platform urged cooperation "with all men in the establishment of the kingdom of God, of universal brotherhood, justice, truth and peace on earth."⁷⁴

Some went even further. From time to time, a passion for Jesus has surfaced in the movement—a strange desire to capture Jesus for Judaism, so to speak. Thus, Rabbi Hyman G. Enelow declared that the "modern Jew realizes the ethical power and spiritual beauty of Jesus" because he taught a phase of Judaism that was vital and Jews should glory in what Jesus meant to the world. Stephen S. Wise delivered a sermon in 1925 urging that Jesus be accepted by Jews as a prophet which led to an explosion in the Jewish community and unequaled vilification from the Orthodox. Claude G. Montefiore echoed these sentiments in England, and Maurice N. Eisendrath picked up the theme in 1963. As recently as 1971, a member of the CCAR urged the acceptance of Jesus as our brother, teaching the Judaic ethical system, as a means of cementing bonds between Jews and Christians. His recommendation was sharply denounced by Rabbi

אגוד הרבנים המתקדמים

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

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

Office of the Executive Vice President

May 4, 1983

Handwritten signature: Shalom

Handwritten notes: Shalom, reg. 5/9/83

Rabbi Daniel H. Lowy
Temple Shalom
Bethany Pike
Wheeling, WVA 26003

Dear Dan,

Thank you for your letter of April 14 which only arrived on the 2nd of May. It was sent to 790 Madison Avenue which we left almost two years ago.

Alex Schindler is correct that this is a rabbinic matter which you raise, and we will deal with it on that level, but I do believe that it is equally a congregational matter, even initially, and thus feel that there is no reason for the two organizations not to move ahead concurrently.

If the rabbi in Sharon is willing to name names and give evidence of specific incidents to Herman Schaalman, chairman of our Ethics Committee, we can begin the process from our end. We must have a complainant, however, for the ethics procedures to be invoked. Otherwise, we're just passing resolutions and I don't think that's enough.

He should also provide this information to David Hachen and Richard Address, since it looks from your letter like both regions are involved, and I see nothing amiss about the matter being taken up on the Union level. I think that there is already a UAHC resolution from some years back which disapproves of "raiding."

I am sending this correspondence along to Rabbi Schaalman so he can be thinking about it in the meantime. Thank you for bringing this to our attention.

All good wishes.

Shalom,

Joseph B. Glaser

JBG/s/

cc: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, Rabbi Herman E. Schaalman, Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut

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

March 23, 1983

Rabbi Daniel M. Lowy
Temple Shalom
Bethany Pike
Wheeling, W.V. 26003

Dear Dan:

Thank you for your letter of March 14. I have been giving much thought to the concerns you raise. Since rabbinic relations are central to the issue, I believe that the matter should be dealt with initially by the CCAR. I, therefore, suggest that you raise this issue with the Conference. I will be happy to back you in any supportive resolutions which might be required from the UAHC.

I hope you understand the need to move forward in the CCAR first. This is too important an issue for anything but a united front and therefore it is best to approach the CCAR first.

With best wishes for a sweet and beautiful Passover, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

TEMPLE SHALOM

Congregation Leshem Shomayim

BETHANY PIKE

WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA 26003

Rabbi Daniel M. Lowy, M.H.L., D.D.
Study Telephone: 233-4870

Office Telephone:
233-4870

Dr. Alexander Schindler, Pres.
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex:


I am writing to you at this time to express my deep concern because of something I learned yesterday at the Regional Biennial Convention of the Pennsylvania Council of the UAHC in Philadelphia. I always thought that "reciprocity" was supposed to be honored between UAHC congregations. Now something new has surfaced.

There are rabbis who will not perform mixed marriage ceremonies, and as a result, members of Congregations, respecting their feelings, have tried to find other rabbis in the area who will perform those ceremonies.

Meanwhile, there are congregations particularly two in the region of Western Pennsylvania and Ohio, who make it a point of only electing rabbis who will perform such marriages, and then proceed to make it very clear that such requests for marriage ceremonies will not be honored unless the people involved resign from their local congregations and join Temples where the rabbi who performs mixed marriages officiates. In the case we heard yesterday, such a congregation was in another town more than one hundred miles away.

I think that there is serious need for a UAHC resolution that condemns such practices, whereby congregations take members away from other congregations by this devious means. I feel that such a resolution should insist on reciprocity between congregations in this regard, as well as others, and I would hope that you would bring such a resolution to the floor of the coming Biennial Convention of the UAHC.

Sincerely,


Rabbi Daniel M. Lowy
TEMPLE SHALOM

March 14, 1983

DML:mc

*Photos with
copies of my
reel tape*

TEMPLE SHALOM

Congregation Leshem Shomayim

BETHANY PIKE

WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA 26003

Rabbi Daniel M. Lowy, M.H.L., D.D.
Study Telephone: 233-4870

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233-4870

Rabbi Joseph Glaser, Vice-President
Central Conference of American Rabbis
790 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Joe:

I am sending these letters along to you at the
suggestion of Dr. Schindler.

The congregation was losing members in the
western Pennsylvania area in the city of Sharon.
The complaint that was lodged by lay members of
the Sharon congregation was against another Congre-
gation in Youngstown, OH.

I am concerned because I want other colleagues
like myself to take a strong stand against
performing mixed marriages could be subjected
to the same problem.

Sincerely,

Dan

Rabbi Daniel M. Lowy

April 14, 1983

DML:mc

enclosures (2)

March 22, 1982

Mr. Steven Jacobs
P.O. Box 18892
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Dear Steven:

Many thanks for sharing with me your letter to the
Editor of the Jewish Post & Opinion in regard to
Outreach.

I thank you for writing as you did and for your
thoughtfulness in sharing your fine letter with me.

With warmest regards and every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Post Office Box 15892
Philadelphia, PA 19103

March 15, 1982

Editor
Jewish Post & Opinion
611 North Park Avenue
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Letter to Editor

Dear Editor:

TALMUD ENCOURAGES PROSELYTES

I read with interest the letter from Y. Etzion in the March 12th issue who claims the Talmud discourages proselytes. This view, he says, is contrary to the new "outreach" program to unchurched Gentiles begun by the Reform movement.

In fact, opinions differ among the Talmudic authors. For example, Pesikta Rabbati 35 says God tells the angels that the Jewish People were sent into exile "to attract others into the Divine Presence." And Pesachim 87b asserts that "God dealt kindly with Israel in scattering them among the nations for, because of this, proselytes were added to Israel."

In summary, the view exists within the Talmud that it is our Jewish responsibility to seek Gentiles who might be interested in converting to Judaism. For this reason, I think the Orthodox might begin to modify their antipathy towards outreach to non-Jews, especially in the Diaspora, and the Reform movement might make better use of the tradition which supports its position in this regard.

Sincerely yours,


Steven Jacobs

✓ cc: Rabbi Alexander Schindler

Outreach

July 30, 1981

Mr. Mace H. Levin
1203 St. Mary Drive
Erie, PA. 16509

Dear Mace:

It was gratifying to learn that you shared with members of your congregation the MOMENT MAGAZINE section on "Jews by Choice." I thank you for having done so and for sharing with me your letter to fellow congregants. It was an important reminder of the kinds of things we should all be doing in our home congregations. Many thanks.

Rhea and I join in sending fondest regards to you and Clare. May you continue to enjoy a good summer.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Please mail to

MEMORANDUM

From Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
To Board of Trustees, Union of American Hebrew Congregations
Copies
Subject June 1981 Issue of MOMENT MAGAZINE

Date 7/16/81

I am pleased to share with you the June 1981 issue of MOMENT MAGAZINE. While the issue as a whole is of great and current interest, I call your particular attention to the major section on "Jews By Choice" (pages 25 to 34).

David Belin, the Chairman of the Joint Task Force on Reform Jewish Outreach, addressed our meeting on Sunday, June 14th, in a most touching manner. The programs which he outlined are given meaning through the personal testimony of some of those who have participated in them. Rabbi Daniel B. Syme, Director of Education of the UAHC, and Lydia Kukoff, our staff consultant on Outreach, are well represented in this section with pieces relating their own experiences. Mary Lynn Kotz is a member of the Task Force on Reform Jewish Outreach. I know you will find their statements to be of particular interest.

Warmest regards and best wishes for a pleasant, refreshing, and rewarding summer.

I agree that both stories had real meaning. Since I felt that increased circulation was in order, I made the attached mailing to the members of our Temple Board and our Outreach Cmte.

Hope you are having both a relaxing and a meaningful summer.

Mace Lemur



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



2631 West 8th Street • Erie, PA 16505 • (814) 838-3511

Dear Friend,

I've been advised that a proper duty for a National Board Member is to occasionally mail out releases from the UAHC National Office and other information pertaining to our Temple. So I will be sending you information from time to time and hope you find the mailings of interest and of meaning.

I just finished reading a truly poignant story by our "Scholar in Residence" from this Spring, Rabbi Danny Syme. The story was followed by another one about Jews By Choice. Both of them reminded me of some of the things our Temple has been doing properly and how we should be proud of those efforts. However, no honest reading of these two articles could be made without recognizing the many things we are leaving undone. It is my hope that all of us will try harder in the future, both as a Temple and individually as members.

Cordially,

Mace

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THE CONVERSION OF CAITLIN O'SULLIVAN

DANIEL SYME

On January 10, 1981, Caitlin O'Sullivan became a Jew. Her conversion ceremony took place during a Shabbat morning service at New York City's Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, perhaps the first public conversion ceremony ever in Manhattan. I was there—as her rabbi and as her friend.

March, 1980

My first meeting with Caitlin O'Sullivan was an accident. The then embryonic Task Force on Reform Jewish Outreach of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis had decided to sponsor a weekend program at the UAHC's House of Living Judaism in New York. Registration for the program, originally intended solely for recent converts to Judaism, was lagging somewhat behind expectations. Accordingly, I was asked to recruit participants from Introduction to Judaism classes in the UAHC's New York conversion course program. Doubting the potential efficacy of my efforts, I nonetheless spoke to one class and distributed flyers for the Shabbaton.

No more than ten minutes after completing my "pitch," I had one application in hand. Caitlin O'Sullivan had made a decision to examine Judaism a little more closely. I remember how struck I was at the time with her confidence, her enthusiasm, her candor. This is,

I thought, a remarkable woman.

April, 1980

During the Outreach weekend, Caitlin O'Sullivan spoke very little. She participated knowledgeably in Shabbat services, and even offered a spontaneous closing prayer. But mostly she listened intently to the statements of others, absorbing, concentrating. Finally, on Saturday night, Caitlin shared her personal story.

She had been raised as a Catholic in a community on the West Coast. After a deeply disillusioning family trauma during her high school years, Caitlin and others in her family fell away from the church. Caitlin, especially, began to examine other religions—particularly Judaism. Now, as an adult, after studying on her own for many years, she had taken a second step in the direction of Judaism by enrolling in the UAHC's conversion course. She made it clear that her mind was not yet made up, that she was still thinking and learning and doing Jewishly. In effect, she was "trying Judaism on," seeing how it felt. There was no sense of urgency to her search. After all, conversion was more than a casual decision. It represented a major life commitment.

She concluded her remarks. No one in the room moved. No one coughed. No one yawned or stretched. We all knew that, in a very real sense, we were witnessing the formation of a potentially new Jewish soul. We were deeply moved and touched by this young woman, who knew herself so well, and who

was so determined to maintain her intellectual and religious integrity. We wished her well on her search, quietly hoping that Judaism would one day be blessed by her addition to our people and to our faith.

April–December, 1980

The weekend came to a close. Caitlin left us, but I continued to receive reports of her "progress." She called from time to time, just to say hello. Mutual friends told me of her constant presence at Stephen Wise Free Synagogue. Then, just after the High Holy Days, Caitlin appeared in my office. She had decided to embrace Judaism and to visit the mikvah as a prelude to the service. Most significantly, however, Caitlin O'Sullivan had seized upon an idea she had first heard expressed at the New York Outreach weekend. She wanted a public conversion, and she asked me to participate and to offer a blessing on her behalf.

The notion of conversion to Judaism in the presence of the entire congregation has been shared and popularized primarily by Lydia Kukoff, an adult education specialist, teacher, and Outreach program consultant to many Jewish organizations.

Her logic is inescapable. Born Jews have never been made privy to the process of conversion. Indeed, conversion has been something "we don't talk about," consigned to the rabbi's study or a deserted chapel. That, Lydia Kukoff asserts, is a mistake. The community needs to be part of conversion, to see thinking, caring men and women, who

Rabbi Daniel Syme is the Director of Education of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

are *choosing Judaism!* No ambivalence, no embarrassment, no hang-ups. Judaism is their first choice. What a boon to Jewish pride. What a spur to adult Jewish learning. What a weapon against stereotypes and ethnic prejudice.

And, what a support to the new Jew! A community bearing witness to this powerful moment, with no preconditions and no judgments. Lydia Kukoff has crisscrossed North America, bringing her message to dozens of communities, large and small. She planted the seed—and Caitlin O'Sullivan, hearing her at the Outreach weekend, decided to bring it to fruition.

I told Caitlin that I'd be honored to be part of her conversion, and suggested that we talk further about how best to structure the service and about setting a date. To my amazement, I then learned that Caitlin planned on putting the entire service together: assigning parts to the rabbis, conducting a major portion of the service herself, selecting the music, delivering the sermon—everything was to be carefully planned and sensitively done. She had a date when no bar or bat mitzvah was scheduled. That Shabbat would be hers alone.

December, 1980

In mid-December, the Task Force on Reform Jewish Outreach sponsored a second New York weekend. Caitlin attended, along with four other "alumni" of the April Shabbaton. In contrast to her quiet, almost reserved manner eight months earlier, Caitlin had now become a confident, articulate "Jew in process." Though her formal conversion was still a month away, there was no doubt that many weekend participants looked to Caitlin as a model, a resource, a friend. She issued a blanket invitation to the group to attend her conversion ceremony, and a number said they'd be there.

January 1, 1981

New Year's Day. Between football games, I suddenly realized that Caitlin's service was a week away—and that I had not the slightest idea

of what I intended to say to her in front of all those people. My rabbi's manual was no help. This had to be thoroughly personal.

Eight hours later I had a first draft. Over the next several days I shared it with at least a dozen colleagues and friends. Each made suggestions, changes and additions. At last, by Thursday, I felt I knew how I wanted to say what I felt so deeply.

That night, Caitlin and I spoke by phone. She outlined the service. We talked through her personal declaration and the blessing itself. Then Caitlin dropped the bombshell. She was having second thoughts. She wasn't sure she was doing the right thing, and she was scared. Her parents were coming, along with dozens of other friends and acquaintances whom she had invited, and the pressure was a little frightening. I did my best to reassure her that her feelings were normal and natural. This was, after all, a life-altering step, every bit as significant as a marriage. And, I said with a lump in my throat, the absolute worst that could happen would be to delay the ceremony. After thirty minutes on the phone, we agreed that Caitlin should call a friend who had chosen Judaism, just to talk. The call was made. By Friday, to my relief, Caitlin once again felt solid about her decision.

Friday night, January 9, 1981

I didn't sleep more than three hours. I kept going over my remarks, pacing the floor, making sure that I had done as much as I could to make the next morning's service as meaningful and moving as possible. I finally drifted off at about 3:00 a.m., but was up again at six. I kept thinking about how much insight the Torah has. Wherever in the Torah it says "And he got up early in the morning," it indicates that the person is facing an important and somewhat frightening task—Abraham preparing to take Isaac to Mount Moriah for example, or Jacob preparing to meet his brother Esau after many years.

I finally gave up on sleep and left for the synagogue at 8:00 a.m.

January 10, 1981

When services don't begin until 10:30 a.m., you may be interested to know that most temples are locked at 8:15 in the morning. The Stephen Wise Free Synagogue is no exception. There I was, dressed, ready for services, standing outside in the cold, and feeling very silly. Finally, a security guard let me in, and I sat inside for almost two hours. About ten o'clock, Caitlin arrived. Together with everyone participating in the service, we went over the order one last time. Before I knew it, it was time to begin.

My throat felt dry. I hadn't been this nervous since officiating at my first ceremony of b'rith milah. It took place in a hospital operating room, and the mohel and I both wore hospital gowns and surgical masks. I was a rabbinic student at the time, and had my rabbi's manual clutched in my hand as we began. Disaster! Every time I breathed, my glasses fogged up, obscuring my sight of the various b'rachot. I kept wiping them off, becoming so hysterical in the process that after chanting the kiddush I forgot I had a mask on—and poured the entire cup of wine down the front of my hospital gown!

I thought of that moment as I, Caitlin and others participating in the services walked up onto the bimah. I was terrified! Looking out at the congregation, I was surprised and pleased. There were members of the congregation, faculty members and students of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, numerous alumni of the New York Outreach weekends, men and women who had been part of Caitlin's conversion class, people from my apartment building in New York who had been intrigued by my description of what was to happen, and of course, Caitlin's family, seated in the very first row, eyes riveted to her every move, giving silent support and encouragement. The sanctuary was full.

Rabbis Edward Klein and Balfour Brickner of the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue conducted the first part of the service, explaining the history and significance of certain

"Caitlin," I said, "I want you to know that I'm scared to death. I've never done this before."

"That's all right," she replied. "Neither have I."

b'rachot for the benefit of all in attendance. Caitlin read a number of sections as well. Then came the Torah service. Caitlin chanted the blessings after which Rabbi Brickner read and commented on the sedra. Caitlin read a special haftarah from the Book of Ruth, with the b'rachot before and after chanted by her conversion course instructor, Rabbi A. Bruce Goldman.

At last the magical moment had arrived. The congregation waited expectantly. There was not a sound in the entire sanctuary. Caitlin and I stood at the bimah. My hands were shaking, and I decided to share my feelings with Caitlin.

"Caitlin," I said, "I want you to know that I'm scared to death. I've never done this before."

"That's all right," she replied. "Neither have I." The congregation roared. The tension broken, I continued:

"Caitlin, in the presence of your family and friends, before this open ark, and witnessed by this entire congregation, your journey begins.

"Every Jewish experience until this moment has been only a prelude to the challenge you are about to accept. All the searching, all the study, all the doubts and fears, the joy and exhilaration of discovery and decision, culminate in this instant of re-creation.

"You are about to become a Jewish newborn, entitled thereby to an extra measure of love and caring from the Jewish community. We are obligated to nurture and to nourish you.

"But you, in turn, take on new and awesome responsibilities. You have committed yourself and your future to Jewish living and to the creation of a personal Jewish past. You will continue to study and do, learn and experience, growing each day as a unique and special person. We are also now dependent upon you for our physical and spiritual Jewish survival. You will influence generations of Jewish children and adults. You will teach them by your example and invest them with Jewish identity. From this moment on, then, Caitlin, our destiny is inex-

tricably bound up with yours.

"As a rabbi, as one who cares deeply about Judaism, the Jewish people and the Jewish future, but above all as a friend, who has come to admire and respect you, it is now my privilege to recognize your formal entry into Judaism."

At this point, Caitlin's friend, David Kleiman, stepped forward and placed a tallit around Caitlin's shoulders, his personal gift to her on this occasion. The three of us then walked to the open ark. Caitlin took the Torah in her arms and cradled it as I spoke.

"In the presence of this congregation I ask you to hold this Torah and to recite the Sh'ma, the watchword of our faith."

Caitlin recited the Sh'ma in a strong, clear voice, then sang it with her eyes closed, wrapped in her tallit. A chill ran up my spine.

I spoke to her again: "In the presence of this community I ask if you freely cast your lot with that of the Jewish people from this day forth."

She replied: "I do."

I responded: "In accordance with Jewish custom, I give unto you the Hebrew name you have chosen as your own: *"Elisheva"—God Is My Oath—Elisheva bat Avraham v'Sarah*. May it become a name honored in the household of Israel."

I then asked Caitlin to stand at the Bimah and to declare her acceptance of Judaism. The congregation leaned forward, eager to hear this woman who had already moved and touched them so. Caitlin began:

"I, Caitlin O'Sullivan at this moment embrace Judaism into my being. I do this freely, openly and with great joy before the assembled congregation as a pledge to God and humanity. I cast off the necessity of intercession and undertake the responsibility of a direct, active and immediate relationship to the Power of the Universe.

"I honor and thank my parents and my heritage for giving me life and the strength to commit myself to a belief that is my fulfillment, but different from theirs.

"I approach the Jewish people with

"As I opened my eyes and beheld the light I had created I was moved as I had never been moved in my life."

deep love and ask their acceptance of me as a member of the Jewish community.

"I commit the totality of my strength and loyalty to support and defend the Jewish people amid all circumstances to the absolute limit of my being.

"I pledge to live each day within a Jewish framework:

"To create and maintain a Jewish home.

"To observe the traditions and customs of Judaism within my home and in public worship to the extent that these practices further and enhance my love of God and the Jewish people.

"To spend time in study and the pursuit of Jewish learning; developing the deepest possible understanding of Jewish law, language, thought and culture in order to contribute to my spiritual development and to the future of Judaism.

"To love and serve other people, always striving to understand the meaning of commitment to another human being.

"To develop my individual gifts and talents to their highest potential as a fulfillment of the promise of creation.

"To allow beauty, harmony and peace into my awareness alongside the struggle for achievement, remembering that joy and celebration are as exalted and beloved of God as study, work and prayer."

Caitlin looked at me. She was finished. I looked out at the congregation. Many were in tears. I led Caitlin back to the Ark, then spoke both to her and to all those in attendance.

"We who bear witness to this moment have, like you, been eternally transformed. We will never be the same again. We have been blessed through our participation in this, your moment. I therefore ask the entire congregation to join with you and with me in affirming the uniqueness of this day by reciting the Shehecheyanu."

The congregation stood as one and recited the Shehecheyanu. It may have been my imagination, but I can't remember ever hearing it said quite so enthusiastically. A new Jewish soul

had come into the world, and its spiritual parents rejoiced. Caitlin bowed her head, I offered the blessing, and then we gave one another a big hug. It was a moment that changed at least two lives.

Later in the service, Caitlin delivered the sermon. She spoke of the sort of experience to which every Jew might aspire.

"One Friday evening I decided I wanted to light Shabbat candles. I asked my friend if it was all right—was there anything wrong with it if I wasn't Jewish? He assured me that lightning would not strike me, nor an earthquake swallow me up. He helped me learn the blessing and we talked about the various customs involved in the physical act of kindling the lights. I picked something that seemed to work with my personality and I did it. As I opened my eyes and beheld the light I had created I was moved as I had never been moved in my life. In that moment I understood the concept of mystery, of spirit, of invoking a power greater than myself, through myself. I understood that by activating something very deep and personal, I could also touch something as incomprehensible as the light of the stars in the universe. In that moment I was changed forever, changed utterly."

She concluded: "My discovery of Judaism as a Jew has just begun. Judaism is multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-national. The only limits to an expression of Jewish identity must necessarily be self-imposed. My explorations may take me far, far afield, I know not where. I have reached, I have struggled for knowledge and understanding and now I am ready to begin."

No matter where life takes me as a rabbi, I do not believe I will ever again feel as I did on that Shabbat morning. The moment and the community met in a perfect union, electric, powerful, Jewish.

We are indeed fortunate. Caitlin O'Sullivan is a Jew. God grant that many others like her will opt for public conversion, and thereby help born Jews see their faith and their people through new and fresh eyes.

JEWISH IS BECOMING

MARY LYNN KOTZ

Twenty years ago, in Washington, D.C., I made a commitment. I spoke the same words as did Ruth, the Moabite: Your people shall be my people, your God, my God. It was like coming home. My name was entered into the American Jewish archives in Cincinnati, and I began the process of becoming a Jew.

I say *process* because I believe conversion is the beginning of a process that lasts throughout one's life. Perhaps Jews by accident of birth do not think of Jewishness as a process of learning—of beginning—but it is. From brit to religious school to bar or bat mitzvah, to celebrating the festivals, to marriage, synagogue membership, participation in the Jewish community—throughout our lives, until and including the day our Kaddish is spoken, Jewishness is a vibrant, growing process. And so it is with those of us who are Jews by choice.

Only we began the process a little later in life.

What an experience it is to be a new Jew, as an adult—when one's sensitivity and awareness are fully developed! For me, hearing for the first time the haunting music of the Kol Nidre, knowing that it was now a part of me forever, was a pinnacle moment in my life. I stood there

twenty years ago, surrounded by two thousand people I did not know in Washington Hebrew Congregation, tears spilling from my eyes. I was overcome by the beauty, the majesty, the humanity, the *heritage* in that music. This was my community, this was my people. This was mine.

Seeing for the first time the ark open to the Torah, and then watching the scroll unfold filled me with humility, with awe—and a first deep realization of the meaning of *worship*. This was the word of Covenant, which binds me and my people to God.

Hearing for the first time the shofar blast out loud and clear on a September morning swept me with pride and recognition of my heritage, bringing to mind the prophet Joshua and the walls of Jericho.

Can you imagine the thrill—as well as the sheer panic—of sitting down to my own table, to hold our first Seder? (An ordinary dinner party was cause enough for panic during those days of my twenties.) That chilly spring evening in Iowa, far away from family, we sat down with friends—and the welcome stranger, a college student far from home. There was a friend, still raw from a recent divorce; another woman who had lost all her family in the Holocaust, who herself had survived disguised as the child of her Berlin Aryan neighbors; and my Roman Catholic neighbors, who were also celebrating Good Friday that evening. "I am so new at this," I said, and we all joined hands as we said the Shehecheyanu, and it didn't matter, because we were celebrat-

ing freedom from bondage, and feeling a very special bond with each other.

Those are indelible memories for me. They bind me to this faith with its long, unbroken heritage. They are *my* beginnings.

This past spring, in New York, I had another thrilling experience as a Jew. I participated in the first national conference of Jews by choice, sponsored by the Task Force on Reform Jewish Outreach of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

Men and women from all across America had come—to share their experiences and to guide the Task Force in addressing the needs of Jews by choice. They were intelligent, articulate—far more educated in Judaism than I—and by some strange coincidence, very good singers. We began our weekend singing Hebrew songs, and reading the Sabbath service together. And before the service was over, we were a unit. We spoke out about our reasons for choosing Judaism. Their reasons were identical to mine, their enthusiasm and love for the religion beautiful to hear.

Some, like me, were introduced to the faith by a husband or wife who had been born a Jew. Others found their way into the synagogue on their own, making a rational, individual and personal choice. One delightful young couple from Kentucky had "shopped around" for a religion, and after visiting several churches, wound up at a

Mary Lynn Kotz is the author of several books including Upstairs At the White House, A Passion for Equality: George Wiley and the Movement (with her husband Nick Kotz) and Marvella: A Personal Journey, as well as numerous magazine articles.

Reform temple. "We knew," they said, "that this was what we needed and wanted. It was like coming home." And person after person repeated that phrase, which I had thought was mine alone. "Coming home."

There was pain in our stories, too. Everybody kept remarking, with some surprise, about the similarity of their feelings, saying "Yes, that happened to me . . . I didn't know anyone else felt that way." Another theme began to emerge: "I felt so alone."

We talked about feeling unwelcome, at first. About rabbis who discouraged us at the outset. Some of us were rejected by our own families. (Some of us were afraid to tell our families.) And many were not accepted by the family of the spouse who was born a Jew.

Most of us hated the word "convert." "I do not want to be forever thought of as a convert," one woman said. "I am a Jew."

And that rang a bell with me. We all want to be accepted. We all want to be thought of as "no different." Your people are my people. . . .

As voiced by the group of Jews by choice in New York and borne out by statistical studies conducted by the UAHC, the most far-reaching and difficult problem the Jew by choice must face is the second-class status he or she is often accorded by the Jewish community—the fact that many born Jews have trouble thinking of the convert as a "real" Jew.

How painful it is for us to hear the word "goyim." It implies an outsider, who can never become one of us. It refers to my brothers, whom I love. Many times I have heard it wrongly applied to me. (I wonder, when they call me "shiksa," if they know that the word "shiksa" means "abominable?")

And how many times have I heard, from born Jews—whom my rabbi calls "Jews-by-chance"—"Why on earth would you want to become Jewish? Jews have suffered too much. . . ."

There is an admonition in the Talmud (Yevamot 48b): The con-

vert is like a new-born infant—an orphan who should be given an extra measure of love.

I have been lucky. For I was given that extra measure of love. When those other Jews spoke in that New York meeting, one by one, of their feelings of having been rejected, of the coldness and impersonality of their introduction-to-judaism courses, of their initial fears of synagogue, of strange new services and a congregation of strangers, of Jewish families who made them feel like outsiders, I felt compelled to tell my story. My own experience had been so much more positive than many of theirs. When Nick Kotz and I met, we were both working in Des Moines, Iowa, far away from our homes and families. I found, to my surprise, that I could "become" Jewish. I was drawn to his religion, for reasons both different from and similar to those that drew me to him. When we became engaged, we wished to be married in Washington, his home.

He had been confirmed in Washington Hebrew Congregation, his parents were members there, and so I came to Washington and began my course of study with Rabbi Norman Gerstenfeld. In those days, there were fewer of us, and so the rabbi and I had nearly a month together, one-on-one. And what an exciting intellectual and spiritual journey that was for me!

My background had prepared me for Judaism. I came from a very religious home, and having grown up Southern Baptist, I had a very strong grounding in Bible. We had to read the entire Bible through—and memorize quite a bit of it. The Old Testament, with its wonderful stories and poetry, was my favorite.

And I can remember, as clearly as yesterday, the day I found out I wasn't Jewish. I was crushed. I'd always thought the Gentiles were the "bad guys" in the Bible—the people we had to convert.

My Baptist family went to four different church services on Sunday; then, on Monday, there was Bible Study; Tuesday, Girls' Auxiliary; Wednesday, prayer meeting; Thursday, choir practice. As a teen-

ager, if the sermon got boring, I'd flip open my Bible to the Song of Solomon, and read the love poems. My father's hobby was Hebrew history. He could go to the blackboard and draw, from memory, a map of Moses' journey toward the Promised Land—or anybody else's. Our house was full of books on the Old Testament.

And then as I grew older, I was like Jacob. I wrestled with God. At first, I wrestled with the restrictions of the Southern Baptist Church. Then I went off to a Jesuit university, so I took a look at Catholicism. It was magnificent: incense, pomp, ceremony . . . but where was the Bible? Where were Ezra and Joshua and Elijah and Gideon and Eli and Samuel? My Catholic friends had never heard of them. I was living in Japan, so I took a look at Buddhism. Fascinating philosophy—very peaceful, very pragmatic. But it was just that, to me—a philosophy.

Well, does a grown person need a religion if she can't find one that fits? I know I did, because I tried it without one. Despite the fact that as a deacon's daughter I thought I'd had an overdose, I felt a need, a need to worship; a need to believe in a reason for being; a need to belong to a system that believes mankind has an obligation to improve itself . . . that we have a commitment to help those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

But I knew nothing about contemporary Judaism. I didn't know I could "get in." Ever since my childhood, I had known I was a Jew. What I didn't know was that you don't have to be Jewish . . . to be Jewish. I later discovered that I was not alone: most people, including many Jews, think of Judaism as a closed society.

Most Jews think of themselves as having been born Jewish. And most believe that "Jews do not seek out converts." Because of that statement, and the way it has become embedded in the lore of our people, many people have no idea that a person can become Jewish.

Not knowing the dreadful historical reasons for Jews not

reaching out—the edict of Constantine, the Crusades, the Inquisition—non-Jews have come to feel that they are excluded, they they are not welcome.

And that's too bad—not only because Judaism is such a rational, viable, sensible religion, but also because the seeds of anti-Semitism are often sown in feeling excluded. And feeling envy.

Jews used to reach out. From the very beginning, reaching out to seek and welcome converts was an active part of the Jewish tradition.

There is an old rabbinic statement, "Where were the Ten Commandments given?"

"In the desert."

"Why in the desert?"

"The desert is ownerless. Open. Free to everyone. So is the Torah. It is there; it is open to everyone."

The first verse of Leviticus is, "And God called Moses." According to the rabbis, Moses had ten names. Of all those ten, why did He call him Moses? The rabbis wrote, "Because the name 'Moses' was given to him by Pharaoh's daughter, Batyah, who became a convert. And because of that the name 'Moses' is more precious to God than the other names."

Even in the fourth century, after the edit of Constantine proclaimed Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire, Jews continued to reach out for converts—and to risk capital punishment. And during Talmudic times, the rabbis were favorable both to conversion and to converts.

We who choose Judaism were called "those who seek shelter under the shade of God." And the rabbis wrote that "they shall flourish like corn, they shall blossom like wine." Another verse: "More precious to me are the names given by converts than all the wine that was poured in the altar of the Temple."

But during the Crusades, and again beginning about the fifteenth century all over Europe, to seek converts became impossibly dangerous, and a new Jewish tradition was born—that of *not* reaching out. When Jews today say, "Jews don't seek out converts," they forget that

it was only the cruelest of repression that stopped the practice.

When I heard those other stories in New York, about the difficulties, the obstacles that some of the people who chose Judaism had to overcome, including discouragement by rabbis, I realized what a charmed experience my conversion to Judaism had been. I met with Rabbi Norman Gerstenfeld in his home and at the temple. My Bible knowledge was definitely an advantage; I was among old friends. The rabbi assigned me books to read, questioned me on what I read. And therefore, our work became rather like a thoughtful study of comparative religion—of history, of learning that the most positive aspects of Christianity, in which I believed, were the tenets not only of the ancient Judaism that Jesus taught, but also of practice in present-day Judaism. I learned about the festivals, about the traditions. I learned how to start the process. And finally, I earned the name Ruth. Our wedding service was in our Washington temple, small, consecrated.

I was embraced by my husband's mother, a widow, like Naomi in the Bible. She gave a warm reception for us, to introduce me to her Jewish friends. I was embraced by my husband's father's family with a sweetness that was matched only by my family's embrace of my husband. My father, Christian in the best sense of the word, truly believed I had joined up with the Chosen People.

My parents gave a reception for us, in Mississippi. Their confidence in their beliefs, and in me, totally eliminated any possible conflicts. They knew I was not rejecting the teachings of Jesus, for they knew those were Jewish teachings.

And then we went back to our life in Des Moines, Iowa, where we were strangers to the Jewish community. But not for long. A couple from Temple B'nai Jeshurun gave a dinner party for us, and invited six other couples. For the next six Saturday nights, each of those couples entertained for us, intro-

ducing us to still more of their friends. And at the end of two months, we were part of the Des Moines Jewish community. We were embraced. We were drawn into the temple. One couple invited us to attend Sabbath services with them, and taught me how to prepare Sabbath dinner; another invited us to break the fast with them after High Holy Days. Still another invited us to share their seder, and gave me instructions the following year in preparing my own. One invited me to join a Sisterhood book discussion group; another invited my husband to work on the social action committee. These friends will never know the strength and comfort that they gave me by drawing me in to Jewish participation. My conversion course had been on a cerebral plane. It was "living Jewish" that these friends taught me, that made me feel at one with what I had learned. Soon we were chairing committees in temple, participating and sharing in the richness of Jewish life.

And when my husband's work as a journalist brought us back to Washington in 1964, we were embraced by that community as well.

One of the most meaningful services of my life was our son's bar mitzvah, in our home. Like our wedding, it was intimate, private. My husband's uncle, who is Orthodox, officiated. There was only family present—my husband's mother, my mother (my father had died the previous year), Uncle Sam Kotz, and his wife. The prayers, the words that were said, made an impression on our son that will never leave him. The reverence with which he accepted the obligations of Jewish manhood has bound him inextricably to our faith. His confirmation class was large, the ceremony public (he played the guitar), but I suspect it did not begin to match for him the truly spiritual experience of his bar mitzvah.

As I listened to the pain pouring out of the meeting room in New York, I wished I could somehow package my experience, that it could be institutionalized, to show the

SHOSHANA LEV

I was raised in the Roman Catholic church. I attended Catholic schools, elementary school through university. Until I went to law school, I had never attended a non-religious school. From the time we were children, we were encouraged to stop in at the church to say a prayer, and to seek counsel from the priest when we were troubled.

One steeped in theology and piety is in a unique position to see the flaws in the fabric of religious faith and practice. When the flaws undermined the fabric of my Catholicism, I could not continue to be a practicing Catholic. By the time I was 18 and beginning my second year at the Jesuit-run University of San Francisco, I could no longer stand during the mass and in good conscience recite the Nicene creed. I felt oppressed by the Pope and the church hierarchy, and by all the acts that were mortal sins, that is, sins so serious that if you should die without confessing them, you would go straight to hell. Among these mortal sins were missing mass on Sunday or a holy day of obligation, eating meat on Friday, and others I don't remember.

There could be no compromise: the Church has a set of dogmas, a manifesto of faith, and the Catholic must believe all of it. There was no place for me in the Church.

I felt lost and unsure. I wasn't sure what I believed in and I felt, most of all, alone, alienated from my own history, from my family, from every single one of my friends and from all of my classmates. It was a difficult time in the United States. The campuses were filled with rioting students and Vietnam

was dividing American society.

I passed through Christianity, from the dogmatism of Catholicism to the completely undogmatic Quakerism, through atheism and agnosticism, meditation, and yoga, and still could not find a vehicle for religious expression. One day, I picked up a copy of Leon Uris' novel *Mila 18* and made a shattering discovery: at age 18, I didn't know that Hitler had exterminated six million Jews. I had always assumed that concentration camps and prisoner-of-war camps were the same thing, and that Hitler was just another tyrant. I learned about anti-Semitism and genocide.

I wanted to know what it was about the Jews and their beliefs that made others want to exterminate them. So I went to a Jewish bookstore and there found a little volume by Milton Steinberg called *Basic Judaism*. At last I felt I had found what I had been looking for: here was what I believed. In Judaism, ethics preceded faith in importance and this was the purity I sought.

For the next four years, I continued to study, and I started looking for a rabbi who would convert me. Everywhere I went, I was regarded with suspicion by the Jews I met, who couldn't understand why I wanted to convert. The rabbis I spoke with were either too busy, uninterested, suspicious, or told me to settle my marital situation before they would convert me.

I mentioned my dilemma to Mrs. Bloom, one of the instructors at the university. She was very interested in my problem and introduced me to her Reform rabbi. He sent me to the Bureau of Jewish Education and within a very short time, performed the conversion ceremony. I had finally, at the age of 22, become a Jew. One toe in the door.

For the next few months, while I finished my degree, I continued to go to shul. Then the Yom Kippur War broke out. I found myself at the head of the newly formed Jewish Students Organization at USF, raising money for Israel. I was asked by the editor of the school paper to write an article explaining the Jewish side of the conflict. It was

during the writing of this article that I met my husband at a conference on Zionism.

While the war served to give me a real involvement with the Jewish community, until I moved to Los Angeles I really had no understanding of Judaism's familial aspect, or of the role of the culture aside from religion. Until that point, my Jewishness involved the synagogue, books, and the very beginning of a relationship with Israel.

In Los Angeles, I enrolled in what was then the Yeshiva Teachers College. One Orthodox rabbi who was my teacher collared me after class one night saying, "I understand you want to have a real conversion. I'll arrange it." And so he did. For the next few months I continued to study. I was tested by the Orthodox bet-din. I was then taken through the conversion ceremony, including immersion three times in the mikvah. The rabbi wisely told me that I should not try to do everything at once. He counseled me to start with Shabbat and Kashrut and assume one practice at a time. For the most part, I have followed that advice, but I cannot call myself Orthodox.

There is a well-known Jewish maxim that says the convert should be pushed away with one hand and helped in with the other. This was not my experience with Judaism before I converted. Until Mrs. Bloom offered her help, I had been firmly pushed away. There is a lesser known counsel offered by Maimonides that says that once the convert becomes a Jew, the conversion should never again be mentioned; the convert has become a Jew in all respects and must be treated as such. Would that it were so!

You continue to be called a convert by many Jews. Some indicate that they expect you to drop Judaism and flee, flying into the arms of Christianity when anti-Semitism touches you. You are seen as a religious fanatic by some, and by others as a talking dog: it doesn't matter what the dog says, the fact that it talks is amazing enough.

Shoshana Lev came to Judaism from an intensely Catholic family. Her story appeared in the December issues of Direction, published by the University of Judaism (the west coast affiliate of the Jewish Theological Seminary) in Los Angeles. It is based on a talk she delivered to a UJ class on Contemporary Jewish Issues, and is excerpted here.

I was a great favorite of my Greek professor at USF until I converted to Judaism. He told me, "But surely you understand that only those who believe will enter the kingdom of heaven!" He refused to speak to me. My advisor in the philosophy department, my friend for four years, avoided me and refused to come to my wedding, telling another student to let me know how disappointed he was in me. He died last year; I had never seen him again.

Surprisingly, my parents did not react very negatively. My father prefers that one should be moral and believe in something. My mother, who had a Jewish grandfather amidst her scores of Catholic ancestors, believes that since I was born on his birthday, it was somehow meant to be. She has come to accept my religion although she is mystified by my religious practices. Being a convert I could, as the Halachah enjoins me, forsake my family, consider myself a "bat Avram avinu" and forget from whence I came. Because I continue to love my family, I toe a fine line. I go home for Christmas and downplay my Judaism around my family.

But when I am in my own home, I practice Judaism and am at peace with myself.

LYDIA KUKOFF

• I had what might be described as an ideal conversion. Still, there were a number of post-conversion questions and insecurities that confused and bewildered me. Since I didn't

Lydia Kukoff, coordinator of Jews by Choice: The First Years, and program consultant for the Task Force on Reform Jewish Outreach, holds an MA in Judaic Studies from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles, and is herself a Jew by choice. She talked about her work in an interview in Reform Judaism, published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, in February, 1981. Herewith, by permission, some excerpts.

know anybody else who had converted, I had no one with whom to share and compare experiences. My feelings of insecurity and guilt prevented me from consulting the rabbi. Hadn't he, after all, taught me what I needed to know about Judaism? It only occurred to me some years later it might be possible to enter Judaism through a less painful portal, with the aid of those who were already there.

• In our zeal to teach the philosophy, history, theology, ethics, holidays and rituals of Judaism, the very real emotional needs of Jews by choice are often neglected. The person becoming Jewish comes from a very different world and brings many fears and doubts as to whether or not he or she is going to make it as a Jew, spiritually and socially. Will my Jewish family accept me (if this is before marriage)? Is my non-Jewish family going to reject me? How am I going to raise my children to be Jews and also to respect both families? Will I be accepted in the Jewish community? These are just a few questions that concern Jews by choice, whose success as Jews frequently depends on how well they can resolve them. Let's be honest, though. An introduction-to-judaism course is just that. Becoming a Jew cannot be achieved in an 18-week, a 52-week, or even a two-year course of study. It's a lifelong process.

• If it seems as though a child is going to marry someone who is not Jewish, parents should encourage the young couple to investigate Judaism together and perhaps attend an introduction to Judaism class, if only for the sake of a shared understanding of one another. However, I don't believe in coercive conversions, because I think that no one should or can convert for another person. If the person is not ready to convert, extreme pressure can only lead to bitterness and resentment. I've worked with a wonderful family in which the wife decided only after ten years of marriage and two kids that she was ready to convert. She is now an absolutely committed and

vital Jew. She needed time, and her family was wise enough to let her have it.

• I think that there are many people to whom Judaism would be extremely attractive if they knew about it. And that includes those who were born Jewish but never had a quality Jewish education. I am in favor of an open-door policy. I think we should make information about Judaism accessible in as non-threatening and non-coercive a setting as possible. Many born Jews don't realize how difficult it is for outsiders to take that first step, to find the information, to ask how to do it. It's very scary. The temple can be a frightening place to the stranger who fears being rejected out of hand. By demonstrating our openness, by offering introduction-to-judaism classes to potential Jews by choice and to those simply seeking more information about Judaism, we will go a long way toward building bridges of understanding between us and those of other faiths.

• The major goal of UAHC's outreach effort is to try to find better ways of creating a system whereby new Jews can enter our community fully and positively. I think that the dictum, "Don't call attention to converts, don't set them apart," was and is a well-intentioned Jewish principle. Too often, however, it becomes an excuse for ignoring the very real needs of neophyte Jews. New Jews need our active support. And there are a number of ways in which congregations can help. Offer one year's free membership to new Jews by choice. Pair them for one year with an adoptive Jewish family from the active temple membership. Give the Jew by choice the option of a public conversion ceremony, witnessed by the entire congregation. Above all, let's begin to talk about Judaism by choice. Ultimately, it has to make us better—as Jews and as people.

positive effects of reaching out to the stranger, of welcoming the newcomer. (One woman said that the process in her Temple was so cut and dried, it was "Take the course, and line up for the mikvah." It was as if they were saying, "Just add water, and presto! Instant Jew!") For so many Jews by choice, the questions are poignant: after conversion, now what? Is there anyone to accompany me to my first Sabbath service? Anyone to show me how to celebrate a deeply meaningful Shabbat in my home? Anyone to teach me how to light the candles? Anyone to show me how to make challah? Anyone to tell me how to mourn?

Some Jews by choice live a Jewish life for a long time before making the decision to undertake a formal conversion, and they, of course, have learned by doing. What they need most is acceptance, assurance that they are not regarded as second-class citizens, forever thought of as "different." But for most the problems arise earlier. They are new graduates of the introduction-to-judaism course, and they *do* need a helping hand. Many of the women Jews by choice who have spoken out say that they prefer someone other than the rabbi—or their mother-in-law—to teach them how to lead a Jewish life. "After all," they said, "you don't want to bother the rabbi with such dumb questions, and you want to show your mother-in-law you *know* how to make challah."

In Los Angeles, there is a wonderful post-conversion havurah project, sponsored by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. It is a support system that begins immediately upon conversion. The community is saying, in a concrete way, "We care about you. We want you to be a functioning Jew. We want you to be part of us."

Before each holiday, for example, observances and customs are discussed, demonstrated and practiced, so that each person becomes familiar with them. This intermediary step helps to encourage a lifetime of Jewish identity and

involvement. It is not intended to create a permanent culture of "convert," but to help the newcomer become comfortably settled.

Lydia Kukoff, a former Baptist who holds a master's in Judaic studies and heads the Los Angeles project, has been invited to lead similar conferences at Reform congregations around the country, accompanied by sensitive members of the UAHC staff. These conferences, in the form of "Outreach Weekends," give Jews by choice an opportunity to speak out to each other, to offer sharing and support—as well as ideas for involving us more deeply in Jewish life. The weekends, like that first New York conference, are intensely religious in atmosphere, beginning with a "leaderless" Sabbath service, and then discussing "Why I Chose Judaism," "The Rabbi, His or Her Influence," an evaluation of the introduction-to-judaism courses, and "Becoming Jewish: How It Affected My Family, My Friends."

These weekends have become a very important inspirational experience. Those of us who are older in Judaism give confidence and reassurance to those who are brand-new. And we achieve greater clarity in defining our problems. One common issue: We all need surrogate "Jewish mothers" to teach us by doing with them. (That is why the Jews by choice have been so insistent that an education program be set up, within the temple and within religious schools, to teach the Jews by birth something of the traditional positive Jewish attitude toward the convert.)

After that first conference in New York, those of us who participated went back to our home congregations to speak of these matters.

On Yom Kippur, between the morning service and the memorial service, Washington Hebrew Congregation offers lay people an opportunity to speak to the congregation about personal religious experiences. I spoke, this past year, of the needs and problems of people who have chosen to become Jews. I expected it to be a thorny subject, to

engender a measure of hostility. Instead, to my delight, the response was overwhelmingly positive.

I spoke of the strength and beauty of Judaism, and what it had meant to my life—and that is the message people heard. Others from the conference, going back to their synagogues to speak on the same subject, report that their congregations' response was identical.

And it occurs to me, based on my experience, that there may be a role for the Jew by choice in the revitalization of Judaism. For we are potentially a mirror through which joy can be reflected to Jews who need a more positive view of Jewishness. We, whose sense of Jewish awareness is necessarily heightened, can—perhaps—help others come to more enlightened consciousness.

The other day, a conversation between four women took place in my living room. One woman's parents were each what she described as "half Jewish," and the woman herself had been raised a Quaker. Another woman's mother was a Christian, her father a Jew, and she had been raised as nothing. But my friend went through a conversion course, and became Jewish, like her father. The other woman is Danish, and she had an Orthodox conversion, the only kind available in Denmark.

I, the fourth woman, was thinking to myself, "One out, three in. There's hope." Actually, there were *thirteen* in, because as we talked, we discovered that our commitment had strengthened the commitment of our husbands. And that of our Jewish children.

The three of us who came "in" agreed on one thing. The *reason* why people choose to become Jewish is so overwhelmingly beautiful, all Jews should share in knowing how it feels to the *ger*, the stranger who comes in. If only you could hear the outpouring of love for this religion among people who have chosen it, you would see that to open our doors, to bring people in and shelter them, is to strengthen our people, our faith. *

March 20, 1979

Mrs. Carol Kurland, Pres.
Temple Shalom
Edgely Rd. Near Mill Creek Pkwy.
Levittown, PA 19057

Dear Mrs. Kurland:

Thank you so much for sharing with me the news release regarding your community's implementation for a Reform Jewish "outreach" to the non-affiliated. I was delighted to learn of this program and I thank you for sharing it with me.

I'm taking the liberty of sharing the release with Rabbi Sanford Seltzer who will be directing the Union's Task Force on Outreach. I know your project will be of interest to him.

With warmest regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Rabbi Sanford Seltzer

Temple Shalom

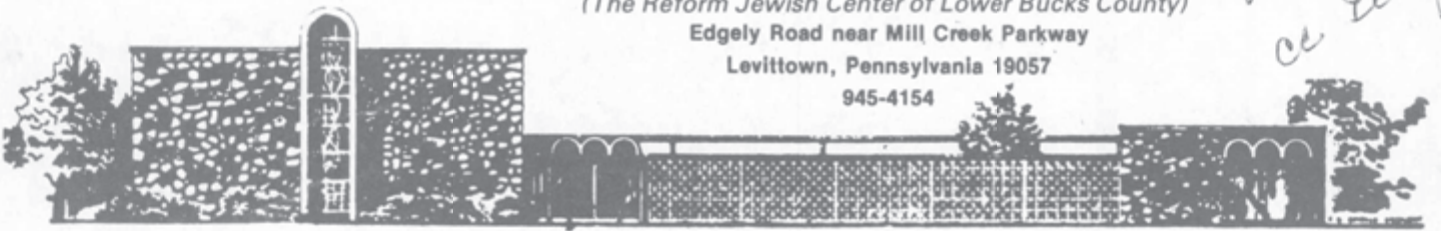
(The Reform Jewish Center of Lower Bucks County)

Edgely Road near Mill Creek Parkway

Levittown, Pennsylvania 19057

945-4154

*Have
Delivered
cc. Leizer*



Dr. Gordon L. Geller, Rabbi

David Wisnia, Cantor

March 15, 1979

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

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

Enclosed please find a News Release regarding our community's implementation for a Reform Jewish "outreach" to non-affiliated Jews as well as Gentiles. I am presuming that this matter might be of special interest to you.

Very sincerely yours,

Carol Kurland

Carol Kurland,
President

Encl.

cc: Rabbi Gordon Geller
Shelly Leibowitz

President
Carol Kurland
949-2489

Financial Secretary
David Bell
245-1588

Sisterhood President
Selma Hochman

Brotherhood President
Bernard Lens

Youth Group President
Steven Rubenstein

Educational Director
Warren Politz

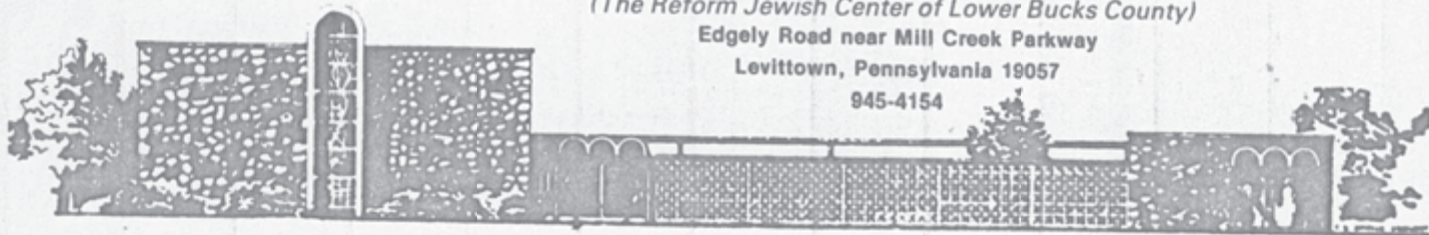
Temple Shalom

(The Reform Jewish Center of Lower Bucks County)

Edgely Road near Mill Creek Parkway

Levittown, Pennsylvania 19057

945-4154



Dr. Gordon L. Geller, Rabbi

David Wisnia, Cantor

NEWS RELEASE

March 15, 1979

Carol Kurland, President of Temple Shalom announced the formation this week of a special "Jewish Hospitality Committee", based at this Reform Jewish congregation in Levittown, Pa. The new group sees itself as the local vanguard of a burgeoning nation-wide effort devoted to "welcoming back" into the affiliated Jewish Community those estimated 1/2 million mixed-marrieds, couples wherein one spouse is Jewish.

Not only do they wish to bring the Jewish partner closer to Jews and Judaism again, but also to provide equivalent religious information and experiences for the non-Jewish partner. The latter would then presumably feel more comfortable with Jewish institutions, ideas, and culture -- toward the ultimate aim of personally desiring to formally adopt the Jewish faith of the spouse.

Shelly Leibowitz, chairman of Temple Shalom's JHC, emphasized that this limited program of religious outreach to non-Jews is but a logical corollary of restoring the Jewish partner to his estranged religious roots. Such a "conversionary side-effect" can by no means

President
Carol Kurland
949-2489

Financial Secretary
David Bell
245-1588

Sisterhood President
Selma Hochman

Brotherhood President
Bernard Lens

Youth Group President
Steven Rubenstein

Educational Director
Warren Politz

March 15, 1979

be equated to hard-sell, evangelical missionizing. "We are not out to either save souls or persuade anyone to turn away from a previously satisfactory religious affiliation."

Formal conversion is the desired goal but even "informal conversion" of the non-Jewish partner (where a mixed-married spouse merely considers oneself to be Jewish by life-style and association) would, in both cases, prove beneficial for countering the increasingly alarming decline in the total number of American Jews due to low birth rate and assimilation via intermarriage. Incidentally, all these efforts are in line with recent pronouncements by national Reform Jewish rabbinic and lay leadership urging a more intensive campaign to reach out and interest "unaffiliated" or "unchurched" Gentiles, whether or not they are intermarried to Jews.

The new group plans to publicize forthcoming informational gatherings at homes and at the synagogue, using both local Jewish media as well as the secular community press. Interested parties are also eligible to join an existing Jewish Family Living Support Group at Temple Shalom providing religious enrichment experiences, particularly for intermarried couples. Membership affiliation in the general congregation is not required.

For further information call Shelly Leibowitz or Rabbi Gordon Geller at (215) 945-4154.

December 18, 1978

Mr. Steven S. Jacobs
201 South 18th Street Apt. 1519
Philadelphia, Pa. 19103

Dear Steve:

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me. For your perusal
I enclose a copy of my remarks that you might read them in their
context.

With kindest regards I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



National Jewish Hospitality Committee
and Information Centers
437 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19106

Telephone 215-925-1951

December 3, 1978

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Rabbi Allen Maller, Culver City

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Steven Jacobs, Philadelphia

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Rabbi Herbert Yoskowitz, Baltimore
Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman, New York
Rabbi Martin Zion, New York

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

Dear Alex: re: OUTREACH TO NON-JEWS!

So you think our Jewish community should organize to welcome interested non-Jews! Well, we already have such an organization--and it was founded by two Reform Jews, namely, me and Rabbi Allen Maller.

HIRE ME! I should be worth the wages of at least one ordinary secretary. As a layman, I can project an impartiality which is important in dealing with many non-Reform Jews, both lay and rabbinic, and gerim. And I'll guarantee to have the effort self-supporting or nearly self-supporting within a year if I get the proper cooperation from the UAHC and CCAR. Also, I'm an expert at rescuing (deprogramming) Jews from the clutches of the missionaries, having done so on numerous occasions besides writing and speaking on the subject. So I can relate to the nuances in the beliefs of those coming into Judaism from Christian backgrounds and can help develop and activate counter-missionary programs as well. Importantly, I am completely self-motivated in this area.

I think the enclosures demonstrate my foresight, interest and concern, my overall grasp of the nuances involved, and my perception of the directions which must be taken, both conceptually and organizationally.

Cordially,

Steven S. Jacobs

P.S.: I put together all the enclosures and got the rabbis to serve on the Rabbinic Board. The Editorial Board of the enclosed Our Choice bulletin, which I also put together, include unmarried gerim, inter-married Jews, Jews from Catholic, Protestant and Shinto backgrounds, a Jew of Crow Indian descent (not listed), and others.

PLEASE CONTACT ME AT YOUR FIRST CONVENIENCE.

Reply address: 201 South 18th Street, Apartment 1519
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

Telephone: 215-352-8500 (daytime); 546-8293 (evening)

"To Serve Non-Jews and Jews Interested in Judaism"



OUR CHOICE

Dedicated to the Universal Spirit of Judaism



VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1

Dear Marcia



Marcia Falconer is a convert to Judaism. For a personal reply to your question, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Dear Marcia, Box 1404, Philadelphia, Pa. 19105.

Dear Marcia--I'm interested in learning more about Judaism. Any helpful information would be welcome. H.A., Florida. **Dear H.A.**--A good introduction to Jewish philosophy and religion can be found in *Basic Judaism* by Milton Steinberg (publisher: Harcourt, Brace). The *Guide for the Jewish Homemaker* by Levi and Kaplan (Schocken Paperback) gives a good insight into traditional home observances including holidays, milestones in Jewish life, and Jewish heritage. In addition, the NJHC has introductory literature about Judaism.

Dear Marcia--A friend of mine, a Seventh Day Adventist, claims the Hebrew word for God is plural and refers to the Trinity. C.R., Washington. **Dear C.R.**--The plural word for God (Elohim) is used in the Bible. Dr. David Cooper, a conservative Christian theologian, explains in his *God of Israel* that "In the (ancient) Semitic world such usage of the plural form of excellency, majesty, etc., was common when subjects addressed their king or at times spoke concerning him." The word is used with a singular verb or adjective which makes it singular and denotes magnitude or majesty in Hebrew.

Dear Marcia--I converted to Judaism two years ago and my mother-in-law still refuses to believe I'm Jewish. Except for this, we have a good relationship. M.D., New York. **Dear M.D.**--It probably will be impossible to convince your mother-in-law verbally. She still sees you as a member of the non-Jewish world. Your best bet is to live quietly as a Jew. Become active in Jewish community organizations that interest you. Invite your in-laws for Sabbath dinner and light the Sabbath candles, etc. It may take a long time but eventually she will be very proud of her Jewish daughter-in-law.

I'm Still Christian

The words "mixed" and "inter-faith" generally apply to married couples who retain their separate religious identities: Baptist and Catholic, Jewish and Lutheran, etc.

Some reasons for retaining separate religious identities are logical as where parental health is concerned. Others may not be logical, especially where the upbringing of children are concerned.

Many times the non-Jewish partner is reluctant to embrace Judaism because of misconceptions which the Jewish spouse is unwilling or unable to correct. Often a seemingly unpleasant or unsatisfactory encounter with a rabbi or congregation is the reason.

If you are a partner in a mixed or interfaith marriage, we'd like to hear from you.

A Letter to Readers

News Bulletin Is For Hindus & Moslems Too!

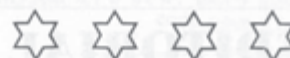
Dear Friend: You don't have to be Jewish to love rye bread, and you don't have to be Jewish to read this *OUR CHOICE* news bulletin.

This periodical is not only for Jews-by-birth and Jews-by-choice. It's also for those who haven't yet or never will embrace Judaism.

If this news bulletin gives you some insights into the universal nature and spirit of Judaism -- and the Jewish People -- it will serve its purpose.

I hope you enjoy reading it. If you feel moved to write, or want to submit an article or story, do so!

Sincerely,
Rabbi Allen Maller
President, NJHC



SHALOM

CINCINNATI SURVEY SHOWS

Many Conversions Not For Marriage

By MAURICE SCHAPIRO

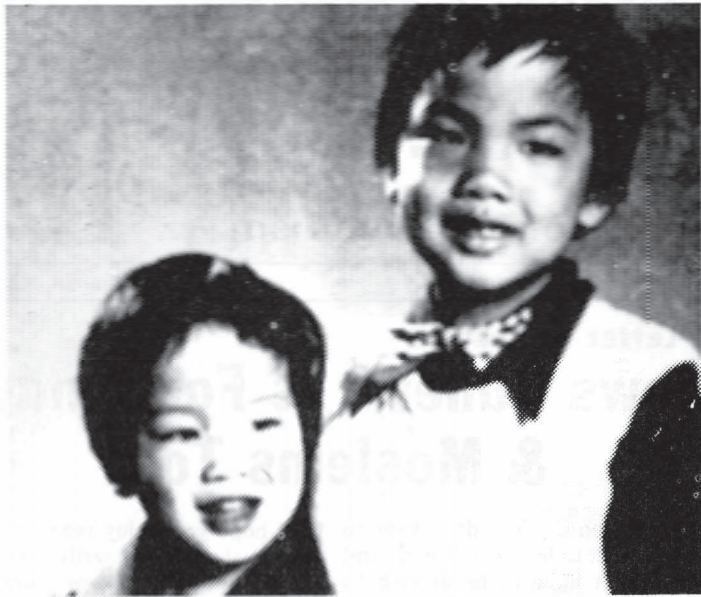
CINCINNATI — A surprising phenomenon not heretofore suspected is shown by a survey among the local rabbinate of the conversions to Judaism performed in the past year. Almost all of the local rabbis who were contacted said that a goodly number of those they converted were not for the purpose of marriage to a Jew.

RABBI ALBERT GOLDMAN of Isaac M. Wise Temple, and his associate, Rabbi Leonard Troupp, reported 13 conversions in the 1973-74 year compared to eight in 1972-73 year. Most of them were not for the purpose of marriage.

Rabbi Harold D. Hahn, of Rockdale Temple, Amberley Village, Cincinnati suburb, reported a slight increase in conversions at his temple in the past year compared to the previous year and most of them were not for purposes of marriage.

RABBI SOLOMON Greenberg of Valley Temple, Wyoming, says he had five conversions last year compared to two the year before and all were for the purpose of marriage.

Rabbi Fishel Goldfeder of Adath Israel Congregation, Amberley Village, largest Conservative congregation serving the Cincinnati area, reported about 12 converts both last year and the year before. He presides over a Beth Din for the actual ceremony.



Vincent Ginn, 3½, attends Temple Beth Sholom Pre-School in Las Vegas, Nevada, while his brother, Pat, Jr., 6, is a second-year student at Albert Einstein Hebrew Day School.

EDITORIAL

Should Synagogues Encourage Non-Jews To Affiliate?

Membership qualifications vary widely from congregation to congregation. The constitutions of many grant full or associate memberships to non-Jews, especially those married to Jews. Where they do not, it often is a case of a constitution written before intermarriage became an important factor in American and Canadian Jewish life. The National Jewish Hospitality Committee has conducted no polls so a precise congregation count is not available.

Rabbi Jerome Pine indicates his Decatur, Illinois congregation makes non-Jews "welcome" with the result those in mixed marriages "have become quite receptive. . .and if not openly converting, then at least openly affiliating with us and involving themselves (and their children) in many of our temple activities."

The NJHC has no formal policies about congregation membership requirements. This is a matter for the individual congregation to decide. The question none-the-less remains. Is it desirable to encourage or permit non-Jewish affiliation in Jewish congregational life?

NOTE: Editorial comments do not necessarily represent the views or policies of the NJHC or any individuals associated therewith.



Special Thanks For Permissions

SPECIAL THANKS for permission to reprint articles and photos from Leon Brown's *Philadelphia Jewish Times*, Gabriel Cohen's *Jewish Post & Opinion*,

David Horowitz's *United Israel Bulletin*, Jack Tell's *Las Vegas Israelite*, and the *Phila. Jewish Exponent*.

'A Feeling of Belonging'

Sparked by Visit to Israel

"Everybody's working, everybody's building for the future; there's no time to look at people's color," Mrs. Cornelia Tutt says.

Mrs. Tutt, a black convert to Judaism, who lives in Chestnut Hill, described her emotions after visiting Israel — "I got a different feeling there, a feeling that I belonged."

A member of the recent Operation Israel mission for women, Mrs. Tutt said she was so inspired by what she saw that she pledged the entire year's bonus from her job as an operating room technician for a local otologist to the Allied Jewish Appeal-Israel Emergency Fund.

"We visited a Malben home and spoke to the residents, who included a 100-year-old man whose 70-year-old son had recently moved in. Everyone who could was busy working, doing something useful, and not feeling as though they had been shunted away and forgotten.

Border Kibbutzim

"When we visited a kibbutz on the border, I was very moved by the underground shelters where the children sleep every night and, as a mother myself, I could feel the terrible concern of the parents for their little ones."

Mrs. Tutt, whose daughter is now grown, said that if she had



Mrs. Cornelia Tutt, a member of Germantown Jewish Centre who participated in the recent "Operation Israel" mission

young children she would send them to Israel. "Children there are too busy to get into trouble caused by idleness," she said.

"I became a convert to Judaism about 10 years ago when, as a Sunday school teacher, I wanted to learn more about biblical history. I went to the Rabbinical Center, which was then around 17th and Walnut Sts., and after I read quite a bit, I decided to convert. I belong to Germantown Jewish Centre and I love it there.

Meet The Editorial Board

The advisory Editorial Board of *OUR CHOICE* news bulletin is comprised of a broad cross-section of men and women in the Jewish community. Of the sixteen who now serve, 50 per cent are Jews-by-choice and the other half, Jews-by-birth. There are black, white and yellow Jews; single, intermarried and divorced Jews; and Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist and Reform Jews on the Editorial Board. They live in California, Louisiana, Florida, Virginia, New Jersey, New York and elsewhere. They are of all ages and backgrounds, and all are "committed" Jews.

Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, editor, *Reconstructionist*; **Rabbi J.S. Gallinger**, editor, *Jewish Monitor*; **Rabbi Robert Gordis**, editor, *Judaism*; **Rabbi Allen Maller**, president, NJHC; **Rabbi Hiroshi Okamoto**, university religion professor; **Dan Cusenbery**, professional editor, journalist, scriptwriter; **Mrs. Marcia Falconer**, author, biologist, housewife; **Steven Jacobs**, executive director, NJHC; **Mrs. Sheryl MacIntosh**, Jewish affairs, housewife; **Thomas MacIntosh**, synagogue officer, contractor; **Ms. Nancy McMurray**, author, lecturer, school art teacher; **John Park**, college div. chmn., music professor, cantor; **Bernard Postal**, editor, *Jewish Digest*; **Alvin Sandberg**, college English professor, Jewish affairs; **Eric Truehill**, student, college newspaper editor; **Ms. Doris Williams**, Jewish affairs, business, homemaker.



McKenna Re-Elected President Of National Family Organization Karen Tells Why She Chose Judaism

William E. McKenna has been elected to a second term as president of the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies. A funeral director, McKenna is now serving an unprecedented sixth consecutive term as president of the Jewish Family Service of Philadelphia.



William E. McKenna

The AJFCA, now in its second year, is composed of 82 Jewish agencies throughout North America. These agencies served more than one million people last year. Purpose of the organization is to maximize the involvement of lay leaders and professional staff of the member agencies through the exchange of ideas, information, methods and new service developments in meeting the needs of Jewish families and children experiencing social and emotional difficulties.

Re-elected with McKenna were Sidney Busis, Pittsburgh, Henry Goodman, Toronto, and Ron Kaufman, San Francisco, vice presidents; Shelton Weber, Louisville, Ky., secretary; and Phillip Soskis, New York, treasurer.

McKenna has spent more than

half his life in community service. He has broadened the scope of services offered by the JFS agency in Philadelphia and placed the 104-year-old facility into a national prominence. JFS currently operates four service headquarters in the Philadelphia area.

McKenna is president of Joseph Levine & Son, Inc., funeral directors. He was educated in the city's parochial school system and attended Drexel University and St. Joseph's College.

He is on the board of the National Council on Alcoholism and was appointed by Gov. Milton J. Shapp to serve on the state's Southeastern Regional Advisory Board for Aging.

He is a member of the executive committee of the Federation of Jewish Agencies, a member of the FJA's community planning committee and chairman of the Federation's Council for the Aged.

McKenna is a past president and a permanent board member of the Golden Slipper Club and the Golden Slipper Club Camp. He was honored by the organization with its Gold Medallion Award; was recipient of the "Man of the Year" Award of the Jewish War Veterans and is the recipient of the Pop Warner Award. He also received the "Man of the Year" Award of the Mizrahi Women's Organization.

"My reasons for converting to Judaism can be simply stated: I married a Jew! That is not to say I wish to convert to marry; rather, I am married and wish to convert none-the-less. I am aware that this explanation does not resound with religious conviction but it's the basic reason for my desire to convert. It has caused me to seek answers in the framework of Judaism, and having found them, has caused me to press on to conversion.

"It was my husband who introduced me to Judaism. I cannot say where I would be without him. Certainly not the Catholic I was raised. I had lost those trappings long ago.

"It is not that my deepest, most basic beliefs have changed. Love of one God, compassion for others, and charity are strong within me. These are Christian

as well as Jewish ideals. It is the tight family kinship to which I turn. It is wondrous that the kindling of the Sabbath candles enables me to share my deepest religious feelings with my family. It is a religious experience that cannot be equalled. Through it we become as one in search of God.

"One could almost say that the appeal of Judaism lies in its expression of the basic nature of religion: the communication with God. My life has changed profoundly, and yet my God remains the same. However, today He is not smothered in Christian trappings, and I am free again to search for and work toward the messianic age.

"In the several years of my marriage I have come to regard myself as a Jew. Each succeed-

cont. page 4 col. 2

Chief Rabbi Was Proselytes' Son

By RABBI A.P. BLOCH

March 19, 1803 — Rabbi Aaron Moses b. Abraham of Amsterdam



Bloch

of two books, "Melitz Yosher", a commentary on Sephardic rituals, and "Zera Yitzchok", a dissertation on religious philosophy. It was the rabbi's background, however, that was uppermost in the people's minds. His father was a Swedish nobleman who, at the age of 60, had come to Amsterdam with his wife and 12-year-old boy to embrace Judaism.

The boy's Bar Mitzvah disquisition, delivered within the year of his conversion, made a profound impression. When his father died the community assumed responsibility for his education. He soon excelled in Talmud, code and Cabala.

AARON LEARNED the trade of diamond cutting. Failing health forced him to abandon this work and thereafter he concentrated exclusively on his studies. In 1790, he was appointed dayan (rabbinic judge)

and in 1797, he was elected chief rabbi.

IT WAS in the post-Talmudic era that the practice of adopting Hebrew names came into vogue. A 7th century monk who lived in the monastery on Mt. Sinai adopted the name of Abraham upon his conversion. Many proselytes chose the name of Obadiah (Servant of God). A 9th century French deacon adopted the name of Eleazer (God is my helper). An English convert of the 18th century selected the name of Haggai (Festival of the Lord). The name Abraham, however, was the most common choice because Abraham was the first one to forsake his faith and embrace Judaism.

Symbol of Prof. Kutsuji's Institute In Japan



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Rabbi S. C. Lerner Pres. 9-10 pm-Sats 9-10 am

WHY DO MORE PEOPLE ADOPT A JEWISH LIFESTYLE?

FOR INSTRUCTION TO A BETTER LIFE write to:

JEWISH INFORMATION Box 4, Highland Park, Ill. 60035

Two Jewish New Years!

It is appropriate to wish friends and relatives a "good New Year" twice annually using the Jewish calendar. Nisan (March-April) is the first lunar calendar month. It initiates Springtime when nature renews itself. Passover starts Nisan 14th. The seventh month, Tishri (September-October), begins the religious year, a time of spiritual renewal. Because Judaism places prime importance on the religious year, the first day of Tishri is called Rosh ha-Shana (Rosh Hashona), which literally means New Year. Originally, this holy day was called Yom Teruah, the Day for Blowing the Shofar, the hollow ram's horn.

NJHC NEEDED, RABBI TELLS CONGREGATION

The following message recently appeared in Temple Adath Israel of Lexington, Kentucky news bulletin:

I have recently become affiliated with a new organization called the National Jewish Hospitality Committee, whose purpose is to "welcome and assist converts to Judaism and serve other non-Jews who for marital or personal reasons have an interest in Judaism."

The Committee was established this past year as an avenue for coming to grips with the increasing number of mixed marriages which are occurring today between Jews and non-Jews. Its chief goal is to "develop the full potential of involvement in Jewish community life by husbands and wives of non-Jewish origin and to accommodate and assist the burgeoning number of people interested in Judaism for reasons besides marriage."

From my experience, on a very limited scale here in Lexington, the effort of this committee is greatly needed. I frequently receive phone calls from persons inquiring about Judaism, and at times even find my calendar becomes quite full with persons seeking this kind of information.

Certainly we should welcome persons whose spiritual quest has led them to Judaism. Judaism has a great deal to offer those who seek our fellowship. If we could start a small chapter of this committee within our congregation, I am sure those who would participate would find it a rewarding experience. If you might be interested in any way, please let me know.

William Leffler
Rabbi

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE NATIONAL JEWISH HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE?

Want free information about the NJHC or a free copy of *OUR CHOICE* news bulletin mailed to a friend or relative? Write to Executive Director, NJHC, Box 1404, Philadelphia, Pa. 19105, or telephone (215) 925-1951.

Who Are The Jewish "People"?

The answer to the question, who are the Jewish "people," seems simple enough on the surface. Most people would answer they are the descendants of the ancient Hebrews.

This simplistic answer, however, is erroneous and misleading according to most contemporary scholars. The fact is that Jews are descendants of many races and nationalities.

Professor Karl Kautsky in his book, *Are the Jews a Race*, summarizes the situation: "A mixed race from the start, the Jews in the course of their migrations have come into contact with a great succession of new races and their blood has become more and more mixed."

Kautsky says elsewhere that "as early as 139 B.C.E. (B.C.) Jews were deported from Rome because they made proselytes in Italy. It is reported from Antioch (in modern Turkey) that the majority of the Jewish congregation were converts to Judaism, not Jews by birth. Conditions must have been similar elsewhere. This fact alone shows the absurdity of the effort to explain

Steven Jacobs

Karen Tells Why

cont. from page 3

ing year has found my home further committed to the Jewish ideal. I have slowly incorporated the Jewish festivals and Shabbat into our home. I have become increasingly aware of the Jewish community around us. The culmination of these beginnings has been this conversion class. Through it I feel that I've earned this right to be called a Jew, and have begun the arduous trek towards further learning and understanding.

"Why have I chosen this particular time to convert? Why have I waited this long? In a word, 'opportunity'. Prior to this time all thoughts of conversion were squelched either by an uncooperative rabbi, or a lack of time I felt should be devoted. The rabbi and the time finally have come together and the conversion that I feel I have worked so long for is about to become a reality. Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe..."

NOTE: Rabbi Barton Lee, Hillel director at Arizona State University, has granted permission to reprint this letter.

Jewish traits on the basis of their race."

The word "Semite" also is a misnomer. The word in its historical context had a "cultural" meaning. Dr. Allen Godbey, Professor of Bible at Duke University, says "there is no such thing as a Semitic race. We use the term to describe a type of language and a sort of culture which we can trace by means of that language."

Even Biblical evidence points to a mixed people from the start. Judah, the son of Jacob, took a Canaanite wife (Genesis 38:2). Joseph married an Egyptian woman (Genesis 4:45). Sampson married a Philistine (Judges 44:2f).

What are the Biblical implications of this information? It is obvious that the prophecy of Zechariah 2:15 that "Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and they shall be My people" is a process begun long ago which continues to this day. Isaiah 55:7 reminds us that "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

McMURRAY BOOK HAS ACADEMY AWARD POTENTIAL SAYS SCREENWRITER

San Francisco—Dan Cusenbery, screenwriter for major Hollywood motion picture and television producers, says a film using the artwork and text of *The Becoming of Ruth* would have "academy award" potential. This hardbound book is both written and illustrated in full color by Nancy McMurray and tells about the spiritual quest which eventually led her to Judaism.

According to Cusenbery, "it treats a profound and difficult theme in an enchanting way, genius in itself, without losing either the message or the entertainment elements." Nancy McMurray was born and raised in Africa, attended Baldwin College and Harvard University, graduating with a master of arts degree in teaching.

The Becoming of Ruth can be purchased through the NJHC, Box 1404, Philadelphia 19105, or directly from Crown Publishers, Inc., New York City, for \$4.95 plus 35c postage. Quantity prices are available through the NJHC upon request.

Compare Your Views With Judaism

Discovering Myself!

Ever wonder how your personal views and beliefs compare with those found in Judaism? The National Jewish Hospitality Committee has prepared two companion publications, the *Discovering Myself!* confidential questionnaire, and the *Jewish Responses* to it. Sample questions include "do you believe sin is inherited?", "do you believe in God?", "do you think an atheist or agnostic can be a good Jew?", and many others. Single copies of these publications are available FREE upon written request. Write to Discovering Myself, NJHC, Box 1404, Philadelphia, Pa. 19105, to get yours.

OUR CHOICE
BOX 1404
Phila., Pa. 19105
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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Alex - Please turn over



National Jewish Hospitality Committee

and Information Centers
437 Chestnut Street, Room 408
Philadelphia, Pa. 19106

Rabbi Allen S. Maller
President

Steven S. Jacobs
Executive Director

WHY GENTILES BECOME JEWS. Free
information.—Director, Box 1404, Phila-
delphia, PA 19105

SPECIAL REPORT

ARE NON-JEWS INTERESTED IN CONVERTING TO JUDAISM?

The answer to the question posed above can be answered in the affirmative, with a resounding yes! Although our tests to determine this are limited, tentative yet definitive answers are possible to give.

We placed a small classified advertisement in a specially selected national magazine. The advertisement read "Why Gentiles Become Jews. Free information." We gave a box number as a return address. The responses we got were followed with special NJHC literature. Below are some of the comments we have gotten to date:

Mrs. S.S., Philadelphia, writes "My husband is Jewish but is not religious....The NJHC group has given me a feeling that I could be part of the Jewish people....I am learning more and seeing the beauty in Judaism in a way I have never seen it before."

Mr. S.P., McPherson, Kansas, writes "Since my wife and I have been in the process of converting to Judaism I may be excessively zealous, but I feel and think that Judaism is the best good news for modern man."

Mr. R.C., Vancouver, Washington, writes "I have long been interested in the Jewish answers and beliefs and would like to thank you for the opportunity to direct (questions) to a Jewish source."

Mr. S.A., Vancouver, Washington, writes "I recently read a pamphlet which was loaned to me. This publication advertised a questionnaire called Discovering Myself. Please send me a copy."

Mr. A.K., Portland, Oregon, writes "I would like to become a Jew."

Mr. M.M., Anaheim, California, writes "I have discovered a great love for Judaism....I am very seriously considering becoming a convert to Judaism."

Mr. J.B., Burlingame, California, writes he recently discovered his natural father was Jewish and asks "Please help me make a start back to the 'religion of our fathers' for which I shall be most grateful."

These are only some of the more than 30 responses we received from this single classified advertisement. It cost only \$7.20. Although we do not equate human responses with dollars and cents, the results none-the-less provide a measure of the intensity of current and potential interest in conversion to Judaism.

"To Serve Non-Jews and Jews Interested in Judaism"

originals on pink paper

Note the thrust of this classified ad
I placed in a monthly publication. It does
not proselytize; it simply offers information.
It eventually pulled about 50 replies.
In part because of my correspondence with
some of them, I have reason to believe
5-7 actually converted to Judaism.





National Jewish Hospitality Committee

and Information Centers
437 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19106

Telephone 215-925-1951

PRESIDENT

Rabbi Allen Maller, Culver City

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Steven Jacobs, Philadelphia

A SOLUTION: THE NATIONAL JEWISH HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

Is the NJHC an answer to the problem of intermarriage which now besets the Jewish community? The best proof that it is comes from the rabbis themselves. Here are excerpts from a few of the many unsolicited written comments received and in our A-through-F files:

Rabbi M.A., Miami Beach, writes: "I eagerly look forward to its (the NJHC's) success."

Rabbi D.B., Allentown, Pennsylvania, writes: "I was thrilled with the extent of your growth (and) hope and pray (it) will become an ever more significant part of Jewish life."

Rabbi B.B., Forest Hills, New York, writes: "I believe the overall goal and your method of procedure altogether commendable."

Rabbi M.C., New York City, writes: "I would like to commend you for your efforts and for the creation of a much needed vehicle for the preservation of the faith."

Rabbi L.C., Freeport, New York, writes: "I do hope you will include me in all your future endeavors."

Rabbi D.E., Satellite Beach, Florida, writes: "You may use my name and materials in connection with your very important endeavor."

Rabbi J.E., Kingston, New York, writes: "I think you and Rabbi Allen Maller are doing a fine job."

Rabbi S.E., Alexandria, Virginia, writes that if the NJHC "can do no more than to change the image of Judaism from one that is opposed to converts to a faith that welcomes inquiry about our faith, then we will be able to say 'Dayenu.'"

Rabbi T.F., Jerusalem, ISRAEL, writes: "I heartily endorse the purpose of the organization."



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Steven Jacobs, Philadelphia

I wrote this
- Steve

EXAMPLES OF JEWISH HOSPITALITY

The following are two actual examples of Jewish hospitality in action. Mrs. A.W. of Huntington, West Virginia, who was born a Jew, and Ms. S.S. of the same city and a convert to Judaism, are members of a community which presently is attempting to combine its Conservative and Reform congregations into one. The local Jewish population is small and includes people living in neighboring Ohio.

Mrs. W. voluntarily acts as a kind of one-person hospitality committee for her congregation. Whenever newcomers to the Jewish community (which often means someone who is a convert or prospective convert to Judaism) makes contact with the rabbi, she acts as unofficial hostess and guide. She invites them into her home, often to have a meal with her and her husband. She often accompanies them to synagogue and introduces them to the congregation members. In short, she makes the newcomers feel welcome and at home.

Ms. S. also acts as a one-person hospitality committee but in a slightly different way. Occasionally she takes the initiative and invites a non-Jewish friend to Sabbath services. She does so without ulterior motives except to serve as a goodwill ambassador for the Jewish community by letting her non-Jewish friends know they are welcome to attend services and to learn about Judaism.

Here are two informal examples of what the NATIONAL JEWISH HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE is all about. What the NJHC is trying to do --with your cooperation and support--is make the Hospitality Committee concept a continuing, meaningful activity in every Jewish community.

Recommended readings which may be ordered through the NJHC, 437 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106:

Answers to Questions About the National Jewish Hospitality Committee
Discovering Myself! confidential questionnaire and Jewish Responses to it
A Brief Historical Survey of Conversion to Judaism
Our Choice news bulletin
Educational Series (various)
The Becoming of Ruth, by Nancy McMurray (\$4.95 + 35¢ postage)
Conversion to Judaism: A History and Analysis, by David Max Eichhorn
(\$5.95 + 35¢ postage)

Note: Single copies of the above publications are FREE except where noted.

"To Serve Non-Jews and Jews Interested in Judaism"

or signals on blue paper



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- Steve*

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INTRODUCING THE NJHC....

About one of every three Jews now marries someone of non-Jewish origin according to a recent study.* This means that every second marriage is an "intermarriage" to use the common term. As a result, one of every two prospective new family memberships in Jewish congregations involves a spouse of non-Jewish origin. If the average congregation is to remain viable, it is necessary that this ratio be reflected in its own new members.

The National Jewish Hospitality Committee was founded to respond to this situation, which is compounded by the negative birth rate of and increased apostasy from the Jewish community.

The NJHC has over 100 Conservative, Orthodox-ordained, Reconstructionist and Reform rabbis on our Rabbinic Board, some of whom are not shown to the left. We have a growing number of Jewish lay people who are participating, including many of non-Jewish origin.

The Committee's chief goals are to develop the full potential of involvement in Jewish community life by husbands and wives of non-Jewish origin, to retain the Jewishness of their offspring, and to assist those people interested in Judaism for non-marital reasons whether for conversion or not.

The NJHC has no policies with regard to proper conversion procedures, congregation membership qualifications, or related matters. These are subjects for the individual rabbis, congregations and religious organizations. We seek to utilize and support the established religious and communal institutions where possible.

Our programmatic approaches basically are three-fold: the development of local Hospitality Committees, Jewish information centers, and the kind of information and publicity which serves our goals.

The NJHC seeks to find and encourage support of and cooperation from individuals and organizations, both religious and communal, within the Jewish community.

Sincerely,
Steven S. Jacobs
Steven S. Jacobs
Executive Director

*American Jewish Yearbook (1973), page 295, Table I

"To Serve Non-Jews and Jews Interested in Judaism"

original on green paper



National Jewish Hospitality Committee
and Information Centers
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Philadelphia, Pa. 19106

Telephone 215-925-1951

*I wrote this
- Steve*

PRESIDENT
Rabbi Allen Mailer, Culver City

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Steven Jacobs, Philadelphia

STATISTICAL BACKGROUND: According to the study published in the 1973 American Jewish Yearbook, 30% of all Jews marrying between 1966-1972 married someone of non-Jewish origin. In other words, approximately 50% or half of all marriages involving Jews during this period were mixed or intermarriages according to this analysis. These figures include civil and religious marriages.

PROBLEM FOR THE SYNAGOGUE: Now that the current intermarriage rate is about 50%, the synagogues must reflect this in their new memberships (or affiliations) if they are to remain viable and to meet their Jewish community responsibilities. This situation is compounded by the negative birth rate and sharply increased divorce rate among Jews.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NATIONAL JEWISH HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE:

1. Does the NJHC advocate or engage in proselytizing?

No! As a practical matter, about 90% of the non-Jews involved are in marital situations with Jews. Certainly, efforts to obtain their commitment to have Jewish homes and to raise their children as Jews does not constitute proselytizing. As for the others, the roughly 10% who inquire about Judaism for non-marital reasons, there is no attempt to convert them, only to provide them with the kind of information which they seek whether they wish it for purposes of conversion or not.

2. Does the NJHC encourage intermarriage?

No! Intermarriage is a statistical reality in the American Jewish community today. The NJHC was founded to provide some systematic, programmed responses. In the 1950's, many Jewish girls had sexual liaisons out of wedlock with black (and white) men. The only segment of the Jewish community to make any concerted effort to save the illegitimate children (of these Jewish mothers) for Judaism were certain groups of Hasidic Jews. Such concern on their part did not mean these Hasidic groups condoned illegitimate liaisons or births out of wedlock.

3. Does the NJHC segregate converts to Judaism?

No! On the contrary, the NJHC is comprised of both born-Jews and converts to Judaism. The president and executive director both are born-Jews. The purpose of the NJHC simply is to deal with the problems of "intermarriage and conversion to and from Judaism" in programmatic ways. Those who choose to participate are not precluded or prevented from participating in other Jewish communal and religious activities. On the contrary, the NJHC seeks cooperation with other Jewish organizations to encourage broader Jewish involvement by those who participate. The NJHC follows traditional Jewish practice insofar as Jews with common backgrounds and experiences have had organizations to represent and deal with their particular needs and concerns.

Are Your Children Immune From the Missionaries?

by Steven S. Jacobs

SO YOU THINK your son or daughter, or grandson or granddaughter, is too smart to get involved with the missionaries!

As an adult Jew who personally has rescued (deprogrammed) a number of Jewish young people from the clutches of the fundamentalist Christian missionaries, I can assure you the most vulnerable are those with above-average intelligence who are philosophically inclined. In fact, the missionaries have captured the minds and souls of some of Jewry's brightest youth with the greatest leadership potential.

In this age of assimilation, when the mores of Jews have moved ever closer to the American norms, as manifested by the increased use among Jews of drugs and alcohol, the rising divorce rate, intermarriage and the like, there has been a commensurate increase in apostasy and the missionary activities linked to much of it.

Not Just Cults

And it is not just the cults like the Reverend Moon's Unification Church or the Divine Light Mission of the so-called Guru Maharaj Ji that have won and continue to win the spiritual allegiance of flocks of young Jews. In Philadelphia, my hometown, as an example, the very respectable, establishment United Presbyterian Church operates a mission to Jews in the heart of its center city. Similar missions aimed exclusively at Jews are operated here by the Assemblies of God,

the Mennonites, the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, and several independent missions including the American Board of Missions to the Jews with its \$2 million annual budget.

Here is what happened to one family in Philadelphia, so don't be too certain it could not happen to yours. Evelyn, a young woman in her mid-20's, was invited by a neighbor to attend a social function held by a nearby Baptist church. Although married, she is a shy girl, lacking a structured social life. She purposely was introduced to several church members of Jewish origin, including a professional missionary to Jews named Rosenthal. After being suitably "love bombed" and made to feel wanted socially, she was invited and began to attend the church's bible school. Within six months, she was converted much to the distress of her husband and parents.

What happened next? It was not long before she had managed to get both her husband and older sister involved with the missionaries and within three months they, too, had undergone baptism into the Christian faith. Evelyn's four-year-

Mr. Jacobs is executive director of the National Jewish Hospitality Committee, which was founded to deal with problems like those described in this article. See photo on page 12. He is available for personal consultation and for lectures on the subject of missionaries and missionary cults. He can be contacted through the NFTB Lecture Bureau or at Box 1404, Philadelphia, Pa. 19015, or (215) 546-8293 evenings.

old daughter now attends the Baptist nursery school at this church and both she and her husband spend their spare time trying to proselytize other Jews.

The missionaries are salespeople, it is true. But don't deceive yourself into thinking they are not sincere. All the missionaries I ever met, amateur or professional, are totally dedicated to their cause. They are willing to spend every spare moment of every day plowing the fields for a Jewish harvest.

How They Operate

Here is an example of how they operate. The Christian and Missionary

Alliance Church, a small zealously fundamentalist Protestant church group with two congregations in the Philadelphia area, sponsors basketball and baseball teams in season. They specialize in recruiting teen-age Jewish boys with offers of free equipment, free coaching and scheduled games. The coach is himself an apostate Jew from an Orthodox background who simply goes to the neighborhood schoolyard and ball park for his recruits.

The parents are unaware of the sponsorship of the teams, because the missionary portrays himself strictly as a Jew.

(Continued on page 21)

Brotherhood

Vol. XI, No. 1 September-October, 1977

Official publication of the NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE BROTHERHOODS. Sponsors of the JEWISH CHAUTAUQUA SOCIETY, founded in 1893 by Rabbi Henry Berkowitz. An affiliate of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

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Cover Art

Elder with Torah.

Lithograph hand-painted by Seymour Rosenthal, artist of the Jewish people. See Page 12.

Holiday Calendar

September 13	Rosh Hashanah
September 22	Yom Kippur
September 27	Sukot
October 4	Shemini Atzeret Simchat Torah

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Mail Bag



Chicago College Youth Plan

Werner Heymann, chairman, of the NFTB College Youth Committee, has worked tirelessly during the past few years to create programming of Jewish value and content for our college youngsters in the Chicago area. We owe him a debt of gratitude for his devotion and dedication to this program.

I write to endorse the Chicago Plan and to urge the leaders of our UAHC regions to join together with NFTB leaders for the purpose of creating similar regional programs for Reform college youth. This is a most worthy undertaking to help our young people express their Judaism in a manner near and dear to their hearts.

Through the cooperation of our regions, our Youth Division College Education Department and the NFTB College Committee, I am confident each and every region of the UAHC can provide meaningful Reform Jewish experiences for our youngsters at colleges and universities throughout this land.

*Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
UAHC President*

Deal WITH Mixed Marriages

I read the article titled "Realities of the Mixed Marriage—How To Deal With It?" in your January-February issue.

What makes our Jewish leaders think they are dealing with it? It appears to me there is a great deal of talk and not enough action.

Deal with it by not losing interest before and after the wedding. Invite the couples to religious services, Bible classes and young couples' club meetings. Have informal classes on understanding Judaism.

Welcome these young people into Judaism; make them feel wanted. Take a special interest in them. Teach them to live with, enjoy, love and cherish Judaism.

I am a voice of experience. Thank God, our family has a marvelous rabbi, teacher and friend. Through him our mixed marriage has produced three generations active in our Judaism. Our rabbi acted and didn't just talk.

He dealt with it. As one partner of a mixed marriage, I'm pleading with the Jewish leaders of today and tomorrow to act in favor of mixed marriages to help Judaism to survive.

*Mrs. Herman A. Kerngood
Baltimore*

NFTB Helped Get Job and Home

I wish to express our sincere thanks to you for the kindness which you showed to us when we were in New York. The names and addresses of temple brotherhood leaders in Toronto, which you gave to me, proved to be most fruitful. As a result, I obtained employment. We managed to obtain a very nice town house in a beautiful complex of 300 units, 40 of which are occupied by fellow South Africans. The response which I received from brethren whom I phoned was absolutely tremendous, and I feel that it goes a long way to show that members of the Brotherhood are brothers in the strict sense of the word.

Ralph Newstadt

The Jewish Family

In Sylvan Lebow's article on the Jewish Family in the January-February issue, there is a great deal of emphasis on programs. Perhaps Jewish leaders who are concerned with the loneliness and alienation of the individual ought to visit congregations other than their own for an *Oneg Shabbat*.

*Betty Lauer
White Plains, N.Y.*

March-April Cover

As a member of the Springhill Avenue Temple Brotherhood, and as one who is interested both in early Mobile Jewish history and the Mobile silversmith, J. Conning, I was fascinated to see the picture on the March-April cover of *Brotherhood Magazine* portraying a Kiddush cup. I own a Conning cup with an identical handle, but it has no decoration, and I have never seen one with Jewish motifs, although our local museums have a number of pieces of Conning silver.

Our Congregation, Shaarai Shomayim, was founded in 1841, although there were a number of Jewish families here prior to that date, which makes the item of particular interest.

*Edwin A. Zelnicker, Jr.
Mobile, Alabama*

In the 1970 *HUC Annual* you will find an extensive study by me of the earliest Jews in Mobile. Is anything known about the former ownership of this cup? I would like very much to track it down.

*Rabbi Bertram W. Korn
Keneseth Israel Temple, Elkins Park, Pa.*

Likes JCS Speakers

Our campus welcomed two speakers from the Jewish Chautauqua Society this year—Rabbis Arnold Shevlin and Milton Richman. Both speakers were excellent. They knew their subject and presented it clearly and effectively. There was a good interchange in the question period. We appreciate very much your making these speakers available to us. They have contributed to enriching the educational experience on this campus. We shall be submitting separately a request for books to be added to our library from your annotated bibliography.

*Basil Karp
Associate Professor of Political Science
Pennsylvania State University, Dunmore*

Likes JCS Spot Films

We have a print of your spot film, "The Need to Be Free," on Chanukah. It runs at least twice a week, usually on Saturday during cartoon rotations, to reach the children and youth. Send me more spots produced by your group and we will play them.

*Mariellen Smith
KOTV, Tulsa*

Clergy Institute

Thank you for including me in the Interfaith Clergy Institute on "Church and Synagogue Art and Architecture in the 70's and Beyond," which you sponsored. I found the program extremely worthwhile and interesting and I greatly enjoyed the fellowship.

*Rev. Byron P. Brought
Salem United Methodist Church, Baltimore*

Montreal Chapel Photo

In your May-June issue you published a photograph of the menorah sculpture and ark of the chapel at Temple Emanu-El, Montreal. Kindly permit me to correct the credits. The overall design of the chapel, including the ark, was by Eliasoph, Berkowitz, Cohen & Berns, Architects; menorah sculpture by Esther Wertheimer; ark curtain by Tziporah Levy and stained glass windows by Pierre Osterrath.

*Marcus M. Berns
Montreal*

CHILDREN IMMUNE

(Continued from page 5)

What they also don't know is that their sons are required to attend Bible lessons given by the missionary after every practice session or game. The kids in turn don't dare tell their parents, because they

don't take the lessons seriously at first and therefore figure there is no sense worrying mom and dad.

But unknown to the kids, the missionary uses this time to learn more about his Jewish charges. He gets to know their personalities, their family backgrounds, the extent of their religious educations, their fears and aspirations and other factors he wants to know. In short, he begins to zero in on those who are most susceptible. Perhaps a kid is unhappy at home or having fights with his parents. Maybe he is lonely or lacks a structured social life. Chances are he is intellectually curious, but without the mental resources to challenge the missionary's line of empiric reasoning.

Even though these sports activities represent but a temporary interest to most of the Jewish boys, the missionary's own game plan is to play the percentages. The result is that in Philadelphia the mission currently has some thirty youthful Jewish apostates under its control.

How To Prevent It

What can you do to prevent your child from getting involved with the missionaries? First, be aware the problem exists and admit to yourself that it could strike your home. Maintain a Jewish home where everyone participates in Jewish life together. Try to avoid a Jewish generation gap. Be firm, caring and reasonable in your relations with your children, and of course let there be lots of love.

Keep the closest possible track of your child's friends and social activities. Watch for unusual changes in habits, interests, grades and friends. Take notice of the books and literature your son or daughter brings home. Learn more about your own Jewish religion. And contact your rabbi at the first sign of trouble ahead. In short, be a missionary for Judaism where your kids are concerned.

March 29, 1979

Mr. Steven S. Jacobs
201 South 13th Street
Apt. #1519
Philadelphia, PA. 19103

Dear Mr. Jacobs:

Your recent letter to Rabbi Schindler was received during his absence. As he is not due back in the office for a week or ten days I am taking the liberty of responding in his behalf.

In accordance with the Resolution passed by the Board of the UAHC in December, a Task Force on Outreach has been named. The chairman and staff director are now planning for the first meeting of the Task Force. I am sharing your letter and the various documents attached thereto with our staff director so he may be apprised of your concern and your interest in the work of the Task Force.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Edith J. Miller
Assistant to the President

Apartment 1519
201 South 18th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

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

Dear Alexander:

Everybody seems to think you want Jews to proselytize!

Of course I know better--because I'm familiar with and sensitive to the nuances. Read the enclosed bulletin carefully. I never had a single complaint from anyone, not even the over 100 rabbis on our Rabbinic Board who received copies of it.

I recently addressed an audience of over 300 at a meeting sponsored by the Men's Club of a local Reform congregation. The rabbi previously had told them he was against your proposal. But when I explained to them what you really meant, they seemed to understand and approve. At least, these were the comments I received from some of those who previously were confused or held negative opinions about your proposal.

If you want to give more than just lip service to the need for outreach to non-Jews, let's you and me get together at your office. I can put together a program which will be acceptable to almost everybody but the most orthodox--and such program can be largely self-funding.

With my best personal regards. I wait for your reply.

Sincerely yours,



Steven S. Jacobs

P.S.: Talk to Tillie Ginsberg about my reputation as a public speaker. I'm a Chataqua Society speaker on the subject of missionaries and cults.

P.P.S.: Incidentally, the booklet the UAHC published about how to answer the Christian missionaries is, in my opinion, the work of an amateur, or the work of someone who has never engaged in deprogramming or missionary-encounter work with any regularity. For example, the single-most important Bible chapter ~~xxxxxxx~~ used by the Christian missionaries to convert Jews is Isaiah 53. Yet, the UAHC booklet glosses over it.



National Jewish Hospitality Committee
and Information Centers
437 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19106

Telephone 215-925-1951

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Rabbi Martin Zion, New York

Hi,

I'm Nancy McMurray, author and illustrator of The Becoming of Ruth--a kind of children's book for adults which tells why I chose to convert to Judaism. I've spoken to Jewish and Gentile audiences, and I'm on the editorial board of OUR CHOICE, a new publication for anyone who's interested in Judaism. It's a fascinating bulletin put out by the National Jewish Hospitality Committee, an organization of friendly rabbis and laymen and women.

I'm enclosing a complimentary copy of OUR CHOICE for your reading pleasure--and for your comments if you have any. It needs the guidance of friends like you.

We serve not only Jews-by-choice and Jews-by-birth, but others who are interested in Judaism because of marriage or other personal reasons. Our purpose is not to convert, but to inform in hopes of building bridges of greater understanding.

I hope you'll write me if you have any particular comments or questions. Thanks.

Cordially,

(Ms.) Nancy McMurray

"To Serve Non-Jews and Jews Interested in Judaism"



OUR CHOICE

Dedicated to the Universal Spirit of Judaism



VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1

Dear Marcia



Marcia Falconer is a convert to Judaism. For a personal reply to your question, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Dear Marcia, Box 404, Philadelphia, Pa. 19105.

Dear Marcia--I'm interested in learning more about Judaism. Any helpful information would be welcome. H.A., Florida. Dear H.A.--A good introduction to Jewish philosophy and religion can be found in *Basic Judaism* by Milton Steinberg (publisher: Harcourt, Brace). The *Guide for the Jewish Homemaker* by Levi and Kaplan (Schocken Paperback) gives a good insight into traditional home observances including holidays, milestones in Jewish life, and Jewish heritage. In addition, the NJHC has introductory literature about Judaism.

Dear Marcia--A friend of mine, a Seventh Day Adventist, claims the Hebrew word for God is plural and refers to the Trinity. C.R., Washington. Dear C.R.--The plural word for God (Elohim) is used in the Bible. Dr. David Cooper, a conservative Christian theologian, explains in his *God of Israel* that "In the (ancient) Semitic world such usage of the plural form of excellency, majesty, etc., was common when subjects addressed their king or at times spoke concerning him." The word is used with a singular verb or adjective which makes it singular and denotes magnitude or majesty in Hebrew.

Dear Marcia--I converted to Judaism two years ago and my mother-in-law still refuses to believe I'm Jewish. Except for this, we have a good relationship. M.D., New York. Dear M.D.--It probably will be possible to convince your mother-in-law verbally. She still sees you as a member of the non-Jewish world. Your best bet is to live quietly as a Jew. Become active in Jewish community organizations that interest you. Invite your in-laws for Sabbath dinner and light the Sabbath candles, etc. It may take a long time but eventually she will be very proud of her Jewish daughter-in-law.

I'm Still Christian

The words "mixed" and "interfaith" generally apply to married couples who retain their separate religious identities: Baptist and Catholic, Jewish and Lutheran, etc.

Some reasons for retaining separate religious identities are practical as where parental health is concerned. Others may not be practical, especially where the upbringing of children are concerned.

Many times the non-Jewish partner is reluctant to embrace Judaism because of misconceptions which the Jewish spouse is unwilling or unable to correct. Often a seemingly unpleasant or unsatisfactory encounter with a rabbi or congregation is the reason.

If you are a partner in a mixed or interfaith marriage, we'd like to hear from you.

A Letter to Readers

News Bulletin Is For Hindus & Moslems Too!

Dear Friend: You don't have to be Jewish to love rye bread, and you don't have to be Jewish to read this *OUR CHOICE* news bulletin.

This periodical is not only for Jews-by-birth and Jews-by-choice. It's also for those who haven't yet or never will embrace Judaism.

If this news bulletin gives you some insights into the universal nature and spirit of Judaism -- and the Jewish People -- it will serve its purpose.

I hope you enjoy reading it. If you feel moved to write, or want to submit an article or story, do so!

Sincerely,
Rabbi Allen Maller
President, NJHC



SHALOM

CINCINNATI SURVEY SHOWS

Many Conversions Not For Marriage

By MAURICE SCHAPIRO

CINCINNATI — A surprising phenomenon not heretofore suspected is shown by a survey among the local rabbinate of the conversions to Judaism performed in the past year. Almost all of the local rabbis who were contacted said that a goodly number of those they converted were not for the purpose of marriage to a Jew.

RABBI ALBERT GOLDMAN of Isaac M. Wise Temple, and his associate, Rabbi Leonard Troupp, reported 13 conversions in the 1973-74 year compared to eight in 1972-73 year. Most of them were not for the purpose of marriage.

Rabbi Harold D. Hahn, of Rockdale Temple, Amberley Village, Cincinnati suburb, reported a slight increase in conversions at his temple in the past year compared to the previous year and most of them were not for purposes of marriage.

RABBI SOLOMON Greenberg of Valley Temple, Wyoming, says he had five conversions last year compared to two the year before and all were for the purpose of marriage.

Rabbi Fishel Goldfeder of Adath Israel Congregation, Amberley Village, largest Conservative congregation serving the Cincinnati area, reported about 12 converts both last year and the year before. He presides over a Beth Din for the actual ceremony.



Vincent Ginn, 3½, attends Temple Beth Sholom Pre-School in Las Vegas, Nevada, while his brother, Pat, Jr., 6, is a second-year student at Albert Einstein Hebrew Day School.

EDITORIAL

Should Synagogues Encourage Non-Jews To Affiliate?

Membership qualifications vary widely from congregation to congregation. The constitutions of many grant full or associate memberships to non-Jews, especially those married to Jews. Where they do not, it often is a case of a constitution written before intermarriage became an important factor in American and Canadian Jewish life. The National Jewish Hospitality Committee has conducted no polls so a precise congregation count is not available.

Rabbi Jerome Pine indicates his Decatur, Illinois congregation makes non-Jews "welcome" with the result those in mixed marriages "have become quite receptive. . . and if not openly converting, then at least openly affiliating with us and involving themselves (and their children) in many of our temple activities."

The NJHC has no formal policies about congregation membership requirements. This is a matter for the individual congregation to decide. The question none-the-less remains. Is it desirable to encourage or permit non-Jewish affiliation in Jewish congregational life?

NOTE: Editorial comments do not necessarily represent the views or policies of the NJHC or any individuals associated therewith.



Special Thanks For Permissions

SPECIAL THANKS for permission to reprint articles and photos from Leon Brown's *Philadelphia Jewish Times*, Gabriel Cohen's *Jewish Post & Opinion*,

David Horowitz's *United Israel Bulletin*, Jack Tell's *Las Vegas Israelite*, and the *Phila. Jewish Exponent*.

'A Feeling of Belonging'

Sparked by Visit to Israel

"Everybody's working, everybody's building for the future; there's no time to look at people's color," Mrs. Cornelia Tutt says.

Mrs. Tutt, a black convert to Judaism, who lives in Chestnut Hill, described her emotions after visiting Israel — "I got a different feeling there, a feeling that I belonged."

A member of the recent Operation Israel mission for women, Mrs. Tutt said she was so inspired by what she saw that she pledged the entire year's bonus from her job as an operating room technician for a local otologist to the Allied Jewish Appeal-Israel Emergency Fund.

"We visited a Malben home and spoke to the residents, who included a 100-year-old man whose 70-year-old son had recently moved in. Everyone who could was busy working, doing something useful, and not feeling as though they had been shunted away and forgotten."

Border Kibbutzim

"When we visited a kibbutz on the border, I was very moved by the underground shelters where the children sleep every night and, as a mother myself, I could feel the terrible concern of the parents for their little ones."

Mrs. Tutt, whose daughter is now grown, said that if she had



Mrs. Cornelia Tutt, a member of Germantown Jewish Centre who participated in the recent "Operation Israel" mission

young children she would send them to Israel. "Children there are too busy to get into trouble caused by idleness," she said.

"I became a convert to Judaism about 10 years ago when, as a Sunday school teacher, I wanted to learn more about biblical history. I went to the Rabbinical Center, which was then around 17th and Walnut Sts., and after I read quite a bit, I decided to convert. I belong to Germantown Jewish Centre and I love it there."

Meet The Editorial Board

The advisory Editorial Board of *OUR CHOICE* news bulletin is comprised of a broad cross-section of men and women in the Jewish community. Of the sixteen who now serve, 50 per cent are Jews-by-choice and the other half, Jews-by-birth. There are black, white and yellow Jews; single, intermarried and divorced Jews; and Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist and Reform Jews on the Editorial Board. They live in California, Louisiana, Florida, Virginia, New Jersey, New York and elsewhere. They are of all ages and backgrounds, and all are "committed" Jews.

Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, editor, *Reconstructionist*; Rabbi J.S. Gallinger, editor, *Jewish Monitor*; Rabbi Robert Gordis, editor, *Judaism*; Rabbi Allen Maller, president, NJHC; Rabbi Hiroshi Okamoto, university religion professor; Dan Cusenbery, professional editor, journalist, scriptwriter; Mrs. Marcia Falconer, author, biologist, housewife; Steven Jacobs, executive director, NJHC; Mrs. Sheryl MacIntosh, Jewish affairs, housewife; Thomas MacIntosh, synagogue officer, contractor; Ms. Nancy McMurray, author, lecturer, school art teacher; John Park, college div. chmn., music professor, cantor; Bernard Postal, editor, *Jewish Digest*; Alvin Sandberg, college English professor, Jewish affairs; Eric Truehill, student, college newspaper editor; Ms. Doris Williams, Jewish affairs, business, homemaker.



McKenna Re-Elected President Of National Family Organization

William E. McKenna has been elected to a second term as president of the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies. A funeral director, McKenna is now serving an unprecedented sixth consecutive term as president of the Jewish Family Service of Philadelphia.



William E. McKenna

The AJFCA, now in its second year, is composed of 82 Jewish agencies throughout North America. These agencies served more than one million people last year. Purpose of the organization is to maximize the involvement of lay leaders and professional staff of the member agencies through the exchange of ideas, information, methods and new service developments in meeting the needs of Jewish families and children experiencing social and emotional difficulties.

Re-elected with McKenna were Sidney Busis, Pittsburgh, Henry Goodman, Toronto, and Ron Kaufman, San Francisco, vice presidents; Shelton Weber, Louisville, Ky., secretary; and Phillip Soskis, New York, treasurer.

McKenna has spent more than

half his life in community service. He has broadened the scope of services offered by the JFS agency in Philadelphia and placed the 104-year-old facility into a national prominence. JFS currently operates four service headquarters in the Philadelphia area.

McKenna is president of Joseph Levine & Son, Inc., funeral directors. He was educated in the city's parochial school system and attended Drexel University and St. Joseph's College.

He is on the board of the National Council on Alcoholism and was appointed by Gov. Milton J. Shapp to serve on the state's Southeastern Regional Advisory Board for Aging.

He is a member of the executive committee of the Federation of Jewish Agencies, a member of the FJA's community planning committee and chairman of the Federation's Council for the Aged.

McKenna is a past president and a permanent board member of the Golden Slipper Club and the Golden Slipper Club Camp. He was honored by the organization with its Gold Medallion Award; was recipient of the "Man of the Year" Award of the Jewish War Veterans and is the recipient of the Pop Warner Award. He also received the "Man of the Year" Award of the Mizrahi Women's Organization.

Karen Tells Why She Chose Judaism

"My reasons for converting to Judaism can be simply stated: I married a Jew! That is not to say I wish to convert to marry; rather, I am married and wish to convert none-the-less. I am aware that this explanation does not resound with religious conviction but it's the basic reason for my desire to convert. It has caused me to seek answers in the framework of Judaism, and having found them, has caused me to press on to conversion.

"It was my husband who introduced me to Judaism. I cannot say where I would be without him. Certainly not the Catholic I was raised. I had lost those trappings long ago.

"It is not that my deepest, most basic beliefs have changed. Love of one God, compassion for others, and charity are strong within me. These are Christian

as well as Jewish ideals. It is the tight family kinship to which I turn. It is wondrous that the kindling of the Sabbath candles enables me to share my deepest religious feelings with my family. It is a religious experience that cannot be equalled. Through it we become as one in search of God.

"One could almost say that the appeal of Judaism lies in its expression of the basic nature of religion: the communication with God. My life has changed profoundly, and yet my God remains the same. However, today He is not smothered in Christian trappings, and I am free again to search for and work toward the messianic age.

"In the several years of my marriage I have come to regard myself as a Jew. Each succeed-

cont. page 4 col. 2

Chief Rabbi Was Proselytes' Son

By RABBI A.P. BLOCH

March 19, 1803 — Rabbi Aaron Moses b. Abraham of Amsterdam was laid



Bloch

to rest by the mourning members of Adath eulogizers lauded his deep piety and scholarship. The rabbi was the author of two books, "Melitz Yosher", a commentary on Sephardic rituals, and "Zera Yitzchok", a dissertation on religious philosophy. It was the rabbi's background, however, that was uppermost in the people's minds. His father was a Swedish nobleman who, at the age of 60, had come to Amsterdam with his wife and 12-year-old boy to embrace Judaism.

The boy's Bar Mitzvah disquisition, delivered within the year of his conversion, made a profound impression. When his father died the community assumed responsibility for his education. He soon excelled in Talmud, code and Cabala.

AARON LEARNED the trade of diamond cutting. Failing health forced him to abandon this work and thereafter he concentrated exclusively on his studies. In 1790, he was appointed dayan (rabbinic judge)

and in 1797, he was elected chief rabbi.

IT WAS in the post-Talmudic era that the practice of adopting Hebrew names came into vogue. A 7th century monk who lived in the monastery on Mt. Sinai adopted the name of Abraham upon his conversion. Many proselytes chose the name of Obadiah (Servant of God). A 9th century French deacon adopted the name of Eleazer (God is my helper). An English convert of the 18th century selected the name of Haggai (Festival of the Lord). The name Abraham, however, was the most common choice because Abraham was the first one to forsake his faith and embrace Judaism.

Symbol of Prof. Kutsuji's Institute In Japan



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Two Jewish New Years!

It is appropriate to wish friends and relatives a "good New Year" twice annually using the Jewish calendar. Nisan (March-April) is the first lunar calendar month. It initiates Springtime when nature renews itself. Passover starts Nisan 14th. The seventh month, Tishri (September-October), begins the religious year, a time of spiritual renewal. Because Judaism places prime importance on the religious year, the first day of Tishri is called Rash ha-Shana (Rosh Hashona), which literally means New Year. Originally, this holy day was called Yom Teruah, the Day for Blowing the Shofar, the hollow ram's horn.

NJHC NEEDED, RABBI TELLS CONGREGATION

The following message recently appeared in Temple Adath Israel of Lexington, Kentucky news bulletin:

I have recently become affiliated with a new organization called the National Jewish Hospitality Committee, whose purpose is to "welcome and assist converts to Judaism and serve other non-Jews who for marital or personal reasons have an interest in Judaism."

The Committee was established this past year as an avenue for coming to grips with the increasing number of mixed marriages which are occurring today between Jews and non-Jews. Its chief goal is to "develop the full potential of involvement in Jewish community life by husbands and wives of non-Jewish origin and to accommodate and assist the burgeoning number of people interested in Judaism for reasons besides marriage."

From my experience, on a very limited scale here in Lexington, the effort of this committee is greatly needed. I frequently receive phone calls from persons inquiring about Judaism, and at times even find my calendar becomes quite full with persons seeking this kind of information.

Certainly we should welcome persons whose spiritual quest has led them to Judaism. Judaism has a great deal to offer those who seek our fellowship. If we could start a small chapter of this committee within our congregation, I am sure those who would participate would find it a rewarding experience. If you might be interested in any way, please let me know.

William Leffler
Rabbi

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE NATIONAL JEWISH HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE?

Want free information about the NJHC or a free copy of *OUR CHOICE* news bulletin mailed to a friend or relative? Write to Executive Director, NJHC, Box 1404, Philadelphia, Pa. 19105, or telephone (215) 925-1951.

Who Are The Jewish "People"?

The answer to the question, who are the Jewish "people," seems simple enough on the surface. Most people would answer they are the descendants of the ancient Hebrews.

This simplistic answer, however, is erroneous and misleading according to most contemporary scholars. The fact is that Jews are descendants of many races and nationalities.

Professor Karl Kautsky in his book, *Are the Jews a Race*, summarizes the situation: "A mixed race from the start, the Jews in the course of their migrations have come into contact with a great succession of new races and their blood has become more and more mixed."

Kautsky says elsewhere that "as early as 139 B.C.E. (B.C.) Jews were deported from Rome because they made proselytes in Italy. It is reported from Antioch (in modern Turkey) that the majority of the Jewish congregation were converts to Judaism, not Jews by birth. Conditions must have been similar elsewhere. This fact alone shows the absurdity of the effort to explain

Steven Jacobs

Karen Tells Why

cont. from page 3

ing year has found my home further committed to the Jewish ideal. I have slowly incorporated the Jewish festivals and Shabbat into our home. I have become increasingly aware of the Jewish community around us. The culmination of these beginnings has been this conversion class. Through it I feel that I've earned this right to be called a Jew, and have begun the arduous trek towards further learning and understanding.

"Why have I chosen this particular time to convert? Why have I waited this long? In a word, 'opportunity'. Prior to this time all thoughts of conversion were squelched either by an uncooperative rabbi, or a lack of time I felt should be devoted. The rabbi and the time finally have come together and the conversion that I feel I have worked so long for is about to become a reality. Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe..."

NOTE: Rabbi Barton Lee, Hillel director at Arizona State University, has granted permission to reprint this letter.

Jewish traits on the basis of their race."

The word "Semite" also is a misnomer. The word in its historical context had a "cultural" meaning. Dr. Allen Godbey, Professor of Bible at Duke University, says "there is no such thing as a Semitic race. We use the term to describe a type of language and a sort of culture which we can trace by means of that language."

Even Biblical evidence points to a mixed people from the start. Judah, the son of Jacob, took a Canaanite wife (Genesis 38:2). Joseph married an Egyptian woman (Genesis 4:45). Sampson married a Philistine (Judges 44:25).

What are the Biblical implications of this information? It is obvious that the prophecy of Zechariah 2:15 that "Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and they shall be My people" is a process begun long ago which continues to this day. Isaiah 55:7 reminds us that "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

McMURRAY BOOK HAS ACADEMY AWARD POTENTIAL SAYS SCREENWRITER

San Francisco--Dan Cusenbery, screenwriter for major Hollywood motion picture and television producers, says a film using the artwork and text of *The Becoming of Ruth* would have "academy award" potential. This hardbound book is both written and illustrated in full color by Nancy McMurray and tells about the spiritual quest which eventually led her to Judaism.

According to Cusenbery, "it treats a profound and difficult theme in an enchanting way, genius in itself, without losing either the message or the entertainment elements." Nancy McMurray was born and raised in Africa, attended Baldwin College and Harvard University, graduating with a master of arts degree in teaching.

The Becoming of Ruth can be purchased through the NJHC, Box 1404, Philadelphia 19105, or directly from Crown Publishers, Inc., New York City, for \$4.95 plus 35c postage. Quantity prices are available through the NJHC upon request.

Compare Your Views With Judaism

Discovering Myself!

Ever wonder how your personal views and beliefs compare with those found in Judaism? The National Jewish Hospitality Committee has prepared two companion publications, the *Discovering Myself!* confidential questionnaire, and the *Jewish Responses* to it. Sample questions include "do you believe sin is inherited?", "do you believe in God?", "do you think an atheist or agnostic can be a good Jew?", and many others. Single copies of these publications are available FREE upon written request. Write to *Discovering Myself*, NJHC, Box 1404, Philadelphia, Pa. 19105, to get yours.

OUR CHOICE
BOX 1404
Phila., Pa. 19105
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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February 6, 1979

Ms. Ellen Z. Charry
2307 N. 50th Street
Philadelphia, PA. 19131

Dear Ms. Charry:

It was thoughtful of you to write and share with me your thoughts on my proposed Outreach Program. I thank you for your kindness and your warm words of support.

While there has been some hostility expressed, you will be interested in learning that the mail response to my Board address is far more positive than I had expected. I have also found that expressions of concern based on the news reports seem to be mitigated once the full text of my address has been read. For your interest, I enclose herewith a copy of my speech and the Resolution passed by the Board of the UAHC.

With repated thanks and every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Encl.

2307 N. 50th st.
Philadelphia, Pa. 19131
January 29, 1979

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

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

I want to congratulate you on your courageous stand in favor of conversion to Judaism. I have been convinced for a long time that we have a good product and that we should sell it.

I also realize that your position is likely to be received with some hostility in some Jewish quarters, and so want to lend my support as a student of Jewish thought and one very interested in the relationship of Judaism to the contemporary world. I am a graduate student in the religion department at Temple University.

2/2/79

Ellen Z. Charry

Ellen Z. Charry