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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES
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Series A: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1961-1996.

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December 31, 1986
29 Kislev 5747

Rabbi Moshe Sherer
Agudath Israel
5 Beekman Street
New York, N.Y. 10038

Dear Colleague:

Some months ago we talked -- at the Regency Hotel and you suggested that we "cool" the mutually recriminating rhetoric. I earnestly tried to do so.

When I returned from Israel a day or so ago, the enclosed was called to my attention. Your words, if accurately quoted, certainly made no contribution toward that end. Do you have even an iota of evidence to support what you attribute to our spokespeople?

I don't mind, indeed, I expect to be opposed on issues on which we disagree -- but these kind of baseless irresponsible attacks are really unacceptable. I hope you will find a way of correcting them.

Cordially,

Alexander M. Schindler

bcc: Mr. Richard Cohen

Battle brews over funds to anti-Zionist yeshivas

By STEWART AIN

Charges that the Reform movement has engaged in a conspiracy with the Jewish Agency to deny funding to yeshivas in Israel that don't recognize the State of Israel were heatedly denied last week by Rabbi Daniel Syme, vice president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

"The energies of the Reform movement are now directed solidly at obtaining a fair allocation from the Jewish Agency for the kibbutzim, schools, settlements and other programs established by the Reform movement for Reform Jews seeking roots in Israel," said Syme. "We have neither the inclination nor the time to enter into any kind of conspiracy against anybody, even anti-Zionist yeshivas."

Syme's comments to the *Jewish World* came in response to allegations by Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president of the Agudath Israel of America, that Reform rabbis have "formed a conspiracy with the leadership of the federations and the Jewish Agency."

He said the conspiracy was an attempt to "blackmail and bludgeon yeshivas in Israel into submission—if they dare consider themselves non-Zionists—to deny them the right of obtaining money from the Jewish charity funds and the Jewish Agency. And now, too, in the United States, this alliance of these so-called leaders is trying to influence the federations to even cut down on

grants to yeshivas."

Sherer's comments regarding the Reform movement were made at his organization's recent national convention. In his remarks, Sherer insisted that "politically-motivated Reform rabbis, because of their sway with those who hold the purse-strings of Jewish charity funds," should not be allowed to decide the fate and policies of yeshivas.

And he expressed confidence that once federation leaders learn the "truth about the role of yeshivas of all types as the primary guarantor of Jewish survival, they will not discriminate against any Torah institutions on the basis of attitudes towards Zionism."

A Reform spokesman, who asked for anonymity, felt that if the Jewish Agency has indeed terminated funding to non-Zionist yeshivas in Israel, "many Reform Jews would applaud that action."

Syme pointed out that these anti-Zionist yeshivas have for years been receiving Jewish communal funds even though they refuse to recognize the State of Israel.

"That fact—indeed the whole system by which the Jewish Agency supports institutions in Israel—should be carefully discussed by the entire community, including Orthodox spokesmen," Syme suggested. "We would welcome a discussion with Rabbi Sherer, and all movements of the Jewish people, of the principles that determine the allocation of such support."

Sherer spoke of Reform rabbis who, like pied pipers, lead "innocent, unwary" secular Jewish leaders "down a road of spiritual disaster." To illustrate, Sherer quoted the director of the UAHC's National Interreligious Affairs Department as saying that Reform rabbis who become involved with the "Jews for Jesus movement should not be excluded as Reform rabbis."

"And he went on to say, 'I would not throw him out as a rabbi; after all, the Reform movement has rabbis who are atheists and agnostics and homosexuals. Should we throw them out? Where would we stop?'"

Denies Statement

The Reform spokesman rebutted Sherer's attack, pointing out that the director of the agency to whom Sherer referred is not a man but a woman, Annette Daum, and that she never made any such comments.

The spokesman was incensed by Sherer's comment that there are leaders of the American Jewish community today who "have no right to speak as Jewish leaders, especially those who dare speak in the name of *clal Yisroel*, when they personally married non-Jewish women."

The spokesman said that "such wild and irresponsible attacks that accuse without naming the target make no contribution to that calm and loving examination of the issues that should form the standard of discourse to which all rabbis and Jewish community leaders should seek to adhere." □

See p. 8

FROM: Richard Cohen

March 3, 1987

TO: 1. ALEX 5. _____
2. _____ 6. _____
3. _____ 7. _____
4. _____ 8. _____

Please return ()
Your action ()
Your files ()
For your info ()
Let's discuss ()

Remarks:

Here are some suggestions for a reply to Rabbi Sherer.

Dear Moshe:

Please forgive this belated reply to your letter of January 5. ~~As you may know,~~
I have been traveling quite a ^{lot} ~~bit~~ in recent ^{months, Indeed I} ~~weeks~~, and have ~~just~~ returned from
^{only a day ago.} ~~several weeks in Israel.~~ It was simply impossible for me to devote the necessary
attention to a reply until just now.

I'm afraid that the "evidence" you cite in your letter is really not more
than an iota. The clipping from the American Examiner of April 9, 1978 is nearly
nine years old, and Rabbi Balfour Brickner, who is quoted in that story, has not
been the director of our interreligious affairs commission for nearly that length
of time. As you know, some years ago he left the UAHC to become the rabbi of the
Stephen Wise Free Synagogue. Many of us (myself included) were embarrassed by
his foolish statement quoted in the 1978 story that you submitted as "evidence."
In any case, we were not responsible for his statement then and we certainly cannot
be held as responsible for it now. Really, you must offer something stronger than
that. I am certain that I could find equally preposterous statements from officers
of the Agudath Israel of America, but I would not think of holding you or the
Agudath movement to be bound by it or even agreeing with it -- especially if the
spokesman cited had left your movement some years ago. *We should judge each
other by our aspirations, not our foibles.*

The clipping you submit from the Jewish Advocate of Boston is of course a
more serious matter. But here, if you will forgive me, I think you miss the point.
If you had read Rabbi Menitoff's remarks with that measure of human sympathy and
understanding that has endeared you to so many people in our community -- including
many Reform Jews -- I think you would have found it to be what it was intended --
brutally
a honest cri de coeur, a courageous admission of a condition that exists in Reform
synagogues -- and (although Rabbi Menitoff was too polite to mention it) among Jews
of many other denominational persuasions. That too many Reform Jews do not believe
and find difficulty in praying I admit. That this condition is limited to members
of Reform synagogues I would vehemently deny; and I ask you to look into your own
heart, and those of your fellow Agudath members, and ask: Who among us has not

voiced doubt -- either aloud or in the silent reaches of the heart. ~~It was Alfred Lord Tennyson, I believe, who wrote more than 100 years ago: "There lives more faith in honest doubt, / "Believe me, than in half the creeds."~~ You will tell me, ~~correctly, that Maimonides said it better. Agreed!~~

I do not deny that we are deeply concerned in the Reform movement with those in our synagogues who find it difficult to believe and difficult to pray. We are working on it; we are writing books for young people and for adults on how to find God and how to pray. I am neither ashamed nor embarrassed by this; I am proud of it! I pray only that other religious groups within our Jewish community would confront this issue among their members rather than keeping their heads in the sand.

You raise the question of the efforts by Reform Judaism to get a fair shake in allocations of funds for activities in Israel. I respectfully suggest that you have not confronted this issue in your reply, preferring instead to raise the issue of "academic freedom," which of course has no bearing whatsoever on the question. It is not a question of what the so-called "non-Zionist yeshivas" believe but what they do. These institutions reject the Jewish state, denounce the Israeli flag, reject Israeli military service and yet insist that the Jewish world and the Jewish state support them, their students and their right to repudiate the Jewish state. At the same time, these same institutions and their supporters in the United States would deny to Reform-sponsored kibbutzism, schools, synagogues and other institutions their fair shake of funding. *AT ANY RATE, YOU OUGHT TO KNOW THAT I WAS NOT AT ALL INVOLVED EITHER IN THE INITIATION*

You raise the issue of patrilineal descent and charge that unless we abandon this principle the Reform movement "will be responsible for the historic act of cutting the Jewish people into two entities which cannot intermarry." I will not here go into the argument, with which I am sure you are familiar, that holds that patrilineal descent is an ancient and honorable tradition in the Jewish faith -- antedating, in fact, the relatively modern matrilineal principle. I do not believe that the Jewish people will be cut in two, any more than I believe that if women are permitted to serve as rabbis and as cantors, and if men and women are permitted to sit side by side, and if the synagogue accepts civil divorce -- in short, if

ON THE EXECUTION OF THE STATE TO WHICH YOU BELONG

we give halacha a vote but not a veto -- the Jewish people will be severed. Reform has been around for 100 years now. I believe profoundly that Reform Judaism has prevented the loss of millions of our people to Christianity or to no religion at all. And that is so because Reform has demonstrated that Judaism is a living faith, not frozen in some time-frame of 18th-century Poland, or 15th-century Spain, or earlier Babylon or even Jerusalem. If ours is the living God, Judaism must be a living faith, one that people of this day and this age can find solace and inspiration in -- as our people have done through the ages.

Reform does not reject change in Jewish practice, but we do insist that any such changes must be born of necessity and conviction. The patrilineal decision was a principled assertion of the equality of men and women and a response to the anguish of children who considered themselves Jewish but were pushed into a no-man's land between Christians and Jews. Please note further that the CCAR resolution adopting the patrilineal decision did not confer Jewishness automatically on any child of a non-Jewish mother and Jewish father, but required that the child be raised Jewishly and undergo certain Jewish rites of passage -- circumcision, Jewish education, bar mitzvah, etc. In this respect, ^{we are much stricter} Reform is more rigorous in its requirements of its members than Jewish tradition, which automatically confers Jewishness on any child of any Jewish mother, regardless of the mother's or child's adherence (or lack of it) to our faith.

In any case, I believe that our disagreements -- Reform vs. Orthodoxy, for example -- have not truly inflamed the passions of the people. The greatest danger arising from our wranglings is not that the Orthodox refuse to recognize Reform conversions but rather that the great mass of unaffiliated Jews will be so put off by what they say that they will say, "A plague on all your houses."

Our problem, then, is to recognize that many of the differences between us are not likely to be resolved. Let us at least come to know and, hopefully, respect one another, ^{and cooperate with one another in the many areas} ~~let us exchange ideas and pulpits, let us study together, let us~~ ^{of our common concern, e.g. Israel, Soviet Jewry etc.} ~~reason together, in the words of the prophet, and discuss ways and means of compre-~~ ^{mise to bring us together.}

MEMORANDUM

From Ms. Edith J. Miller

Date January 13, 1987
12 Tevet 5747

To Mr. Richard Cohen

Copies

Subject

Please let Alex know how you would respond to the enclosed. He will want to answer when he comes back from his travels -- he says Israel, but he may mean California.

Thank you.



LA 1/13/87 - 1/21/87
Israel 2/15 - 3/6/87 before wgs
London after
Paris



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



Agudath
Israel
of America

אגודת ישראל באמריקה

7"03
Office of the President
*Get wide how
he would answer
will do so
when I return
from
Israel*

4 Teves, 5747
January 5, 1987

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

Dear Alex:

I want to acknowledge your letter of December 31 / 29
Kislev.

I have more than "an iota of evidence" to support my
quotation from a statement by a director of the National
Interreligious Affairs Department of the UAHC. Enclosed is a
photostat of a news story which appeared in the American
Examiner, which was the predecessor of the Jewish Week.

In addition, I am enclosing a photostat of a story which
appeared in the Boston Jewish Advocate, where an official of the
UAHC, your own staff member, charges that "sizeable segments of
the lay and rabbinic populations of Reform synagogues do not
believe in G-d."

The new militancy of many within the Reform movement vis a
vis the use of Federation funds is a matter of record. Indeed,
the very article you sent me, while reporting the "heated denial"
of your vice-president, quotes "a Reform spokesman" who applauds
this anti-"non-Zionist yeshiva" campaign. Interestingly, this
spokesman insisted on remaining anonymous; that silence itself
speaks volumes about the credibility of your vice-president's
denial of my charge.

The entire campaign to deny the Jewish charity dollar to
"non-Zionist yeshivos" is a tactic beneath every criticism.
Those same American proponents of this effort would shout blue
murder if anyone would dare to infringe upon academic freedom in
the United States, and deny funding to colleges whose students
are either too liberal or too conservative.

Surely this anonymous "Reform spokesman" would never
countenance denying Jewish communal funds to Hebrew University,
for example, even though that institution has a large number of
Jewish radical leftists and Arab extremists as students.

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
January 5, 1987
Page Two

When I spoke with you some months ago about the rhetoric being utilized, I was referring to such outrageous epithets by Reform leaders against the Orthodox as "Khoumeinis" or being guilty of the "selekzie" process used by the Nazis during the Holocaust. This is not comparable to my portraying to our national convention the ludicrous position of Reform rabbis, many who do not even believe in G-d, promoting the denial of funding to yeshivos, the only guarantor of the continuation of G-d-subservience in the world.

I still feel that the situation in Jewish life has reached a point where, unless your group reverses its position on such issues as patrilineal descent, it will be responsible for the historic act of cutting the Jewish people into two entities which cannot intermarry.

AMERICAN JEWISH

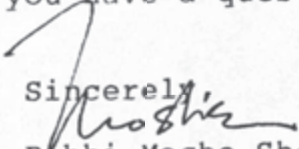
Moreover, I once again urge you, in the spirit of fairness and truth, to use your power in the Reform community to halt the campaign of disinformation being waged to libel Orthodox Jews as refusing to recognize Reform Jews as Jews. The most recent example of this vicious slander appears in the current issue of your publication Arza Newsletter (Winter 1987) which includes a message from the Arza president (Page 3) in which he states: "We shall not allow his kind (the Chief Rabbi) to deny that we are Jews."

You know very well that the Orthodox Jew considers his Reform brother-Jew as much a Jew as himself. The "denial" by the Orthodox relates solely to non-Jewish converts who, in our view, lack the proper credentials to be recognized as Jews. The continuation of this "scare campaign," which has won wide acceptance in Reform Jewish circles, inserts a bizarre false element into the current controversy unworthy of such a serious matter.

The religious situation in the Reform camp is deteriorating at such a rate that unless a man like yourself reverses this speeding train, we are heading for a split within the Jewish community of unprecedented magnitude. I hope that you will take strong action to prevent this historic tragedy before it is too late.

I appreciate your writing me when you have a question.
Regards.

MS/dbj
Enclosures

Sincerely,

Rabbi Moshe Sherer
President

Atheist Rabbis Linked to Low Reform Attendance

By Ben Gallob

A Boston-based Reform rabbinical executive has asserted his conviction that a key reason Reform synagogue sanctuaries are often sparsely attended for wor-

ship on the Sabbath is that "sizeable segments of the lay and rabbinic populations of Reform synagogues do not believe in God."

That evaluation was spelled out by Rabbi Paul Menitoff, regional director of the Northeast Council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the association of American Reform synagogues. Menitoff presented his analysis in a recent issue of the Journal of Reform Judaism.

Menitoff argued that no matter how active a Reform synagogue may be, worship services may not be well attended. He argued that "worship does not attract people; programs at services sometimes do: family nights; Sisterhood/Brotherhood Shabbats; teacher appreciation services; scholar-in-residence lectures; commissioned cantatas; social actions Shabbats — the list is endless."

He declared that in the Reform movement's "abundance of well-attended activities" there is a "dead spot" in most Reform synagogues — the sanctuary when it is being used for worship "for God's sake."

The Reform rabbi said that many Reform Jews can describe themselves as "Kaplanians," for Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionism; or "Buberians," for Martin Buber, the theologian; or as naturalists or existentialists.

He declared that the God of such Jews, "created through mental gymnastics, is a theological construct, not a reality." He asserted that a sanctuary attended by Jews for whom God is "merely a mental mutation, and not a reality, is a sparsely populated place."

Special services and "gimmicks" in sanctuaries cannot be a substitute for God, Menitoff said. "Prayer is communicating with God — not thinking, not meditating with ourselves. God is the object, the recipient of prayer."

Contending that people "cannot pray to theological constructs," he declared that



Paul Menitoff

Jews know this, "at the very least, on an intuitive level. They therefore do other things on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. When God does not attend services, people stay at home."

Asserting that the problem of minimal attendance at worship services could be resolved, Menitoff said the first step was for Reform rabbis to "confront honestly the following questions: Do we really believe in God or are we fooling ourselves? Are we (rabbis) hiding behind theological constructs and rituals while ignoring the issue of God?"

He contended that rabbis avoid talking about God "because they either do not believe in God or they fear they will be considered as hopelessly naive and intellectually unsophisticated."

He added that Reform rabbis "who do not believe in God should leave congregational worship to those who do. To do less is dishonest. Rabbis who do not believe are not helping their people pray; they are at best directing a presentation."

Brickner balks at expulsion of Jews for Jesus

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. — The Reform movement in the United States should not exclude Reform rabbis if they became involved in the "Jews for Jesus" movement, according to Rabbi Balfour Brickner, director of the national department of interreligious affairs of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (Reform).

Speaking as one of a panel of experts at the Brandeis-Bardin Forum on Contemporary Values, Rabbi Brickner said "I would not throw him out as a rabbi. I think such an action by a Reform rabbi is foolish, ludicrous and impossible. He would exclude himself."

Rabbi Brickner said that the Reform movement has rabbis who are atheists and agnostics, and even homosexuals. "Should we throw them out?" he asked. "Where would we stop?"

Ms. Edith J. Miller

Mr. Richard Cohen

January 13, 1987
12 Tevet 5747

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Agudath
Israel
of America

אגודת ישראל באמריקה

7"ב
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
*Ask to see how
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will do so
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4 Teves, 5747
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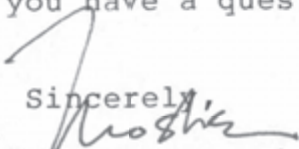
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I appreciate your writing me when you have a question.
Regards.

MS/dbj
Enclosures

Sincerely,

Rabbi Moshe Sherer
President

A/c

April 22, 1986
13 Nisan 5746

Dear Ken:

The copy of the 1910 Silver Anniversary edition of the "Yiddisches Tageblatt" is terrific. Many thanks for your thoughtfulness in sharing this with me, I thoroughly enjoyed reading the paper. The truth of the matter is, there really is nothing new under the sun!

I've sent a copy off to Walter Burzburger and I am certain that he, too, will enjoy perusing these pages.

With thanks and fond good wishes to you and Jean for a very happy and sweet Passover, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Mr. L. Kenneth Rosett
191 Albemarle Road
White Plains, NY 10605

April 22, 1986
13 Nisan 5746

Rabbi Walter S. Wurzbarger
Congregation Shaaray Tefila
Central and Lord Avenues
Lawrence, NY 11559

Dear Walter:

It was a pleasure and a privilege to dialogue with you. I enjoyed the experience very much and I am most admiring of your presentation. You were wonderful.

The enclosed copy from The Jewish Daily News ("Yiddisches Tageblatt") may be of interest to you. Note the date -- March 20, 1910 - Adar II. The grandson of Sarasohn, publisher of the paper, is a member of the Union Board and he shared the copy with me. For the Silber Anniversary of the paper, Sarasohn propounded the question, "Is a Reconciliation Between Orthodoxy and Reform Possible?" He had a long sub-title which included.... "...and By What means Could it be brought about?" He also arranged for responses from Schiff, Kohler and Schechter. I thought you might enjoy perusing these pages. There really is nothing new under the sun!!

Have a sweet and happy Pessach. All good wishes,

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Encl.

L. KENNETH ROSETT
191 ALBEMARLE ROAD
WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK 10605

April 19, 1986

Dear Alex:

Thoroughly enjoyed your dialog with Rabbi Wurzburger at the WUPJ meeting in Toronto last week.

But I did have a minor case of *dejas vu*! If you subtract about 75 years, you will get back to 1910. My grandfather, for the Silver Anniversary of his lead paper, THE JEWISH DAILY NEWS, propounded the question, "Is a Reconciliation Between Orthodoxy and Reform Possible? His subtitle included "... And By What Means Could It Be Brought About?"

Grandpa arranged a "troika", Jacob Schiff as a lay communal leader, Dr. Kaufman Kohler (note he did not use the term rabbi) for Reform and Prof. Solomon Schechter (still not the term rabbi) for Orthodoxy.

Copies of those articles are enclosed. Enjoy.

Sending an extra set. Will appreciate it if you will send it to Rabbi Wurzburger, if you think it might interest him.

A Hag Someach to you and to yours for a Happy Pesach.

B'Shalom,

L. K. Rosett

enclosures

*Thank you
profusely*

*Will send
to Walter*

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Agency
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first 1*

*much
enjoyed*

*Dialoging with
him + I advised
his presentation.*

THE JEWISH DAILY NEWS

("YIDDISCHES TACEBLATT")

VOLUME XXVI., No. 67. NEW YORK, SUNDAY, (ADAR II., 9), MARCH 20, 1910 PRICE, FIVE CENTS.

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

IS A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN
ORTHODOXY AND REFORM POSSIBLE?

SILVER JUBILEE NUMBER

ONE HUNDRED
PAGES

English Section

Simultaneously with the growth of the Jewish community of the United States, problems have kept pace. Important problems, of peculiarly Jewish concern and confronting the Jewish community as a whole, have arisen, having their genesis in the complex and rapid growth of the community. Yet, despite the acuteness and gravity of these problems, no systematic, no statesmanlike efforts have been made to solve, or even to cope with them, owing to the lack of organization, owing to the absence of a common viewpoint.

Two great camps exist in American Israel. And these two camps represent almost diametrically opposing religious opinions, and owe their existence to this very difference of religious opinion. It has been well said that the only bond of union between these two camps, Orthodoxy and Reform, is the thin unifying thread of the belief in the Oneness of God. But this thread is as weak as it is thin, and lacks the power to bind Israel in a common bond of solidarity. Misunderstanding, suspicion, misrepresentation is entertained in the one camp as against the other. Meantime, the problems clamor for solution, and clamor in vain.

THE JEWISH DAILY NEWS has endeavored to ascertain from the leaders and captains of both great camps whether a reconciliation is possible; whether a community of interest cannot be created; whether the much-vaunted but, in truth, hardly existing and rapidly disappearing solidarity in Israel cannot be made a fact in America—a solidarity imperatively necessary for the good of Israel and Israel's future, and for the rendering to this country of the service that can be rendered best and by a people united for the preservation of its own best ideals.

With this in view, and as a service which this Silver Jubilee Number might render to American Jewry, the editors of THE JEWISH DAILY NEWS propounded to the leaders and captains of both great camps the following question:

"IS A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN REFORM AND ORTHODOXY POSSIBLE, AND BY WHAT MEANS COULD IT BE BROUGHT ABOUT?"

We have given to each full freedom to say what is in his heart and mind. We have asked of each to say only that which he believes to be the truth? In the main, the question has been discussed seriously, gravely, though some have stubbornly refused to yield their prejudice. We represent to the Jewish community of the United States the testimony of the leaders and captains. Whether from the wisdom and statesmanlike utterances contained in many of these letters will come an effort to unite the camps, for the good of Israel, depends upon the leaders not so much as upon the rank and file, upon the strong and staunch Jewish hearts enlisted under either one or the other standards, Orthodoxy and Reform.

JACOB H. SCHIFF FOR UNITY!



Calls Upon All to Unite for Preservation of
Jewish Ideals and for Weal of America.

Orthodoxy Must Respect Those Whose Con-
ception Is Liberal.

Reform Must Not Disdain Those Who
Strictly Maintain Traditions of the Fathers.

Americanization Without Loss of Jewishness
Work of "The Jewish Daily News."

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

New York, January 21, 1910.

Messrs. Sarason & Son, Publishers,
JEWISH DAILY NEWS,
185 East Broadway, City.

Dear Sirs:-

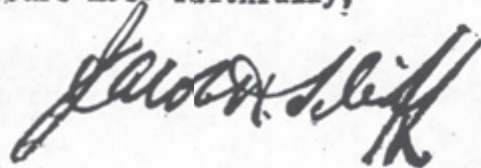
Having learned that your paper will shortly reach
the twenty-fifth anniversary of its existence, I want to tender
to you, as well as to your editors and other collaborators, my
congratulations upon so auspicious an occasion.

I well remember the time, a quarter of a century ago,
not long after the great influx of our Russian co-religionists
had set in, when your paper made its first appearance, and I think
I am justified in expressing the opinion that the rapid Americani-
zation of those who, raised under totally different conditions,
than are prevailing here, have come in such large numbers to our
shores, is in no small part due to the influence for good which
your paper has exercised these twenty-five years. It is certainly
no small service which those who have determined the policy of the
Jewish Daily News have rendered, when they so shaped their paper,
that through its influence, to a considerable extent, the larger
number of our Russian co-religionists, who are now a part of this
community, have become self-respecting American citizens without

losing the conservative Jewish principles under which they had grown up and which have developed in them ideals which, brought into daily life, form a most valuable asset to the citizenship of the country. Your paper has moreover understood it to inoculate into the considerable portion of those of our townsmen, whom it more or less influences, the tolerance for the views of others, both religious and political, which is the first condition of good citizenship, and I feel the conviction is growing upon all classes of the Jewish people of this town, under whatever conditions of life they exist, that no unsurmountable difference need exist between the American Jew, whatever shade of religious views he may hold; that orthodoxy should have respect for those who have a more liberal conception of Jewish law and tradition, and that the so-called Reformed Jew should look without disdain upon those who continue to strictly maintain the traditions which have come to them from their fathers; that all can and should unite in the constructive work which needs to be done so imperatively if the Jew is to maintain his ideals within the body of the American people, of whom he is so rapidly becoming part and parcel, and to the weal of whom he need loyally contribute the best that is in him and in his faith.

Expressing, therefore, the hope upon the turning of so momentous a milestone in the existence of your paper that its influence for good may constantly grow, and wishing you every further success, I am,

Yours most faithfully,



WORDS OF BOTH, WORDS OF LIVING GOD



Dr. Kaufman
Kohler Says the
Issue Is as Old as
Judaism Itself

Bridging Gap
Would Undermine
Conviction and
Faith in Both
Camps

REFORM DOES NOT LEAD TO CHRISTIANITY

(Specially written for the Silver Jubilee Number of the Jewish Daily News.)

Messrs. Sarasohn & Son, Publishers, "The Jewish Daily News.

Gentlemen: Accept my congratulations upon your silver anniversary. May your efforts towards the Americanization of the Jewish masses be crowned with still further success!

To your question I herewith offer the following reply:

Orthodoxy is a term borrowed from the Christian Church. The Letter or the Spirit, Stability or Progress? this is the issue. This issue is as old as Judaism itself, the secret of whose wondrous vitality lies in its latitude of beliefs. Like the stars in heaven, Judaism always had its centripetal and centrifugal forces; the one stood for the **preservation of the old**, the other

(Continued on Page Three.)

for progress. Israel was at all times divided into two camps. Ancient Israel had its house of Joseph and its house of Judah; the Second Temple its priestly Sadducees and its democratic Pharisees. The book of Koheleth indicates the influence of Hellenism, and the book of Daniel the austerity of the Hasidim party.

In Talmudic times we find the Shammaites and the Hillelites at variance with one another on many points, and at times their differences appeared very serious, nay, even dangerous. Still, we are told in the Talmud that a heavenly voice proclaimed both opinions to be "words of the living God," and both adhered to the Biblical maxim; "Love ye above all truth and peace." "Truth first, and afterwards peace!" is the Jewish maxim. Accordingly, during the middle ages we see the widest possible diversity of opinion between the Rationalists, beginning with Saadia Gaon and culminating in Maimonides, and the Mystics whose chief representative in the latter's time was Abraham ben David of Posquieres. Maimonides, to give a striking instance, declared him to be no Jew who believes that God has bodily qualities or attributes, such as the Cabbalists ascribed to Him, whereas Abraham ben David in his annotations to the latter's great Code (H. Teshubah III. 7) says: "Greater men than he have believed in such a God and are as good Jews as he." Maimonides had assimilated the philosophy of Aristotle as interpreted by the Moslem thinkers. Thus all men of progress in Judaism assimilated the prevailing ideas—the *Weltanschauung*—of their age and environment.

Reform Judaism is nothing else than Judaism harmonized with our own *Weltanschauung*. The same principles of evolution and growth which govern the physical world govern also the world of the spirit, and consequently, religion, too, is subject to the laws of historical growth and development. Accordingly, we behold in the Mosaic Law, with its sacrificial mode of worship one phase of Judaism, in the Rabbinical Law, with its ceremonialism, another, and in Reform or Progressive Judaism, which aims at a world religion in the spirit of the prophets, another necessary phase in the development of our faith. Far from destroying our ancestral heritage, the Reform principle has proved a saving power for all those who would otherwise have become estranged from our holy patrimony. Reform lays all the stress upon the essentials, the moral and spiritual truth of Judaism, and looks forward to the time of its becoming the uniting force of humanity; therefore, it accentuates its world-mission, the Messianic hope of Judaism.

The great majority of Jews brought up in the atmosphere of blind belief in authority, are as little capable of grasping the principles of Reform Judaism as the average medieval Jew could follow the flights of thought of a Maimonides or Ibn Gabirol. So they erroneously take Reform to be a stepping-stone to Christianity, while, as a matter of fact, it is its most outspoken and aggressive antagonist.

Every attempt towards bridging over the wide gap that exists between the adherents of traditional Judaism and the Reformers by way of compromise is apt to undermine the power of conviction and of faith in either camp. Instead of this, I think that the leaders of both camps should, like the pupils of Shammai and Hillel, foster mutual good-will and friendly feelings, recognizing the spirit of honesty and sincerity that prompts each to act and to live, or think, as his own heart, his religious consciousness prompts. Let the Reform Jew recognize that the authority of a hoary past bespeaks the highest regard for Orthodoxy, and, therefore, he owes reverence to the same as being the mother that begot and nurtured him. On the other hand, let the Orthodox Jew cease condemning, maligning and cursing Reform and Reformers, and become cognizant of the fact that even according

to the Talmudic view "he is a veritable Jew who stands forth in the presence of Israel's monotheistic truth"—*Ha-Emet be Abodah Zarah mikra Jehudi*. Let us strive in common, each in his own way, for truth, which is the seal of God, and, at the same time, never lose sight of the divine goal, which is peace, ever realizing that *Eleh ve eleh divre Elohim Hayim*: "The opinions of both battlers for truth are, when manfully uttered, words of the living God."

DESIRE FOR RECONCILIATION GROWING



**Prof. Solomon
Schechter Sees
Trend In That
Direction**

**Remnant Must
Join Together Un-
der Banner of
Torah**

SCHOLARLY LEADERS CAN WELD LAITY

(Specially written for the Silver Jubilee Number of the Jewish Daily News.)

The subject chosen by you, "The Possibility of a Reconciliation Between Reform and Orthodoxy," is very important and worthy of such an occasion as the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of your valuable paper. I assume that you do not expect me to treat the subject in any manner approaching completeness. Only a thorough study of the history of Jewish sects in the past, their aims and their ends, would enable us to gain a full knowledge and a proper understanding of the movements of our own time. For "innovations" are often mere repetitions, and "modernity" itself, after examining it closely, is sometimes found out to be a mere echo of some miscarried schism of the dark ages or even antiquity. But, even to speak only of the present, it would seem to me that a reconciliation between the two sections of the community is by no means a simple matter. The division has gone too far both in doctrine and in practice to dispose of the matter in an offhand way. I will illustrate this by one or two instances of recent date: Last November the Conference of American Rabbis held its convention in New York. A banquet was given to the rabbis at a Christian hotel, and many toasts were, on that solemn occasion, proposed to the success of Judaism in this country. This occurrence impressed one part of the community as tragic, if not tragi-comic, whilst the other part of the community perceived in it the triumph of modernity over the "pot and pan religion." I am certain that the majority of the

rabbis assembled there in no wise meant to give offense to their brethren of the "Bondage." They simply took it as a matter of course. But this does not alter the fact that the great majority of the Jews not belonging to the jurisdiction of the Conference of American Rabbis viewed this violation of the dietary laws with sorrow. To quote an instance of doctrine I will only refer to the Ninth of Ab: On this day, even in this country, hundreds and thousands of Jews gathered to their synagogues and read there the Scroll of Lamentations, following it up by the Elegies of the sweet singer of Israel, R. Jehudah Halevi, in his mournful strains over the destruction of the Holy Temple, the loss of Jewish independence and the banishments and expulsions following it. The day after one could read a notice in the paper given out by some leader of the opposite party, in which it was declared that in his congregation no service was held, as the Ninth of Ab is rather considered by him as a day of rejoicing, the consummation of Israel's mission commencing with the destruction of the Holy Temple and the termination of Israel's nationality. Any student, and even any layman, with religious common sense, can see from these two instances to what pass matters have come. Such excesses could be easily avoided, and they only tend to show that fanaticism and lack of considerateness, if not martyrdom, is not the exclusive possession of one party. Under these conditions I hardly see how a reconciliation is possible.

The only platform upon which we can meet at present seems to me to be that of philanthropy, where both sections of the community can work whole-heartedly without doing violence to their conscience. Perhaps, too, we may hope that in the course of time Jewish scholarship will grow up in this country, which will bring joint efforts to the fore, and varying conceptions. Real Jewish leadership has always impressed men with a respect for history, with a regard for the past, and has made him more cautious in his utterances, and more conservative in his judgment, and suspicious against all sectarian endeavor. This was achieved largely in Germany through the Wissenschaft School, and there is no reason why it should not happen again in America. The modern American laity that is free from fanaticism will follow soon enough their leaders in this direction. Indeed, among the laity, the desire for reconciliation is constantly gaining ground, and many gracious acts on their part have been done to bring about unity and harmony in American Israel. It requires but a deeper understanding of the situation on the part of the spiritual leaders to make this reconciliation effective and lasting. Attention must be directed to the community of Israel; appreciation, not to say respect and reverence, must be paid to the norm of Jewish thought and action; the high and holy purpose must be entertained to further Jewish unity and to maintain the honor of the Jewish name, both within ourselves and before the world; the remnant must draw nearer to each other in mutual trust, and faith and helpfulness; then, in the progress of time, and in the providence of God, the scattered members of the whole house of Israel may once more be joined together in organized union, and stand upon their feet a mighty army under the banner of the Torah. May your valuable paper be helpful in bringing about such a result.

R.O. ✓

February 11, 1986
2 Adar 5746

Mr. Ira Schorr
131/7 Sanhedriah Murchevet
Jerusalem, Israel 97707

Dear Mr. Schorr:

Your statement that the Conservative and Reform Movements "make no attempt to stop or prevent intermarriage" is a perversion of the truth and demonstrates that you do not have the vaguest idea of what we are about. You form your judgments on the basis of the slander that is levelled against us. That is certainly not in accordance with the biblical injunction which bids us:

I find your analogy to the Holocaust morally reprehensible. Surely you do not mean to suggest that these were killed for their sins.

Learn something about us -- what we are, what we teach, what we believe. Until then, little purpose can be served by our corresponding.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
c/o American Hebrew Congregat~~i~~ons
Los Angeles, Cal.

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

I hope this letter reaches you and you will find the time and inclination to read it and deign to answer it.

I have been wondering, when G-- gave the Toran to us, did He give four types, one for the Orthodox, one for the Reform, one for the Conservative and one for the secularists? What would happen if we Jews would adopt the life styles of each generation, what would we be today?

Who were the Hasmonians? Orthodox, Conservative, Reform or secular?

It seems to me we have not learned a lesson from the Holocaust. The Jews today follow the exact footsteps of the German Jew; inter-marriage, assimilation and conversion. Is that what the Reform and Conservative movemaent want? They make no attempt to stop ~~and~~ prevent inter-marriage.

It seems the secularists don't believe in *6/1/73*
We Jews abrogate the laws of the Toran without compunction and with impunity. How long do you think we can go on doing this without retribution from on high?

Again I pray this letter reaches you and you will find the time to answer it.

Sincerely yours,

Ira Schorr
Ira Schorr

131/7 Sanhedriah Murchevet
Jerusalaem, Israel 97707

MRS. LILLIAN PREIS
3216 HEALY AVENUE
FAR ROCKAWAY, N.Y.
11691



Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Ave
NY NY 10021

Rlo

28 Tevet 5746
January 9, 1986

Mr. Arthur Guttman
6109 Highbury Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6N 1Z2

Dear Arthur:

It was thoughtful of you to forward a copy of the Vancouver Jewish Western Bulletin to me. The only comment I will make on the editorial is that it was undoubtedly based on a press release or comment from someone rather than on the basis of the totality of my comments. Be that as it may, I will not dignify the column with a response.

Rhea and I, too, regret that you and Glenda were not at the Biennial. It was one of the best within memory. The program, the accommodations, the outstanding hospitality of the local community made for an absolutely superb few days. I hope we can maintain this standard for Chicago and I do hope that you can be with us in 87.

I'm glad that things are moving along nicely for you and I will tell Rhea that you now have a four-door car rather than the back seat of a VW Rabbit, this may sway her towards another visit to Vancouver.

We both join in sending you fondest regards and all good wishes for the New Year.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

GUTTMAN SERVICES INC.

6109 Highbury St.
Vancouver, B.C. V6N 1Z2
TELEPHONE: (604) 263-7156

December 31, 1985

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Rabbi Alex,

Enclosed is a copy of the Vancouver Jewish Western Bulletin dated December 19th. There is an editorial on page 4 which will interest you. Attitudes surely are hard to change. The editor/publisher of the Bulletin is a former president of the orthodox congregation here and not what might be termed a progressive thinker when it comes to matters Judaic. The new Rabbi of the orthodox congregation, on the other hand, I understand has been most helpful and supportive (and that is a real change).

Glenda and I had hoped to be able to see you in Los Angeles at the biennial, but could not make it and had to forego that pleasure and also what I have heard was an excellent program. Needless to say we also missed seeing so many other people of whom we are so fond. Hopefully we will be at the next one. It is also very satisfying to know that the representatives from the Pacific Northwest region are such talented and wonderful people.

Our own congregation continues to make progress. I understand our former burned-out site has been sold; detailed plans for the new building have been almost completed; and construction should be starting within a matter of months.

By the way, my own work has been developing very nicely. Indeed it has been a bit of a struggle but worth it. One result is that no longer will we have to fit you and Rhea in the back seat of the VW Rabbit as we did in Seattle.. We now have a four-door car and it awaits your next visit with anticipation. As you know, EXPO 86 is in Vancouver next year. Is there any chance you may be able to come to visit?

One last thought: should it be felt that I might be able to be of any service to you or the movement, please do not hesitate to call upon me.

Best wishes for a year of health and success to all of you at 838,

Shalom,


Arthur Guttman

*acknowledge with
thanks - Glenda & I
chatty - he's OK
miss him
etc.*

R/O/c

22 Tevet 5746
January 3, 1986

Arthur C. Silverman, Esq.
645 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Mr. Silverman:

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter to Lou Bernstein.

I appreciate the openness and moderation of your remarks. I just want you to know that, your impressions to the contrary notwithstanding, I share them fully.

As a case in point, you ought to know that the Atlanta Resolution was not introduced "as an implicit criticism of the leadership of the UAHC." Quite the contrary, it was submitted with my encouragement and placed before our recent Biennial with my full hearted endorsement.

You ought to know further that I have never used strident voices against Orthodoxy per se. I have felt free to refuse the reckless and unfounded charges that have been levelled against us by a politicized Orthodoxy which is interested not so much in what is being done, but in who is doing it.

I enclose herewith a copy of the recent address I gave at our Biennial which will give you a clearer view of what I am about. Certainly you will see therein the full hearted endorsement I gave to the Atlanta Resolution. I am also confident that there are many things contained therein with which you will disagree, but then, at least, you will disagree with what I said not what others reported me as saying.

With every good wish, I am

Cordially,

Alexander M. Schindler

for top



Member of K-S City
(Lookster)

Close friend of
Rackman & while
not on Board

promised to raise
\$ for her

ARTHUR C. SILVERMAN

645 FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

December 23, 1985

Rabbi Louis Bernstein
Rabbinical Council of America
275 Seventh Avenue
New York, New York 10001

Dear Rabbi.

I read with great interest your article in the December 13 issue of Philadelphia's Jewish Exponent.

It generally was a very effective article which well summarized the case for halachah as the determinant of status as a Jew. The Orthodox position was set forth in a dignified manner, generally free of invective.

I said "generally" because one could have done without the statements about Reform's alleged "plummeting birth rate" (untrue) and about Reform's "exaggerated claims to the contrary" (true). I think these were unnecessary jabs, irrelevant to the merits of the argument and, therefore, damaging to it. I well appreciate the intention to rebut some of the untruths asserted by some Reform leaders, but they have no monopoly on untruths or on confrontational tactics. Unfortunately, we Orthodox Jews are guilty of our own fair share of the same things.

In the same issue of the Exponent, I also read a rather detailed article (enclosed) about what occurred at the meeting in Jerusalem of the Presi-

See
Try to find
one who can

dents' Conference regarding Prime Minister Peres's proposal to freeze for ten years any legislative action to change the Law of Return. The Jewish Week and the JTA did not well report what had happened.

It was a disgrace and worse that the reactions of the various constituents of the Conference of Presidents had to erupt into competing and utterly improper press conferences and statements.

It is obvious that the press conference of the six or so Orthodox organizations came after and was intended as a response to the other seventeen organizations which had improperly gone public first. Yet, as erroneous as was the holding of the prior conference, it was wrong beyond peradventure for the Orthodox press conference to have been held, or, if held, to have gone beyond the narrow issue of the jurisdictional impropriety of the earlier press conference. The Orthodox members of the Conference had no business at their press conference taking the following public positions: (i) that Reform and Conservative Judaism are not entitled to insist upon recognition and legitimacy; (ii) that consideration of the Law of Return should not be postponed because it will increase assimilation (this position was reported by the JTA, not the Exponent).

I would respectfully suggest, Rabbi Bernstein, that there are many Orthodox Jews who fundamentally disagree with one or both of these positions. Many of these Orthodox Jews are members of Hadassah, the American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith, and other national Jewish organizations which participated in the first press conference. I would venture to say that there are many, many members of the six Orthodox organizations -- rabbis and laymen -- who oppose changing the Law of Return. There are many Orthodox Jews in Israel who fully support Prime Minister Peres's position.

I would say somewhat similar things to Rabbis Schindler and Stern as well, namely, that I believe that there are many, many Reform Jews who do not agree in the slightest with what is happening and has happened in the Reform movement that has indisputably led to the imminent fracture of the Jewish people. They, of course, deny the possibility of the result, but their knowledgeable constituents well know what is in store for the Jewish people as a result of certain positions taken by Reform Judaism if those positions are not soon changed.

A Reform congregation in Atlanta found it necessary a short time ago to put before the recent UAHC convention a resolution implicitly critical of the leadership of the UAHC and reaffirming the commitment to K'lal Yisrael of the Reform movement. The resolution called "for a dialogue with mutual respect among all branches of Judaism", and called "upon the lay and rabbinic leadership of all of the movements in Jewish life to undertake concrete steps to engender a constructive approach to many of the issues which we as Jews confront." This resolution was not dissimilar to the one passed last May by Orthodox congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in New York calling upon the Orthodox Union to develop "positive and productive relationships among the different branches of Judaism" and to reduce "destructive tensions and polarization between Jews with differing religious views", and noting that "cooperation among the congregational and rabbinic umbrella organizations of the principal denominations of Judaism" are "critically necessary for Klal Yisrael and the unity and survival of the State of Israel and the Jewish people."

I think that the leadership of our national Jewish groups -- which includes you and Sidney Kwestel, Rabbi Alexander Shapiro and Franklin Kreutzer, and Rabbis Alexander Schindler and Jack Stern, as well as others -- are simply not listening to their constituents or to the Jewish people on the subject of the importance of avoiding a

fracture. The leadership only listens to each other and responds to (or bickers with) each other. I would submit that the American leadership of religious Judaism -- all branches of it -- are letting the Jewish people down horribly and are abusing their positions of trust and leadership. Most Jews do not want to see the Jewish people split in two -- and, in that connection, they do not want public press conferences being held and confrontations occurring that will assist and encourage such a fracture.

It is time that the public recriminations cease between Orthodox and Liberal Judaism. It would be far more useful if all branches of Judaism quietly took up and acted upon Rabbi Haskel Lookstein's suggestions set forth in his recent inaugural address to the New York Board of Rabbis (enclosed). It would be far more useful if all the American lay and religious leaders of the various branches of Judaism and of key national organizations attended and constructively participated in the pioneering conference to be held in Princeton, New Jersey on March 16 and 17 and to be sponsored by CLAL, on the subject of "Will There Be One Jewish People by the Year 2000?" at which the opening address will be delivered by the President of Israel, Chaim Herzog, and the keynote address will be delivered by Elie Wiesel. Both are Traditional Jews who weep with angry tears at the polarization that is about to destroy the unity of our people. It would be productive if Yeshiva University, The Jewish Theological Seminary, and Hebrew Union College all took up the call for mutual dialogue and study which was added to the Atlanta congregation's resolution referred to above and then adopted by the entire UAHC at the recent convention (enclosed).

These are the efforts that, hopefully, will yield productive results, not the shouting matches and "shtochs" that are taking place on an almost daily basis among the so-called "leaders" of the

Rabbi Louis Bernstein

-5-

December 23, 1985

branches of American Judaism and of other Jewish communal organizations.

Very sincerely yours,



Arthur C. Silverman

ACS/pw

Enclosures: Exponent article, UAHC resolution,
Lookstein speech

cc: Rabbi Alexander Schindler (Exponent article,
Lookstein speech)
Kenneth Bialkin, Esq. (Exponent article,
Lookstein speech)



Religious issue simmers

JERUSALEM — The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations is a body that lives by consensus. Comprised of 38 different groups, the Presidents' Conference continually searches for common denominators and avoids like the plague those issues it perceives as divisive.

Analysis

Religious practice, however, is one of those divisive issues, and the ongoing effort by Israel's religious parties to change the Law of Return, due once more for Knesset debate next month, simmered just below the surface of the Conference's four-day mission to the Jewish state.

Occasionally, despite efforts by the chair to rule the matter out of order, it erupted into heated exchanges.

The Law of Return, adopted by the Knesset on July 5, 1950 — the 46th anniversary of the death of Theodor Herzl — provides that every Jew has the right to settle in the land of Israel. The problem, of course, is "Who is a Jew?"

According to the law, a Jew is anyone born of a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism. Since 1977, the religious parties in Israel, with the aid of many Orthodox groups in the United States, have been trying to insert the words "according to halachah" after "converted to Judaism."

Since those converted to Judaism by the Reform, Conservative or Reconstructionist movements have not been "converted according to halachah," they would not be considered Jewish in Israel. Non-Orthodox groups, therefore, strenuously oppose the change, and Conservative rabbis have formally voted to bar their pulpits to any Knesset member who supports it.

The presidents of the major American Reform and Conservative rabbinical and congregational bodies are members of the Presidents Conference. It was only natural, therefore, that they would use the opportunity to meet with Israel's leadership to voice their position on this controversial matter. It was equally natural that the representatives of the equivalent Orthodox

(Continued on Page 88)



U.S. Jewish leaders debate Law of Return

(Continued from Page 3)

groups would oppose them.

The issue surfaced early in the formal mission program.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres was the guest speaker at the opening breakfast and, in response to a question, declared that his Labor Party had not changed its opposition to the proposed change in the law. He then suggested a 10-year moratorium on any legislative action to change the Law of Return.

The next day at dinner, Deputy Premier and Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir was also asked about the issue. Maintaining that he was speaking to the group in his role of foreign minister, Shamir dodged the question.

The controversy erupted again later that same evening during a panel discussion on the relationship between Israel and American Jewry. Presidents Conference Chairman

Kenneth Bialkin, of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, strove to defuse the issue by saying that since there is no consensus on the matter, and since, in any event, the Presidents Conference only deals with the relationship between the government of Israel and the government of the United States, the discussion was out of order.

One of the panelists, Professor David Hartman of Hebrew University, an Orthodox rabbi, and several questioners insisted on raising it, however. In his formal presentation, Hartman insisted that it would be "tragic" if the "Who is a Jew?" issue were to be resolved through Knesset action.

"Do we really want an Israeli political society that limits the way in which Jews can approach God?" he asked.

When the controversy threatened to get somewhat boisterous during the question-and-answer period, Hartman remarked that it was encouraging to see American Jews get so excited over a religious issue.

The controversy continued throughout the conference as both sides called press conferences to present their points of view.

At the first press conference, the leaders of 17 organizations — whose constituencies, they said, "comprised the overwhelming majority of the organized Jewish community" — issued a joint declaration opposing any change in the Law of Return and supporting Peres' stance on the issue.

In addition to the representatives of the Reform and Conservative movements, leaders of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith International and the ADL signed the declaration. Hadassah had earlier issued a separate statement opposing the change. The groups were careful, however, to stress they were not officially representing the Presidents Conference.

"The self-serving demand of one group of Jews that they be recognized as the sole interpreter of the Jewish religion — and specifically that their authority to determine the legitimacy of conversions performed outside Israel be spelled out in the secular law of Israel — is morally and religiously unacceptable to us," their statement said.

"It is contrary to the interests and welfare of world Jewry. The proposed change in the Law of Return will do harm to the principle of Jewish unity and jeopardize the sense of solidarity that binds the Jewish people everywhere to the State of Israel," it continued.

"The symbolic meaning" of the proposed change, said Rabbi Jack Stern, president of the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis, "is that Israel says to the non-Orthodox, 'We do not recognize the authenticity of your leaders and, therefore, of your Judaism.' Some of our people by now are saying, 'If I'm not authentic, how is my financial support authentic?'"

"This issue is beginning to interfere with our ability to maintain Israeli programming," added Franklin D. Kreutzer, president of the Conservative movement's United Synagogue of America. "We feel we have second-class status in Israel. We can't get land for our synagogues and other facilities."

Two hours later in the same room, leaders of several American Orthodox groups issued their own statement and held their own press conference. "The Reform and Conservative are misusing their presence in Israel as part of the Presidents Conference to give the impression that this is an issue before the Presidents Conference," said Rabbi Louis Bernstein, president of the Rabbinical Council of America.

"The Reform and Conservative are not really asking for a continuance of the status quo, but for recognition," he added. "This is closely connected with their demand for equal legal status with the Orthodox in Israel. If the Law of Return is changed, they know it will read them out."

The issue, the Orthodox spokesman said, is far greater than the wording of the Law of Return; the issue is the right of the non-Orthodox to change the halachic laws of divorce and conversion.

The Reform movement's adoption of patrilineal descent, its abolition of religious divorce and its changes in conversion procedure are creating a "tremendous problem" of Jews who, by Orthodox standards, are not really Jewish, the Orthodox spokesman added.

There is a distinct possibility, he said, that lists specifying who is and who is not a "kosher Jew" will be compiled in the near future.

Most observers here in Israel feel that while it might not pass the Knesset this session, the proposed change in the Law of Return will be an issue here for the foreseeable future. If the Presidents Conference mission was any indication, it appears that it will be an increasingly important issue in the American Jewish community as well. — David Gross

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

by RABBI HASKEL LOOKSTEIN

at ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NEW YORK BOARD OF RABBIS

Wednesday, December 18, 1985 - 11:00 A.M.

Dear Colleagues:

I am very grateful to all of you for this opportunity to serve the more than 1,000 rabbis who comprise the New York Board of Rabbis. I feel particularly privileged to follow in this office many distinguished rabbis from Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism who have served the cause of Jewish unity with distinction and self-sacrifice. I am particularly proud to follow directly my good friend and associate, Rabbi Morris Friedman, under whom I have been happy to work in the New York Board and in the Rabbinic Advisory Council of UJA-Federation here in this city.

My election to the New York Board of Rabbis, however, means something even more in a personal way. It means that I am assuming the same position which my father, Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein, of blessed memory, occupied exactly 43 years ago in this season of the year. It is not the only position of his which I am privileged to try to fill. I have followed him in Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun where he was Rabbi for 56 years, and as Principal of the Ramaz School which he founded in 1937 and which he lead as Principal until his passing six years ago.

But in the case of the New York Board of Rabbis, there is an historical analogy which bears special mention. My father was elected in 1942 because of a crisis which developed in the Jewish community and which was tearing that community apart. It was precisely at that time that American Jews first learned about the Final Solution when on November 24, 1942, the late Stephen S. Wise held a news conference which gave the details of Hitler's plan to murder all the Jews in Europe. He provided specific figures which told of the fact that already 2,000,000 Jews had been murdered in Poland and that 5,000,000 more who were under Nazi domination were threatened with annihilation.

At that critical juncture in Jewish history something else was happening which shook the Jewish community. A group of American Jews who were vigorously anti-Zionist in their orientation formed the American Council for Judaism. Nothing would stand in their way, including the need to rescue the Jews of Europe and the campaign to open the gates of Palestine. Its declared purpose was to make clear that Jews were only Americans of the Hebraic persuasion and that they had no other national or political loyalties which would compromise their total Americanism.

The regular order of procession in the New York Board of Jewish Ministers, as it was known then, called for the election

of Rabbi Hyman Schachtel as the next President of the Board. Rabbi Schachtel, a Reform Rabbi, was among the signers of the declaration which created the American Council for Judaism. Because of the divisiveness which that declaration created in the American Jewish community and out of regard for the larger issues of Jewish survival which were then so poignantly at stake, the late Rabbi Stephen S. Wise lead a political revolt within the New York Board of Jewish Ministers and introduced my father's name as an alternative candidate for President of the Board although he was not in any way in line for that post. With Rabbi Wise as my father's campaign manager the outcome was a forgone conclusion. Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein was elected President by a vote of 62 to 11, and Rabbi Schachtel and his 11 supporters resigned from the Board.

It is therefore a special honor and privilege for me to serve in this position, not alone because my father served in it, but also because of why he was chosen - to unite the community and to be a symbol and an instrument of Jewish survival here and around the world.

It is somewhat in the light of that history that I would like to express my major concern to you as your new President.

In 1985, the Jewish people does not face a threat of physical annihilation like the one it faced in 1942. We do, however, confront another threat which is both serious and frightening. I am referring to the growing polarization that exists in the religious community both here and in Israel. So many of us are unable to speak to each other civilly. Religious rightists and leftists throw epithets at each other. The extremism that manifests itself on both sides threatens to isolate Jew from Jew and to rend the fabric of Jewish peoplehood so that we will no longer be one people.

From my own vantage point as part of centrist Orthodox Judaism, I am terrified at the prospect of such disunity. I believe fervently in the middle position. I believe in respect for varying opinions, which also includes respect for those who hold those opinions. I feel there must be a degree of moderation exercised by all of us in expressing our views and acting upon them.

Here in the New York Board of Rabbis, as in few other places, there is this mutual respect and love for each other. There is a degree of civility in our rhetoric and tolerance in the way in which we express our differing positions. But as I look out to the wider community I do not see this kind of coming together. On the contrary, looking at the Jewish religious community in America

I understand as never before the frightening words in the prayer of Sa'adia Gaon which we recite at the s'lichot service on the eve of Rosh Hashanah

אני פונה ימין ואין תמיכה
אני פונה שמאל ואין תעוד
אני פונה קדמה ואין תעוד

"I turn to the right and there is no support; to the left and there is no encouragement."

On my right I feel terribly alone. So many of my Orthodox colleagues are not ready to relate to my friends in the Conservative and Reform rabbinate except on broad communal issues. When it comes to religious matters they want no part of dialogue.

How many Orthodox colleagues are members of the New York Board of Rabbis. And of those who are, how many are active? Not many!

Last year, when Rabbi Alexander Schapiro, President of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly, was invited to address the Rabbinical Council of America, I received a letter signed by many of my friends urging me to stay away from the RCA Convention as an act of protest. Why must I protest the presence of a Conservative colleague who reaches out to his Orthodox brothers in a gesture of peace and cooperation?

Not too long ago, in one community of this country, the UJA wanted to honor all of the rabbis in the community at the annual fund raising dinner in the hope that honoring the rabbis would bring out a large attendance of lay people. The leading Orthodox rabbi in that community, a man of great piety and knowledge, accepted the invitation with two qualifications: first, that the Orthodox rabbis be listed separately from the other rabbis and, second, that there be a separate dais for the Orthodox rabbis.

Why is such a posture necessary? Are we really afraid that participating together in joint ventures means giving endorsement to those with whom we may disagree? Nobody has asked us for our endorsement, nor is anyone interested in it. Individual communities give legitimacy to their own religious leaders. We of the Orthodox movement have no monopoly on granting or withholding legitimacy. No one has given us the right to judge the qualifications of others. Every Yom Kippur we pound our breasts and we ask forgiveness of God for the sin of p'lilut, which means the sin of passing judgment on others. Oh how sinful all of us are in that regard - Orthodox, Conservative and Reform. We are all so busy passing judgment on everybody else that we forget that it is only on ourselves that we have the right to pass judgment - indeed, the obligation to pass judgment three times a day when we stand before God in prayer - l'hitpallel.

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"I turn to the right and there is no support."

But, frankly, PNIO /SC/ Teneo
there isn't much help from the left either. One of the foremost leaders of the Reform movement told a New York Times reporter last summer that there really is no purpose in intra-religious dialogue. We can talk about broad communal issues, he said, but when it comes to religious matters, "either you accept halakha or you are outside halakha. We have chosen to be outside." That statement, regrettably, mirrors the most extreme judgments and denunciations that come from the far right. Why must a respected leader take such a position which precludes meaningful discussion?

Of course, to be honest about it, the Reform movement has taken a turn recently which does represent a serious break with halakha. The patrilineal decision of three years ago threatens to tear us apart as a people irretrievably, because we will no longer have a common ground for agreement on who is Jewish and who is not. The seeds for this break were planted many years ago but the decision to formulate the policy as a public statement and, if you will, a public challenge, has driven a wedge between the left and the right that fosters polarization, anger, resentment, bitterness and divisiveness.

The result of our not talking to each other and the actions which have been taken by some religious leaders in America has created what Rabbi Reuven Bulka calls a coming cataclysm in the form of an expected schism between half the Jewish people in America and the other half which will preclude social relationships and intra-marriage between one group and another. The more traditional group will not recognize the Jewishness of hundreds of thousands of the less traditional group. Moreover, because of the position that Reform has taken in not requiring a religious divorce prior to the remarriage of someone who has been civilly divorced, there will be very large numbers of children born in second marriages who will be mamzerim and therefore ineligible for marriage with the more traditional segments of Jewish society.

What are we to do in response to the present rancor and bitterness and the coming schism which is unavoidable if steps to bring us together are not taken quickly? Shall we just sit back and let polarization run its course and see our community hopelessly divided? I, for one, am not prepared to sit back and watch this happen and I do not believe that my colleagues in the New York Board of Rabbis are prepared to do so either.

And so, I would like to make a proposal to you. I would like the new Administration of the New York Board of Rabbis to devote itself to placing ahavat Yisrael on the top of our list

of priorities. I would like to suggest that the strident tones of our rhetoric be lowered and that we seek to find those things that unite us rather than focus on the ideological differences which divide us. We are not going to solve our philosophical disputes in the near future. Perhaps we shall never solve them. But we do have concrete problems which affect our future as a people and which, if allowed to continue, will lead to a tragedy for which none of us ought to be responsible.

In focusing on concrete problems, I would urge my Orthodox colleagues to extend a hand of friendship and love to Conservative and Reform rabbis and not to be afraid to sit down with them in order to find acceptable solutions for our problems. The rabbis of groups with whom we differ are the recognized leaders of those groups and they must be approached with respect and regard, just as we want others to approach us. I submit that shalom bayit - peace in our collective home - is essential if we are to deal with critical issues. Moreover, the principle of kavod ha-briyot - the respect for every human being - surely transcends our individual Torah outlook which separates us from the philosophy of others.

With this kind of respect, regard and love for those with whom we reserve the right to disagree, but whose status as religious leaders we must accept, I would turn to my Reform and Conservative

colleagues and ask them to consider some concrete steps that will help to avert the catastrophe which looms on the horizon. Specifically, I would ask for three things.

1. A retreat from the recent public decision on the part of the Reform movement to recognize the children of all intermarriages - regardless of which spouse is Jewish - as being Jewish as long as the children are brought up as "Jews" and connected to the temple.

2. A readiness to explore methods to convert non-Jews to Judaism in a way which will be accepted by the Jewish people as a whole, including Orthodox Jews. I am sure that such methods exist. If we all have the same practical goal in mind - the survival of one Jewish people - and if we all will respect each other's sensibilities, we will find and implement those methods.

3. An agreement that every marriage between Jews which ends civilly must also end with the giving and receiving of a Jewish divorce which will be acceptable to the Jewish people as a whole. I recognize that my Reform colleagues, as a group, have not had such a requirement for some 80 years. I also recognize that this would entail some compromises on the make-up of the Bet Din for a get which would exclude many of my Conservative colleagues. I believe that these concerns, justifiable and fundamental as they

are, nevertheless have less importance than the tragedy which we are creating by our present, uncoordinated approach. The alternative is the creation of hundreds of thousands of mamzerim in the coming decades.

Forgive me for being so detailed in my proposals. What I have said is purely for the purpose of discussion, debate and analysis. I hope that at future meetings of the New York Board of Rabbis we can invite Jewish religious leaders with the broadest possible views who will articulate their own feelings about how to solve the critical problems which confront us. Perhaps we can create an atmosphere that will help the recognized rabbinic bodies of the major American groups to work out among themselves the necessary solutions. Surely, it is not the task of the New York Board of Rabbis to find the solutions. But in this group we may be able to help clear the air and foster the necessary rapport.

There is a lot of hatred out there in the Jewish world. It almost rivals in intensity the hatred of vicious anti-Semites who make no distinctions between the different branches of American Jews. When one of them, a clergyman no less, pronounced in Madison Square Garden less than two months ago that "God will put you in the ovens," he meant you and me and all of us.

The antidote to unnecessary hatred must be unconditional love. This must be the passion of the middle ground among our Jewish people. It must be more powerful than the passions on the right and on the left, where emotional commitment and passionate statements seem to develop more naturally. We must create our own passionate position - a position which says that we love all Jews, that we love Judaism, that we love the Jewish people, and that we are passionately committed to see that all of these survive in the future in health, in vigor and in peace. Thank you



January 2, 1986
21 Tevet 5746

Mr. Irv Wengrow, President
Troy Jewish Congregation
3333 Coolidge
Troy, MI 48084

Dear Mr. Wengrow:

David Hachen was kind enough to share with me a copy of the fine letter you wrote on "Inter-Factional In-Fighting" which was published by the Detroit Jewish News. It is a very good letter and I write to express my appreciation to you for writing as you did.

The tone of your letter is thoughtful and you make some very important points in regard to the term "observant." Well done!

With all good wishes and kindest greetings, I am

±±±Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Inter-Factional In-Fighting

This madness must end. Jew arguing with Jew, using the media as a battleground and adjectives as battleflags. First we have the now-infamous ad placed by an Orthodox group. Then Rabbi Schindler of the UAHC responds in his address to their convention which I attended. A local Orthodox rabbi takes issue calling Rabbi Schindler an "evil racist." Last week's Op-Ed called for unity yet the same issue contained "scathing attacks on Reform and Conservative Judaism" by the Agudath Israel of America rejecting the UAHC's K'lal Yisrael resolution that called for "dialogue with mutual respect among all branches of Judaism."

As Rabbi Schindler said, "What chutzpah, this! What arrogance! What desecration! To presume to know just which rites and prayers are and are not acceptable to the *ribono shel olam*; to claim the clairvoyance to look into the soul of another human being and judge his feelings for God!"

Why is it that Lutherans, with whom we share a building, will attend our services yet there are some Jews who refuse. This should not be. But the schism widens. One reason, and one I take great issue with, is the increasing use of the term "observant" as a synonym for Orthodox. I observe Judaism as a Reform Jew yet some would consider me non-observant by their definition. Our congregation takes great pride in our observances and our daily celebrations of our Jewish lives. No one who has been with us could possibly say we were "non-observants." I cannot accept this term and I refuse to do so. I am an observant Jew who happens to be affiliated with the Reform movement. Observance is a relative term, not an absolute, and it is not defined by one's affiliation.

I don't ask for the Orthodoxy's blessing, only their recognition that different perspectives can be valid. But to hear, they must first listen and that is what I ask. Let us at least agree to disagree. Again Rabbi Schindler — "... the Jewish world must know this: Reform is an adjective, it is not a noun. The noun is Jew."

The more adjectives separate us, the quieter becomes our voice.

Irv Wengrow
President, The Troy Jewish Congregation

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVE



Send her a note thank
her for her letter in
the Detroit Jewish News.

RC
January 2, 1986
21 Tevet 5746

Mr. Alexander Gottdiener
801 North Broad Street
Elizabeth, NJ 07208

Dear Mr. Gottdiener:

Thank you for your recent note and the various clippings you were kind enough to share.

As you can appreciate, my schedule is a very hectic one and I am certain Rabbi Shapiro is in the same situation. While it would be pleasant to meet with you and to chat, I really do not know what would come of such a get together. After all, the presidents and executive directors of the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform movements meet on many occasions and discuss a multitude of concerns. We do talk with one another and it is not a matter of no dialogue between us. As a matter of fact, I will be taking part in a major symposium to be held in Princeton a few months hence and it is expected that there will also be representation from the Orthodox and Conservative movements.

With appreciation for your continued interest and with all good wishes,
I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

From The Desk of:

Alex Gottdiener

Dec.27,1985

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

So many things are happening connected with Jewish survival that it is too much for my old fashioned way.

What would you say if I would suggest that the 3 Alexanders get together for lunch in a kosher place sometimes in January.

The (big 3) are, you, Rabbi A.M.Shapiro of South Orange and your humble servant Gottdiener, as my name implicates.

What about it ?

Cordially

Cc.

Rabbi Shapiro

Alex Gottdiener

Can you find out who he is.

Nation Today

Conservative Reaffirm Matrilinealism

KIAMESHA LAKE, N.Y. — Rejecting the recently adopted stand of the Reform Movement to recognize either the father or the mother in establishing lines of Jewish descent, the lay leadership of the 850 Conservative Movement congregations on the North American Continent overwhelmingly voted a major Resolution affirming the traditional position that "status as a Jew is determined only by matrilineal descent, or by conversion according to Jewish Law." The action took place at the five-day Biennial Convention of the United Synagogue of America at the Concord Hotel, Kiamesha Lake, NY.

In adopting the Resolution, the delegates were aligning themselves with the position of the Rabbinical Assembly, international organization of the Rabbis of the Conservative Movement, which has unequivocally opposed the "drastic modification of universally accepted Jewish law" represented in the Reform action.

Is Israel's Soul Imperiled?

Yes, By Kahanism

By Thomas Smerling

WASHINGTON — Is Meir Kahane a serious threat to Israeli democracy? Or is he merely an ugly blemish?

Most Israeli analysts agree that the direct threat posed by Mr. Kahane's party, Kach, is limited. Mr. Kahane's politics are simply too repugnant and ultimately too un-Israeli to ever attract widespread support. Israel's new legislation against incitement to racism may succeed in barring Kach from future elections altogether.

The real danger, such Israelis say, comes not from Mr. Kahane or from his organization but from the extremist ideology he espouses.

Kahanism blends ultra-nationalism with fundamentalism, racism and legitimized violence. It casts aside democratic values in pursuit of its higher goals — first, annexation of the West Bank and Gaza ("Greater Israel"), then, institution of religious

It's the tip of an iceberg

law (a "Torah state"). Its solution to the Palestinian problem is simple: Expel the Arabs from Israel.

Kahanism is greater than Kahane, and it extends far beyond Kach. Last April, a survey by the Van Leer Foundation in Jerusalem found 11 percent of Israeli high school students ready to vote for Kach, while 42 percent agreed with Mr. Kahane's views on Arabs. Shocked, the conservative daily Yediot Aharonot replicated the survey. Its conclusion: "Kahanism is gaining ground among the youth in all strata, all over the country, from all classes. It is turning into a real threat to the State of Israel."

Kach is the tip of a right-wing iceberg. Ehud Sprinzak of Hebrew University, who has studied Israeli extremist groups for 15 years, worries more about Gush Emunim — the "Bloc of the Faithful," responsible for much of the settlement of the West Bank — than about Kach. "The forces

Thomas Smerling is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

which reject even the peace agreement with Egypt are growing daily. They are well-organized and very determined. They think as Kahane does, but they say he talks too much. When asked about Kahane's plan to expel the Arabs, they answer: 'Things that may be done in 10 to 12 years should not be talked about openly today.'"

Israel's ultranationalist party Tehiya differs from Kach more in style than in substance. Its leader, Yuval Ne'eman, advocates "negotiating" the removal of 500,000 Arabs from the territories.

Likud's right wing combines such absolutism with power. Ariel Sharon, now Minister Without Portfolio, has proposed overthrowing King Hussein and establishing a Palestinian state in Jordan. Like Mr. Kahane, he insists that democracy must not be permitted to impede his brand of Zionism. Unlike Mr. Kahane, he conceivably could become Prime Minister.

Add to this list the religious parties and settler vigilantes, then consider Israel in 1986 — a prostrate economy with record-breaking unemployment; a relentless wave of indigenous terrorism; an army still recovering from the Lebanese trauma; continuing military occupation with its daily degradations; a political vacuum at the center. Such conditions can only fuel the search for scapegoats, strongmen and simple answers.

Even a modest tilt to the right could bring to power a radicalized right-wing coalition contemptuous of democracy. More insidiously, the entire political spectrum could be pulled rightward, leading to gradual erosion of democratic rights. Israeli civil libertarians are already troubled: They note that Israel's democracy is vigorous but vulnerable because it lacks a constitution or bill of rights.

Moderates recognize these dangers and are fighting back. A broad coalition is confronting Kach with legal challenges, counter-demonstrations and educational programs in the schools, army and media.

Are these measures adequate? Even those directly engaged in such efforts fear that unless conditions change, the battle against extremism may be lost — washed away by a tide of frustration.

Israel is in a state of flux. The old Labor consensus is dead; former Prime Minister Menachem Begin's counter-consensus is gone. A new order has not yet emerged. Some Israelis are struggling to solidify the center with pragmatic solutions while moving toward peace negotiations. Others are working feverishly to usher in their messianic visions of biblical redemption and Greater Israel. At stake is the soul — and perhaps the democracy — of the Jewish state.

Yes, by Liberal Jews

By Meir Kahane

JERUSALEM — As I review the year since 26,000 Israelis voted that I be their Knesset representative, I am overwhelmed, even as the polls show a dramatic increase in my strength, by the sheer magnitude of the frenzied hatred of the liberal-intellectual mob. Old witch-hunters never die. They return in the form of Israeli and American Jewish liberals, news media people, politicians, intellectuals, Reform rabbis and presidents of Jewish organizations.

"Racist," "fascist," "insane," were among the kinder epithets. All this, of course, from people who pride themselves on fair play and tolerance.

Why the eruption of such poisonous hate on the part of civilized types? Why McCarthyism in the Holy Land and in the United States Jewish community? The answer surely lies in the issues that I raise and, more importantly, in the incredible refusal of anyone to deal with them.

One: I have stated that there exists a clear and present danger of the Arabs of Israel becoming a majority through their naturally high birth rate and through the democratic rights granted by Israel's Declaration of Independence.

On the other hand, I have said, the State of Israel was created by Jews, Zionists, as the Jewish state, and this can mean by definition only one thing: a state with a guaranteed majority of Jews. Only this assures Jewish sovereignty, and Jews mastery over their own destiny. But if that is so, what does one do with Western democracy and its axiom of majority rule? The terribly painful question for the Jewish democrats is: Do Arabs have the democratic right to become a majority peacefully and then peacefully put an end to the Jewish state? Is there a basic contradiction between Zionism and Western democracy?

I have stated flatly that such a contradiction exists and that Jews must choose Judaism and Zionism over Western democracy. But is there a Jewish leader prepared to debate this calmly and rationally? No, for with my demand that a choice be made I have touched upon a most sensitive nerve in the modern, Westernized Jew who dearly wishes to believe there is no contradiction. Having shielded himself from the truth, he lashes out like some wounded animal in terror.

Two: What kind of liberal mind is so contemptuous of Arabs that it cannot understand that no Arabs can ever happily accept living in a country that is officially called the Jewish state; whose Law of Return applies to Jews only; whose national land can be rented to Jews alone; whose national anthem speaks of "the soul of a Jew yearning"; whose Independence Day celebrates Jewish victory and Arab defeat; whose very essence, down to the United Jewish Appeal, is Jewish? What kind of obtuse intellectual cannot understand that the Arab of what was once, in his mind, "Palestine," believes that the Jews of Israel are thieves?

And as the specter of Arab nationalism rages into regular attack, and bombs and grenades and knives take Jewish lives in the land that was supposed to be free of all the suffering of the exile, who among the opponents of "Kahanism" will answer the Jew who asks: Are we supposed to sit quietly and allow our enemies to sit with us, even as they murder us and grow into a majority? What insane servitude to "democracy" and "morality" compels us to commit national suicide?

Meir Kahane, a rabbi, is a member of the Kach Party in the Knesset.

ALEXANDER GOTTDIENER
801 NORTH BROAD STREET
ELIZABETH, NEW JERSEY 07208
(201) 353-4481

Dec.26,1985

Israel Today
16661 Ventura Blvd.
Encino,CA 91436

Re: My comments on your interview with Rabbi Isaiah Zeldin
of Stephen S.Wise Temple in L.A.

Att. Ms.R.Zalis,Director of Israel Today

Dear Editor:

This is our response to your frontpage article "Begin: Razor Sharp and Alert" of your Dec.13,1985 issue:

We both attended the Israel Bond Convention of Nov,1982 as members of the New Jersey delegation. We had a tremendous time until that Saturday night on Nov.13th when the tragic news of Aliza Begin death forced the then P.M. Begin to return to Israel the same night without any public appearance.

*hear To understand our grief and disappointment,we have to tell you that we attended for one and only reason, to see and*Menachem Begin. There was no other reason because there are plenty of Bond Dinners in the NYC.area. Similarly when we got acquainted with members of the French delegation in the Century Plaza and asked them an obvious question: What made you come all the way from France to attend a Bond convention in L.A. ? Not surprisingly we got the same answer, to see and hear P.M.Begin. It did a lot of good to our morale.

Before we get to the point, we want to mention briefly an interesting episode: During the week of Nov.8,82 Mr.& Mrs.Roland E.Arnall and their friends invited the entire New Jersey and French delegations to a Dinner party in their private club. We really do not know if the Arnalls had some special reason to lump together these 2 delegations ? Maybe because my wife Rose speaks a fairly good French, but we all had the time of our life and we use this opportunity to thank publicly to the Arnalls and their friends for their gracious gesture. And now to the point:

1)Rabbi Zeldin, we wish and pray that former P.M.Begin would accept your invitation, come to L.A. and finish his interrupted mission of Nov.82. We pledge solemnly both to come and be there.We are sure many of those in attendance in 1982 would come again for a reunion. It sounds too good to be true.

2)Yes. He is supposed to speak first on Sat.night to a U.J.A (CJF) gathering at the Bonaventura Hotel, and on Sunday at the Israel Bond convention at the Century Plaza. (Literatura enclosed)marked # 1 and 2)

3)We agree and pray that Mr.Begin come back to public life. It would be nothing short of a miracle. The existence of Israel is an every day one.

4)Rabbi Zeldin, we see that you have great respect for the Orthodox. It is only natural. Which normal human being would turn against his or her parents or grandparents just to please some derailed liberals. Not even communist Russia succeeded doing it.

5)Judea and Samaria, liberals prefer to call "Occupied West Bank" Here we are on a collision course. It will not happen and must not happen. It is not we who will decide this grave question. The people of Israel, the
Please turn to P 2

Israel Today, dated 12/26/85

Settlers, the Hesderniks and all those people who are willing to put their life on the line at any moments notice, will have the last word. All what we can do to pray and hope that they will make the right one. Many realize that it was a big mistake to give back the Sinai in view of the Arab nature: Cross and double cross. But it was an easier decision, Sinai never belonged to Israel. To give back any part of Judea, Samaria or the Golan would be tantamount to suicide.

6) Kahanism: I enclose an Editorial of the N.Y. Times of 12/20/85 by Knesset member Rabbi Meir Kahane in response to the question "Is Israel's Soul Imperiled ? by the superliberal Thomas Smerling who answered "Yes, by Kahanism. Rabbi Kahane answered, "Yes by Liberal Jews" (Marked #3)

The Times claims to be evenhanded, but we all know their real intentions.

You have not to agree with everything Kahane stands for, but if you are objective, you have to admit that there is a lot of truth in what he is saying, and the support he is getting shows that his ideas are popular with a large segment of the people in Israel.

Let me remind you that after W.W.II., millions of people have been exchanged without the slightest hitch in many parts of the world. Poles against German and others. Russia, the champion of the Arabs showed the way in the most ruthless fashion. Are the Arabs special ? 6 or 800,000 Sephardic Jews left Arab countries, leaving everything behind. Let the Arabs of Israel take their places and their properties.

Do you know when the Arabs massacred the Jewish population of Hebron in 1928 they have taken over their homes, and are still in possession of those homes until this very day. What kind of people are we to reward murderers ?

Didn't you notice when you walk the streets of the Old City of Jerusalem, the most choicest real estate properties are owned either by the Catholic Church or the Moslems. How did they aquired those properties ? Did they buy it legally from the Jews, or did they massacre first the Jewish population to take possession ? I leave the answer to your judgment.

7) This is our final comment on the question of denying financial support if Israel amends the "Law of Return" If the Knesset adopts the Orthodox version it wouldn't be an Amendment, it would be a Restoration of an ancient Jewish Law about 2000 years old.

Denying Israel financial help would hurt, but if you feel that your money keeps Israel going, all what we will tell you is the same what we said before to Rabbi Alexander Schindler when he voiced the same threat, quoting Queen Esther's uncle Mordechai (Megiloth Esther), the Hebrew text translated is: He said to Queen Esther, if you will deny help from your people, Almighty G-d will provide help for the Jewish people from other sources.

The sooner we realize that nobody can dictate Israel, and if you will try it it will backfire. They are smart enough to find the right solution. Agreed ?


Alex & Rose Gottdiener

Cc.

Roland E. Arnall, Agudath Israel of America, Leonard Diener, Elizabeth, N.J. Harold Jacobs, Pres. of Young Israel, Jewish Horizon, Jewish Press, Jewish Week Yechiel Kadishai, aide to Mr. Begin, Rabbi Kahane, Dr. Norman Lamm of Yeshiva University, Religious Zionists of America, Dr. Hillel Seidman of Allgemeine Journal, Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler of the Reform Movement, Rabbi Alexander M. Shapiro of the Conservatives, Rabbi Pinchas Teitz of the Jewish Educational Center, Professor Elie Wiesel of Boston University, Knesset member Rabbi E. Waldman of Kiryat Arba, Joseph Wilf, Hillside, N.J., Abe Zuckerman, Hillside, NJ and I. Zeldin of L.A. and Rabbi E. Rackman of Bar Ilan University.

ISRAEL TODAY

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Begin: 'Razor Sharp and Alert'

Los Angeles Rabbi Tells Of Rare Private Meeting

Rabbi Isaiah Zeldin founded Stephen S. Wise Temple, which has become the largest Jewish congregation in the West and the second largest in the world encompassing a nine building complex on an 18-acre Los Angeles mountain-top property and serving more than 2,500 families. Born in New York to an Orthodox, Zionist family, he was graduated from Brooklyn College and received his Masters and Rabbinic degrees from Hebrew Union College. Zeldin has served as president and active board member of many Jewish and academic organizations. He and his wife, Florence, an author of children's books, have two sons, an attorney in Berkeley and a professor at Hebrew Union College married to a woman Rabbi, one of the four Rabbis who serves his congregation. He has four grandchildren. Following are excerpts from an exclusive interview with Rosalie Zalis, Israel Today Director, National Politics.

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● **ISRAEL TODAY:** To what do you attribute your ability to have built the world's second largest congregation and in so short a time?

RABBI ZELDIN: We happen to be located at the Jewish crossroads of Los Angeles. The spot where Stephen S. Wise Temple sits is the exact center of the Jewish population of California and one mile from the center of the state's general population. We have members both in the San Fernando Valley and the Westside. Those on the Westside, who are on the average 25 years older, generally have the finances and those in the Valley, the children; so my Westsiders pay for the education of my Valley people. As for me personally, I was born to a family of Maskilim, enlightened people, and although my father was very Orthodox, he was primarily a Hebraist. Before he married my mother he gave her a crash course in Hebrew. Only when she could speak Hebrew, did he marry her. My two brothers and I were raised bilingually. Only later when my grandfather was brought over from Russia did we learn Yiddish and become trilingual. So I was brought up in an Orthodox, Zionist and Hebrew cultural background.

(Continued on page 21)



Zeldin on Kahane, Jackson, Farrakhan

(Continued from page 1)

It was interesting that I was named Isaiah and of the three sons, I became the Rabbi. My brothers though were both active in synagogue life. One was a president of a conservative synagogue and one of a reform synagogue.

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** You recently returned from a visit to Israel where you had a rare private meeting with former Prime Minister Menachem Begin. What did you talk about?

RABBI ZELDIN: Essentially I invited him to come back to Los Angeles which would be good for our Jewish community and also important for him. Begin cutely asked me why, and I told him because it was here that his public life was interrupted when his wife, Aliza, died and he never gave his scheduled speech at an Israel Bond dinner. Begin corrected me saying, "I was supposed to give two speeches."

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** Is there a chance that Begin will come back to public life?

RABBI ZELDIN: Yes, perhaps not to public political life but certainly to public social life. His visit to his wife's grave on the second anniversary of her death was his first foray out of the confines of his home since last year. It was very difficult to arrange my visit because everyone said, "He's a recluse, he sees no one." It was only through sheer determination, perseverance and the help of his closest confidant, Yecheil Kadishai, that it happened.

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** How about his health, the reports are that he suffers from Alzheimer's disease?

RABBI ZELDIN: I didn't detect it during the half-hour visit with him. Also in the room were his daughter and the Minister of Transportation Chaim Corfu and his wife, who live in the same building and bring him cookies every Saturday night to celebrate Motzei Shabbos. He did look a bit frail but he was razor sharp, as alert an individual as I've ever seen. For example, I said to him, "If you come to Los Angeles, I've arranged for Hebrew Union College to give you an honorary doctorate." And with a smile he replied, "To quote my friend Winston Churchill, 'I have more honorary doctorates than examinations I have passed.'" Now you can't tell me such a person is suffering from Alzheimers and if so, it must be the very early stages. At the end of the interview, he stood and shook my hands; he was strong and virile.

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** Other than a possible trip to Los Angeles, what matters did you discuss with him?

RABBI ZELDIN: Jewish education. In the back of his mind was the Farrakhan affair but was afraid to go into it.

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** Why?

RABBI ZELDIN: I was afraid to impose on his time. Since I was granted a limited visit, I needed to use it for my mission which was to invite him to Los Angeles. He was especially interested in our temple's schools which have over 2,000 children. Mrs. Corfu asked, "And they're all studying Hebrew?" Of course, of the 2,000, 500 are infant toddlers who don't even speak. So I did answer "yes" excusing it in my own mind because, although they can't really speak, they say the Hamotzi before eating food and are taught Hebrew holiday songs. During the discussion, my guide told Mr. Begin that the Israeli public still loves him. He responded, "How do you know that?" I believe he still feels rejected by the Israelis because of Lebanon. "You'll have to show me they still love me," continued Begin. And she replied, "Everybody loves you, everybody respects you even those who disagree with you politically." I think the same. Only in America, they gave Begin bad press; the superliberals called him a "dishonest person," they accused him of all kinds of trickery. They fail to understand that Begin is first an Orthodox Jew and as such his word is his bond. He has an integrity and honesty beyond what most American politicians have. Unfortunately, the press and superliberals — even the Jewish community — see him as a "heavy."

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** He certainly made greater concessions for peace than any other Israeli leader.

RABBI ZELDIN: True, and I don't think the Labor

Government could have done what he did in Sinai.

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** Can the Labor Government do that with Jordan?

RABBI ZELDIN: Yes, I think they can do so now, but I don't know that Jordan wants to. The Israeli public is ready for a compromise solution if they can find someone to talk to but so far the Arabs have not been forthcoming. Part of their peace talk is of course a ploy to continue to receive American arms and assistance but I think there is the desire on the part of some Arabs to work out some type of political solution. The problem is that moderate Arabs who favor compromise with Israel are targets for assassination. Unfortunately, that's the Arab mentality.

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** Though you skirted the subject of Farrakhan with Mr. Begin, what is your assessment of the damage done to Black-Jewish relations?

RABBI ZELDIN: The Black community is the only major community in the United States where anti-Semitism is growing. That's why rabbis in Los Angeles have revived Black-Jewish dialogue. Although it's only rumor, I heard that when Mayor Bradley went to Israel to try to recoup his losses within the Jewish community following the Farrakhan affair, Begin refused to see him. That's how strongly Begin felt about it. Sensing his strong feelings, I mailed Begin two articles from the *L.A. Times* and the *Herald*



RABBI ISAAH ZELDIN

Examiner stating that Stephen S. Wise Temple was the major protestant of the Mayor's behavior during Farrakhan's visit. Even after the mayor finally condemned Farrakhan, he did so in waffling terms saying "there were undercurrents of anti-Semitism." That's not true. There were blatant anti-Semitic statements there. I'm not sure the mayor will be able to recoup his losses.

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** Should he?

RABBI ZELDIN: I don't know because he has been a good friend of the Jewish community and he is certainly one of the better of the blacks in Jewish affairs. He understands that he committed a grievous blunder. I recently took a survey of a very large class I teach and 50 percent said they would not vote for Bradley for Governor although 75 percent had voted for him in the last election. His campaign will also suffer because some who gave him money will not do so again.

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** How do you view the rise of Kahanism in Israel?

RABBI ZELDIN: It's a dangerous phenomenon because it's the first time the Jews have produced extremists of the rude indiscriminate nature. We've always had supremacists but not extremists who even advocate bigotry. That Kahane is attractive to high school students is symptomatic of what's happening all over the world. The black militants are the young blacks. The Moslem militants are the young Moslems. The youngsters don't have the tolerance to work out solutions; they want the quick fix. The

"quick fix" people are the radicals, the bigots.

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** But Kahane claims he's not a bigot, he doesn't hate Arabs but he's concerned they'll take over the Jewish state. What is the answer to the problem he raises?

RABBI ZELDIN: Farrakhan spent 10 minutes in Los Angeles denying his bigotry. Jesse Jackson says all the time, "Am I prejudiced, of course not?" The bigot is always the first to deny his bigotry. They all, Kahane and Farrakhan, talk about real problems but the answer cannot be a quick fix like in Kahane's case to evict a whole group of people. The ideal solution is one that has been worked out by university academics in Israel that has unfortunately received little publicity. Both Israel and Jordan would have equal leeway over the Arabs living in Judea and Samaria. The Arabs living there would vote in the Jordanian Parliament; the Jews for the Israeli Knesset. They would live together with each group having allegiance to its own country. Overall control over foreign affairs must be in Israel's hands until there is peace with her Arab neighbors. All other subjects — taxation, financing and water rights — are worked out jointly. That takes care of demography. If Arabs become more numerous who cares? They vote in Jordan. And Israel remains a democracy.

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** It sounds like a nice solution but will the Arab world accept it?

RABBI ZELDIN: Who cares? This solution is not on the backs of another people.

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** Why hasn't this solution been more openly advocated?

RABBI ZELDIN: Perhaps the Israelis see this as their solution when they eventually talk with the Arabs and don't want the Arabs to shoot it down prior to negotiations.

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** Speaking of Jesse Jackson, how did you respond to his going to Geneva and pleading the case of Soviet Jewry?

RABBI ZELDIN: It was his right to go but who needs him? I don't want him as spokesman for oppressed Jews in the Soviet Union. It was an obvious ploy just prior to his announcement that he'll again seek the Presidency in 1988. His rainbow coalition turned out to be one color and a failure; he didn't even get the Chicano vote and he won't because he's another extremist. He cannot win a national election because he is a left winger. He is against the American position all over the world in addition to his positions on the Jewish issue.

Anyone who equates the taking and killing of innocent hostages, as on the Achillo Lauro, with the accidental killing of Arab women and children caused by a terrorist retaliation like the Tunis raid, is a bigot because in the first case, innocents are the targets and no regrets are expressed. In Israel's case, innocents were killed accidentally and regrets were expressed by Israel. And when Jackson, a Christian minister, can't make that distinction on morality, then he's an anti-Semite. I have no problem calling Jesse Jackson an anti-Semite.

● **ISRAEL TODAY:** Should Reform and Conservative Jews stop supporting Israel if the Orthodox Rabbinate continues to hold the power?

RABBI ZELDIN: Not if the Orthodox Rabbinate has its present sway but if that control begins to encroach on American Jewry then that's different.

Half of the Reform community and, I dare say, half the Conservative community will withhold its support of Israel — both financial and political. Israel is kept alive by the United States. That's why numbers of Jews are important. Without numbers, our influence on American policy dies and then Israel withers.

I am probably the most Zionist Rabbi in the Reform movement — certainly in Los Angeles — and if I tell you that if the Law of Return is amended, Israel will no longer get my support, you can imagine the falloff. No one likes to be called illegitimate and then asked for support. No one likes to be called a "mamzer," least of all me. But I don't think it will happen because Israel will not cut off its nose to spite its face.

R/Orth

December 26, 1986
14 Tevet 5746

The Honorable Rudolph E. Boschwitz
Senator from Minnesota
Washington, D.C.

Dear Rudy:

Just a few brief comments concerning your post-script on my recent letter:

a/ I, too, have been concerned about the battling between Orthodox and Reform. The truth of the matter is that the "rift" isn't anywhere near as great as it is bruited to be. Indeed, the rift within Orthodoxy is far more severe (we don't cut each other's beards off, do we?).

b/ I have never added to the vitriolic rhetoric. Indeed, I have gone out of my way to stress that I do not attack Orthodoxy as such but only a politicized Orthodoxy which excludes rather than includes. In order to help you to understand what I am about I enclose herewith a copy of my recent Biennial address (see pages 8-10).

c/ A didactic matter: It is not the Reformed rabbinate or Reformed Jewry but rather Reform in both cases. We consider ourselves to be continuing the process of development. The task is not complete, hence the briefer designation.

d/ I don't think you address more Jewish audiences than I do, unless you give more than 165 speeches during the year. That was my count for the last calendar year.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

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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

December 6, 1985

The Honorable Rudolph E. Boschwitz
Senator from Minnesota
Washington, D.C.

Dear Rudi:

As a member of the Board of the United Israel Appeal, I am aware of your efforts to gain government grants for our refugee absorption programs. Your help was crucial in effecting these allocations and I write merely to let you know how grateful we all are. Your support in these and so many other ways is profoundly appreciated.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Thanks, Rabbi
I am most concerned
about the battling between the Orthodox &
Reformed Rabbinate which the Congregants
have shown the good sense not to involve
themselves — I am on the plane to Miami to
address a Jewish audience; I suppose I address
more of them than you — I never ask what
kind of Jew they are & speak fervently
of unity. Some Orthodox are
mashugana but we
shouldn't

Dignify that with a response
from



Onto/Pel
December 4, 1985

Rabbi Stuart G. Weinblatt
Temple Solel
2901 Mitchellville Road
Bowie, MD 20716

Dear Stuart:

Thank you for your lengthy letter and also for sending me a copy of your excellent sermon.

Unfortunately, there isn't much I can tell you that will help you. I, too, wasn't pleased with the K'lal Yisrael resolutions discussions. It was the most unsatisfactory of the debates on the various resolutions. The others were on a high level and very much to the point. This one wandered all over and conveyed the wrong impression.

There are only two things that you ought to know: First of all, I obviously cannot control the debate on the floor of the Biennial, that is full and free and we have to take our chances there. Democracy will have its say; ~~most~~ most of the time it works out well, at other times it does not work out too satisfactorily.

Secondly, you ought to know that I do not participate in the meetings of the President's Message Committee, nor do I give them any kind of directions other than in my initial presentation, copies of which they receive and with which they work. This committee is free to alter, amend, reject, to do, in effect, what it wishes to do. As a matter of fact, I don't even present them with a draft of any kind of a resolution, I merely present them with my address, period. I don't know, therefore, what motivated them to delete the passage to which you refer in your letter. If you are really interested in pursuing this, you might write to Allan Goldman, who was chairman of our committee, and who may well remember precisely what transpired and why it transpired. I do vaguely recall that the committee took into account some of its discussions which took place on the floor on Sunday afternoon in preparing their revised version for Monday's Plenary Session.

Rabbi Stuart G. Weinblatt
December 4, 1985
Page two

As I recall it also, this was the one resolution on which the debate was conducted essentially by rabbis, I really don't recall too many laymen or laywomen participating in the discussion on this issue. It is quite clear, that a substantial segment of our rabbinic constituency is aggrieved by the reckless and relentless attacks on Reform by the radical right within Orthodoxy and they gave expression to their feelings in making their comments on this resolution.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

P.S. Allan Goldman can be reached at 347 Conway, Los Angeles, California 90024. His telephone number is 213-556-8000.



temple solel

2901 MITCHELLVILLE ROAD • BOWIE, MD • 20716 • 249-2424

November 26, 1985

Stuart G. Weinblatt
Rabbi

Louis J. Cashdan

Rabbi Emeritus

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

Dear Alex:

I just wanted to convey to you some of my concerns and frustrations over the consideration of the "K'lal Yisrael" resolution at the UAHC biennial in Los Angeles. It troubles me that the tone of discussion was not indicative of a spirit of reconciliation. I did not feel that the deliberations were conducted with a sense of "ahavat Yisrael." There seemed to be such a great fear of the possibility of making any accommodations and of even appearing to grant Orthodoxy any voice over our status that people reacted viscerally to what should have been a non-controversial resolution.

I found especially appalling the fact that a rabbi stood on the floor of the plenary session on Sunday and quoted a statement appearing in the New York Times by the head of the Orthodox movement which blamed Reform Judaism for the divisiveness of the Jewish people. Yet the following paragraph in which the same Orthodox leader indicated that the ad to which you referred in the Jewish Post and Opinion was not at all reflective of the Orthodox world was not mentioned. As a result, the rhetoric served the purpose of further inflaming the discussion by conveniently leaving out the conciliatory statement. This was extremely unfair and provocative, prejudicing the nature of the entire discussion. Why did this go unchallenged?

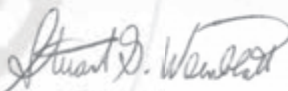
I am also most anxious to know why the final resolution merely calls for "dialogue with mutual respect" and calls upon... "all the movements in Jewish life to engender a constructive approach to many of the issues which we as Jews confront." The wording of the original resolution which called for us to "promote healing and strengthen cooperation" and to "lessen the tensions among us, and raise the level of understanding and cooperation among us," was deleted. Consequently, we are left with a resolution which basically calls for dialogue but does not see as the purpose of the dialogue the reduction of tensions among our people. When I took the floor to ask if the deletion was intentional, I was told it was. However, no reason for leaving out these important words was ever

given. The final resolution is one which calls for dialogue but contains so many qualifying clauses that it reflects the very stresses and strains, so detrimental to the Jewish people that the original resolution sought to ease and reduce.

Needless to say there were many very important issues that were considered at the biennial. While all are important, obviously some of the motions do not have a direct programmatic impact upon Jewish life, but are meant to state our position on various issues. This particular resolution, however, has a direct impact upon the way in which our movement is perceived, upon the way our leaders will conduct themselves in this matter, and the way in which members of reform congregations perceive the movement's position, and may guide their actions and thinking. In this light, it is extremely troubling and disturbing to think that such a resolution was enacted and speaks for American Reform Judaism. Your comments would be greatly appreciated.

Incidentally, I am enclosing a copy of a sermon which I delivered on Yom Kippur on this issue as well as a sermon which I delivered on Rosh Hashanah in which I make use of the midrash about the birds and wings, which you tell so beautifully, (and which is faithfully attributed to you). With best wishes for a Happy Chanukah and much continued success in all your holy efforts, I am,

Cordially yours,



Stuart G. Weinblatt

Enclosures



Are We One?

A classical joke is told about a man, Samuel Berkowitz, who was alone on a desert island for a number of years. He had given up all hope of ever being discovered and had resigned himself to making the best of his situation. One day the pilot of an airplane which had wandered off-course spotted the man and the structures he had built, and a few days later, he was rescued. As Berkowitz was preparing to leave, a member of the rescue party asked him about the strange looking building he had built near his rather comfortable looking home.

Berkowitz, who was an observant Jew, told those who were escorting him off the island, "That's the synagogue I built." Everyone exclaimed how amazing and remarkable it was that he would build such a magnificent synagogue all by himself. Just as they were about to leave, someone saw another equally magnificent synagogue. When asked to explain why he would build two synagogues on such a small island where he was the only inhabitant, he responded, "One is the Shul where I daven, and the other is the one I wouldn't be caught dead in!"

While this joke has been around for quite some time, unfortunately, it takes on an especially poignant and tragic sense of relevance today.

Although we Jews have learned that we can never ignore the peril presented by prejudice and anti-semitism, and that we must remain on guard to thwart actions directed against Jews by non-Jews, the sad truth is that Jews say things about each other which can be as hateful as the diatribes of anti-semites. As a result, I am even more troubled by those actions against Jews which emanate from Jews. It is deeply troubling to me to look at the state of polarization and increased tensions between segments of the Jewish community today.

An advertisement in last week's Jewish Post and Opinion taken out by a group of Orthodox rabbis, the Agudas Harabonim, "warns not to pray in Reform or Conservative Temples." It goes on to say, "Every Jew must make every effort to find an Orthodox synagogue to pray in, and absolutely not to enter a Reform or Conservative Temple. If you do not have an Orthodox synagogue within walking distance then you should pray at home even on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur."

Ironically, the advertisement concluded with the words, "Wishing Klal Israel a Kesivah v'chasimah tovah." - "Wishing all the household of Israel that you may be sealed and inscribed for good life." It is the equivalent of someone signing a hate letter or a kidnappers' ransom note, or the like with the epitaph, "Have a nice day."

For what may be the first time since World War II, a bar mitzvah ceremony was recently held in Krakow, Poland. Unfortunately, 13-year-old Eric Strom's attempt to bring some joy to a dying Jewish community was marred by the apparent insensitivity of all sides in the dispute between the rabbi of his family's congregation, Emily Korzevick and the Orthodox community from America who insisted that she not officiate.

Conversions performed by conservative and reform rabbis are not accepted by Orthodox rabbis here or in Israel. Yet liberal rabbis who want to perform conversion *הפסד* 'כפ', according to Halacha are not allowed to use the mikveh in Baltimore and many other cities. Many communities, including Baltimore and Washington, have two rabbinic organizations - one for liberal rabbis and one for Orthodox.

Certain corners of the Orthodox world are afraid of even having any contact with Reform rabbis, and place in "herem" those who do. They seem so caught up in their own holiness and minutiae of ritual that they overlook basic Jewish ethics which remind us, *כִּי יֵשׁ לָנוּ* "all of Israel is responsible for one another," and of the importance of "ahavat Yisrael" - love of our fellow Jews.

The fanaticism is seen in North America as well as in Israel. The gap presented by intolerance is growing.

The fanaticism and distrust can take many forms. I am reminded of the Hasidic rabbi who passed away. A great meal was prepared for him in the heavens above. Before he partook of the meal, however, he first asked, "Who will be the mashgiach (supervisor of Kashrut)?" He was told "Hakadosh Baruch Hu -- The Holy One Blessed be He, will be the mashgiach." To which the rabbi replied, "Well, just to be safe, I still think I will have just a glass of water."

The litany of intolerance goes on. But it is not one-sided, and there is often justification for the Orthodox criticisms levelled against Reform Judaism.

I have heard all too many Reform rabbis rail against Orthodoxy with a passionate vehemence. As a defense mechanism, their hatred of the Orthodox movement leads them to bitterly condemn them whenever possible.

I was embarrassed last year when the Ambassador of Israel was verbally abused, mistreated, and even booed last year by reform rabbis at the Central Conference of American Rabbis convention when discussing issues of religious pluralism in Israel and the status of the Reform movement. He received this disrespect not at the hands of anti-semites or non-Jews, but from rabbis. He told me afterwards, "In all my years of public service, I have never been treated this way."

I once spoke with a member of a Reform Temple in Texas while waiting in an airport lounge. We got around to discussing Israel, religion, and so on. He told me, "My rabbi gets so upset that he can't perform marriages in Israel." I asked if he ever had any congregants want to get married there, or if anyone in Israel has ever wanted him to officiate. He told me, "No. But it makes me upset at the Orthodox for upsetting him." I do not believe it is our job as rabbis to make Jews upset with other Jews.

We simply cannot go on fighting in this manner. This is not what Judaism is all about. Somehow we need to tone down the rhetoric on all sides, and reaffirm the common ground on which we stand.

The Orthodox community is not as monolithic as some believe it to be. In February when I visited Israel, I went to Meah Shearim to purchase rimonim and a yad for our small Torah. I went to a shop where I had purchased some items once before, which is owned by a Hasidic couple. As a result of my visits, I have gotten to know the woman proprietor somewhat, and she knows that I am a Reform rabbi. We have talked about many things, including some of her experiences during the Holocaust. I was surprised, but moved when on my last visit she said to me about my work as a Reform rabbi, "You are doing a very important thing. It is good what you are doing. May God help you." This was an Orthodox woman speaking - in Meah Shearim!

Somehow, we need to develop a greater respect for each other. I am reminded of the question in the Talmud, "At what point may one begin to recite the morning prayers?" Different possibilities were suggested - after midnight, prior to dawn, or after dawn. The rabbis determined that the morning prayers should be recited "when there is enough light for a man to recognize his brother." What a beautiful insight! We cannot pray the morning prayers until we can see each other. Our religion is based upon the concept of caring for one another. We are commanded to love our fellow Jews, to have an appreciation for the concept of "Klal Yisrael," the community of Israel. Yet where is that love today?

Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, an Orthodox rabbi who is director of the National Jewish Resource Center is keenly aware of the problem. In a recent paper entitled "Will there be one Jewish people by the Year 2000?" he points out the parameters of the problem. Reform disregard for the Orthodox tradition in matters pertaining to conversion, patrilineal descent, the non-requirement for a get, and so on, may lead to a situation where "within two decades 15-20% of American Jewry will be socially and halachically separated from traditional Jews." He fears "a cycle of alienation, hostility, and withdrawal that will lead to a sundering of the Jewish people into two religions or two social groups, fundamentally divided and opposed to each other."

To me, this scenario is both frightening and horrifying, and one which we must seek to prevent. Are we, the post-Holocaust generation, doomed to preside over the demise of our people?

Rabbi Harold Schulweis writing in Moment magazine describes the present situation, "Jewish religious leaders and Jewish religious institutions are de facto delegitimized; their marriages are not marriages; their conversions are not conversions, their divorces are not divorces, their houses of worship are declared off limits... Growing in intensity, it now threatens to isolate important Jewish sub-communities."

The truth of the matter is that divisiveness has confronted our people many times in the past as well. There have always been various ways to interpret Torah and the Way of God. In the time of the Talmud, the great schools of Hillel and Shammai debated and disputed every point of law. Yet their sons and daughters could marry each other. And the Talmud tells us, *אלו ואלו דברי אלהים חיים* "These and these (referring to both schools of thought) are both words of the living God." The works of Maimonides, the great Jewish medieval scholar were disputed and burned by his opponents. In Europe, the mitnagdim and Hasidim argued fiercely. Let us not be idyllic or nostalgically portray a false past in which there was always harmony and unity among our people.

But the Talmud warns against this kind of visceral hatred. It tells us that Jerusalem fell, not because of the assault of the Romans, but because of *מלכות אדם* unfounded hatred by Jews of each other. How sophisticated of our sages to realize that the greatest threat to our people is not external, but internal. In this context, the intensity of today's disputes is especially troubling.

We should feel there is something special about our fellow Jews. We can't just discuss this notion in the abstract. We have to feel it, and live it. We can't proclaim "We Are One" for fundraising purposes, demonstrate together on behalf of Israel and Soviet Jews and then go back to our own self-imposed shtets of isolation.

Our strength comes from our unity and diversity, not from our narrow-minded rejection of each other. As a united community, we pulled together and rescued an ancient Jewish community through Operation Moses. Yet when we stand divided, as in the recent dispute over the necessity of t'villah for the Ethiopians, we look foolish.

I believe we need to take actions to heal the internal rift, even if they are painful and even if it requires compromise. There must be greater dialogue among the traditionalists and liberal movements. We start from the outset, recognizing that we cannot and will not agree on everything, or even on most issues, but hopefully we can come away with a greater understanding. We may come to realize that we are all seeking to fulfill our Divine Mission, that we are all struggling with attempting to grapple with God's demands on us and the pull of modernity, and finally, that we are each working desperately to perpetuate Judaism and the Jewish people. We fight the same battles against apathy and assimilation. We can strengthen each other and learn from each other.

When I travelled to Europe and Israel this past year as part of the UJA Rabbinic Cabinet, rabbis from all branches of Judaism travelled and studied together. One of the younger Orthodox rabbis spoke very movingly at the end of the trip about how much he had learned from his Reform and Conservative colleagues. We are so busy on a national level with inter-faith dialogues and services - we need to undertake the same kind of effort with our fellow Jews.

Rabbi Greenberg's National Jewish Resource Center has already established six groups around the country to work in this format. In talking about the branches of Judaism, he points out that, "Each group is strengthened by the greater effectiveness of the other. Each group should be building up the other, for its own sake as well as for the greater good of Klal Yisrael." Reform can learn from the Orthodox the meaningfulness of a life devoted to Torah. The Orthodox can learn from Reform the imperative of universalistic teachings in Judaism and of the importance of social action. The conservative movement can contribute its attempts to grapple with maintaining tradition while innovating in various areas, and so on.

It is reassuring to know that Rabbi Greenberg, an Orthodox rabbi writes:

"Delegitimization of the other denominations diverts each one from facing its own real issues. When the Orthodox totally deny Conservative and Reform, they can dismiss the women's question as something which has been raised by the non-Orthodox and therefore illegitimate. This distracts the Orthodox from facing the challenge of inequities in Halacha, such as in divorce, and from facing the fact that they have not fully incorporated 50% of the talent and religious potential of their community.

"When the Conservative and Reform define their own legitimacy by dismissing the Orthodox, they end up defining success as breaking with the rigidity of the past. Thus, for example, translating prayers into English is mistakenly believed to solve the problem of worship. They fail to face the fundamental problem of prayer, of modern man's difficulties with prayer, and of how we can pray out of power as we have prayed out of powerlessness.

"To solve their internal problems, each group needs the help and presence of the other."

An experiment in Denver worked extremely well for a number of years. The Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox rabbis all taught the same conversion program and certified each other's conversions. This meant that conversions performed by Reform rabbis had full legitimacy and standing in the Orthodox community! It required some give and take on the part of all involved. The Orthodox rabbis ceded on two critical points. They did not insist on the full level of kashut or Sabbath observance. They did however, insist that the practices and their reasons be taught and encouraged, and that the individual converts agree to commit themselves to some level of observance of the dietary laws and the Sabbath.

For Reform rabbis, it meant giving up some autonomy. For the Orthodox, it meant recognizing that some would practice less than desired. Many Orthodox would not be willing to make such a sacrifice. But I know many Reform rabbis, including a number on the faculty of the Hebrew Union College who would also oppose any attempt to impose any standards as being contrary to the spirit of Reform Judaism.

Quite simply, militant denominationalism prevents some in both camps from working together.

If there is anything we can learn from the increasing polarization of the religious and secular communities in Israel, however, it is that we are on the same side - we agree that religion can and should play a role in the life of our people.

At the upcoming convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations a resolution will be considered which states that, "...there are stresses and strains within the Jewish community which threaten schisms among us, to the detriment of North America's Jewish community, and, indeed, world Jewry.

"To promote healing and strengthen cooperation, channels of communication must be expanded among the branches within Judaism..."

The resolution reaffirms the Reform movement's commitment to K'lal Y'Israel.

I will report back to you in November and let you know what happens to this resolution. But regardless of the outcome, it is incumbent upon us to act now, before we become too fragmented, and while we still are one, to heal the wounds.



Rabbi Stuart G. Weinblatt
Temple Solel
September 1985
Rosh Hashana Morning

USES AND ABUSES OF EXCUSES

A story is told about a poor man in a shtetl who repeatedly tried unsuccessfully to meet with the wealthiest merchant in the city. Tired of constantly being rebuffed, one day he stood outside the man's mansion and made a fuss. He shouted at the top of his lungs, "My family is starving to death, yet you refuse to see me." Finally the rich man reluctantly came out of his home and gave the poor man some money. "Here are thirty rubles," he said. "But I want to tell you if you had not created such a big fuss, I would have given you sixty rubles." The beggar replied indignantly, "My dear sir. You are a merchant, and I don't tell you how to run your business. I am a schnorrer, so please - don't give me any advice on how to do mine!"

The merchant, like so many of us hid behind an excuse to justify his reluctance to give tzedekah. Many times in our lives, we use excuses to hide our true feelings from others, and even from ourselves, to explain why we do not do things we know we should.

There are people who tell me, "Rabbi, I never go to synagogue. It's against my religion." Invariably they will offer any of a series of lame excuses, such as - "Our children are already grown" - as if to imply that Judaism can only be appreciated by juveniles, and that they no longer have any responsibility to help sustain the Jewish community. Or perhaps someone will say, "I don't come to synagogue anymore because the shul I grew up in...[Fill in the blank] raised money on the holidays; didn't raise money on the holidays; had a rabbi I didn't like; had a rabbi I liked who "they got rid of;" and so on. Or perhaps someone will say, "I don't belong to a synagogue because everyone there is hypocritical." In one full swoop, they dismiss good, well-intentioned people who help sustain Jewish communal life. Sometimes I hear, "I don't have to go to synagogue to pray or feel Jewish. I feel Jewish in my heart." I am often tempted to respond, "Nu, and what about the rest of your body?" I could go on. Just like the individual in our story, the reasons given for not contributing to charity are also endless. Some people reason - "Well, all the UJA ever asks for is money, so I'm not giving them any." - obviously overlooking the many applications of these funds and the needy who depend on the assistance for their sustenance, and the numerous Jewish organizations supported by these donations. Or some may say, "I don't approve of this or that policy of the Israeli government." as their reason for not giving. The list of excuses is endless. But they are just that - excuses.

In a recent column about exercise, sports enthusiast, Sally Squires, cites and refutes the primary reasons people offer for not exercising. Among the excuses given are lack of time, boredom with exercise, and so on. Her point is equally applicable to any situation. We can use rationalization to make it seem as if we have a good solid reason for not doing something we are not interested in doing, anyway.

This morning we read the potent and gripping drama of Abraham and Isaac. As our sages point out, when Abraham received the call from God to sacrifice his son, he had any of a number of options. He could have challenged God and argued with him. Or he could have ignored the demand, and just pretend he didn't hear the command. He could have continued to carry on his affairs as if nothing had ever happened. Or he could have made an excuse of some sort. Perhaps he would have said, "I can't take my son to the mountain, because I am busy." Or he could have said as some of us do when shirking our responsibilities to our religion, "Isaac can't come because he has soccer practice tomorrow." But Abraham chose not to hide behind any excuse or rationalization. Rather, he went forward and proceeded on his journey. We learn from the example of the courage of Abraham and Isaac the importance of making difficult choices, of coming to terms with ourselves and of not blaming others or lame excuses for our own shortcomings.

Looking at another Biblical parable, we find that Adam tried to hide from God in the Garden of Eden by taking refuge behind a fig leaf. When asked by God about his eating the forbidden fruit, he set the precedent for later generations. He immediately blamed his wife. Not to be outdone, she in turn blamed the serpent. In this story, Adam and Eve were not willing to accept responsibility for their own actions and own up to what they had done. Significantly, God calls out to Adam, א"י "Where are you?" The rabbis point out that God, who is omniscient and omnipresent obviously knew where Adam was. Rather, the point of the question was that Adam had to honestly come to terms with his actions and its consequences. The rabbis teach that the question was really addressed to all generations, and for all time. In many respects, life is an ongoing struggle and attempt to respond to the question, א"י "Where are you?" Religion helps us along our way to find the answer.

Yet another Biblical story offers a similar message. When Cain has slain his brother, Abel, God asks the seemingly naive question, א"י אֵלֶּיךָ אָבִיךָ "Where is Abel, your brother?" Cain answers somewhat feebly, אֲנִי אֶלֶּיךָ "Am I my brother's keeper?" Once again, an excuse is offered in which Cain tries to avoid honestly confronting the question God raised.

Herein lies the problem with excuses. It prevents us from evaluating whether what we have done is right or wrong and whether our actions and ways need to be corrected.

The High Holidays offer us the chance to confront our true selves and see who and what we are, to ask ourselves, "Where are We?" Are we our brother's keeper, and other poignant and penetrating queries into our psyche and conscience. Too often we are too quick to blame others for our circumstances and misfortunes. Yet I have seen people emerge from the depths of depression and adversity and make a difference in their life and in the life of others.

When I visited Israel in February I met a remarkable man, Menachem Perlmuter, the director of agricultural research for the Negev. He is one of those individuals who helped to make the desert bloom and who takes great pride in the strides Israel has made. He spoke to the Rabbinic

Cabinet of the UJA late in the afternoon, at a time when we were all exhausted. Yet he electrified us with his enthusiasm for Israel's accomplishments. He concluded his address by telling us that he is one of those Jews who has a number on his arm, having spent time in Aushwitz. He said, "I have seen in my own lifetime and with my own hands the prophecy of Ezekiel come true, in which dry bones and the valley of the dead was brought to life."

When I was working at the Religious Action Center a few years ago, I met a couple, Mr. & Mrs. Ken Nathanson who had suffered a tragic loss. Their 14 year old daughter had been killed by a drunk truck driver whose license had been revoked and reinstated a number of times. Devastated and overcome with grief, they wanted to channel their bitterness and anger into a positive outlet. Starting from nothing with absolutely no organizational or grassroots support, they set out to change the country's attitudes and the nation's laws so that convicted drunk drivers would not be treated so lightly. They wanted to make it more difficult for them to regain their license. As a direct result of their efforts, laws in almost every state have been revised and chapters of MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, have sprung up throughout America.

There are numerous other inspiring instances of people who refused to rely on excuses or to feel sorry for themselves. Not all of us can have as dramatic an impact upon others as these two examples. But the point is that only when we strip away the defense mechanisms we rely upon to prevent ourselves from honestly assessing our actions, can we help ourselves. A Yiddish proverb says it all - "People who can't dance say the musicians can't keep time." It is so easy to make excuses.

A story is told of a youngster who longingly looked at a mountain and said, "If I had the wings of an angel, I would fly to the top of that beautiful mountain." Then after thinking a little longer he thought, "I do not have wings, but I do have feet and legs with which to reach the top."

We should try to make the best of what we have and not be so busy worrying about what we don't have. Rabbi Alexander Schindler tells the story from the midrash that when God created the dove, the birds were troubled because he was created without wings. They complained to God, "We are awkward because we have no beaks to defend ourselves and no means of flight." So God gave them wings. But they came back a few days later and said, "We asked for something to enable us to defend ourselves and you have given us these wings which are so bulky and make it even more difficult to escape our attackers."

God replied, "Silly birds. Those wings are heavy on your back only because you do not use them. But if you use them, the skies will be yours to command as they will carry you in flight."

The analogy is made to our mitzvot. As Rabbi Schindler pointed out, they may seem to be a burden, but that is the case only if we do not use them. In reality they can lift us upwards towards the heavens - but only if we use them. At this Rosh Hashana, let us consider how we use the wings and tools God has given us.

Perhaps we do not spend as much time with our children as we know we should. We may claim to be so busy with our work that we don't have the time to spend with our spouse and family. Children are just as guilty - when they offer lame excuses for not cleaning their room, doing their homework, or extending kindness to their siblings.

Joseph Albo writes about elements of repentance in the Medieval classic, Sefer he-Ikkarim, "the elements of repentance by which a person may be cleansed of his iniquities and purified of his sin before God are correction of thought, speech and act. Correction of thought means that he should feel regret on account of his sins. Correction of speech signifies that he should confess his transgressions; while correction of act denotes that he should take it upon himself never again to return to his folly, but should do instead such acts as would indicate that the former were done in error and unintentionally....

"It is also clear...that self-excuse prevents repentance. For if a man thinks that excusing himself for his sin will avail him, he will never regret the doing of it, nor confess his sin. Such a one is called a man "who covers his transgressions, as Solomon says: He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper (Proverbs 28.13). Covering one's sin means to make something else responsible for one's sin..."

The trait that many found most distasteful during President Nixon's handling of the Watergate crisis which ultimately drove him from office was his inability to accept responsibility for the errors of his ways. He reassured us with those immortal words that rank alongside the Gettysburg Address, "I am not a crook." He constantly, and to this very day blamed others. Recent research reveals the inadequacies of President Kennedy, but he will always be fondly remembered, in part for his willingness to accept the blame for the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961.

Today is Yom Hadin. The Day of Judgement. May we judge ourselves openly and honestly. Today is Yom Hazikaron, the Day of Remembrance. May we remember to look into our souls.

As we reflect upon our lives on this new year, as God asks of each of us וְהָיָה "Where are you?" may we respond to God and to ourselves with integrity and conviction.

Ortho/r

November 26, 1985

Mr. Stanton C. Selbst
148 Ralph Avenue
White Plains, N.Y. 10606

Dear Mr. Selbst:

I appreciate your thoughtful note and the earnestness of your concern.

We do have some divergent views concerning tactics. In order to get anyone to reach out to someone who has maligned him it is necessary to first acknowledge the malignment and to regret it. Note if you will what Amos did (see his Chapter 1). First he identified himself with the pain of Isaac and only then did he berate Israel for its sins.

In any event, why should malignities go unanswered, false charges unrefuted? These violate any sense of justice even beyond the tactical considerations which are at stake.

With thanks and all good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

STANTON C. SELBST
148 RALPH AVENUE
WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK 10606

Nov 20, 1985

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

I was privileged to hear your comments tonight at the JCC and also to have read your speech at the recent VAHC Convention.

One of the many pressing issues of our times is the issue of Klal Yisrael. I know that you have obvious and sincere concern for it. However, I wonder if you do justice to this concern with your many "swipes" at Orthodoxy & Orthodox Rabbis. Differ we may; differ we will, but I believe you give a mixed signal to your audience with jokes and stories that seem to denigrate. Perhaps the total Orthodox establishment will never find a way to deal with non-Halachic Judaism, but we must find a way to deal with them, not for their sake, but for ours, lest the Temple be destroyed again because of the divisions in the Jewish Community. I trust you will consider this.

Respectfully yours,
Stanton C. Selbst

Special Report: UAHC General Assembly

Schindler's War On Militant Orthodoxy

By Yehuda Lev

LOS ANGELES—Rabbi Alexander Schindler declared war on militant Jewish Orthodoxy and Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley tried to make peace with California's Jewish voters as 3,000 leaders of the Reform movement met last weekend in Los Angeles for the 58th General Assembly of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

In an atmosphere otherwise devoid of conflict, Schindler, president of the UAHC, denounced Orthodox leaders who "presume to know just which rites and prayers are and are not acceptable to the Almighty." He lashed out at several Orthodox leaders who published an advertisement in American-Jewish newspapers stating that Orthodox Jews should not attend High Holiday services rather than hear the sound of the shofar in Conservative or Reform synagogues.

Bradley, who has been at odds with the California Jewish leadership since he refused to speak out against Black Muslim preacher Louis Farrakhan before Farrakhan spoke in Los Angeles in September, came as close as a politician ever does to admitting that he made a mistake in judgment. In what would normally have been a routine convention greeting from the mayor of a host city, Bradley used the opportunity to tell the Jewish community that he regretted his assumption that Farrakhan would control his anti-Semitism during his Los Angeles appearance. Bradley is considering running for governor of California next year against George Deukminjian who narrowly defeated him in their last race.

Other significant developments at the General Assembly included:

- Approval by voice of a resolution asking all Reform congregations to treat with compassion the victims of AIDS and urging increased federal spending for research on the fatal disease;

- Encouragement of the development of Reform day schools while continuing to support public schools. The move toward increased support for day schools in the Reform movement had twice been defeated in earlier General Assemblies;

- An announcement that the Reform movement has replaced the Conservative movement as the branch of American Judaism with the largest number of adherents;

- A surprisingly mild resolution urging an expansion of avenues of communication among all branches of Judaism, which did not mention the problems with Orthodoxy stressed by Schindler;

- A demand that the Jewish Agency allocate \$20 million for Reform institutions in Israel during the next fiscal year and a total of \$88 million over the next five years;

- A request that Reform congregations place more stress on prayer and that the subject of prayer for Reform Jews be a major topic at the next biannual Assembly, to convene in Chicago in 1987.

Appearances by Abba Eban, Wolf Blitzer, Norman Lear and Joel Grey sparked a series of meetings and dinners at which little in the way of con-

troversy interfered with the normal routines of national Jewish assemblies.

Jewish Agency Demand

The two measures adopted by the delegates that promise to have the most far reaching results are those concerned with day schools and financial demands on the Jewish Agency.

The day school issue is a recent development within the Reform movement, which has traditionally favored a strong public school system. Orthodoxy is the branch of Judaism most closely connected with day schools and only when busing became an issue in many American cities did interest in day schools begin to rise in the non-Orthodox communities.

In its resolution the UAHC rejected the possibility of accepting tuition tax credits for its schools. It adopted a program of teacher training and the preparation of program materials for Reform day schools. But the stress in the resolution was on support for the public schools, a move deemed necessary to gain the 2-1 majority in favor of the resolution that eventually resulted.



Rabbi Alexander Schindler

The demands being made on the Jewish Agency reflect a growing dissatisfaction within the Reform movement about the way in which religious institutions in Israel are allocated funds far in excess of those granted to their Reform and Conservative counterparts. Non-Orthodox elements in American Jewish life claim that the majority of funds raised through the United Jewish Appeal and transferred to the Jewish Agency come from non-Orthodox Jews who are subsidizing Orthodox institutions. The lines have become more clearly drawn since some Orthodox elements in Israel began urging changes in that country's "Law of Return" which would effectively disqualify non-Orthodox converts from inclusion in the ranks of the Jewish people.

The vote favoring the resolution is expected to enable Reform Jewish leaders who are members of the Jewish Agency's executive organs to increase their pressure for greater representation and increased influence.

The resolution on AIDS was brought to the floor by representatives of gay synagogues in San Francisco and Los Angeles. It proposes that the UAHC appoint a panel of medical experts to help it determine how to deal with the victims of AIDS in a compassionate and humane manner. Opposition to the resolution, which its sponsors expected to be significant, melted away after President Schindler personally sponsored the resolution in his opening address, thereby giving it the imprimatur of the UAHC leadership. □

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BARBARA R. MESSNER
8 SURREY LANE
GREAT NECK, NEW YORK 11023

no further

November 6, 1985

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

Der Rabbi Schindler:

In regard to your address in LA concerning the Orthodox Jewish leaders, as concerned, affiliated Reform Jews, we would like to say "right on". You said what needs to be said.

Sincerely,

Barbara and Arnold Messner
Barbara and Arnold Messner



CLAL

The National Jewish
Center for Learning
And Leadership

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

October 3, 1985

o/r

cc: Eric
return original
to me

Dear Alex,

Herschel Blumberg
Chairman
Rabbi Irving Greenberg
President
Robert Loup
Vice Chairman
William Spier
Treasurer
Harvey Arfa
Secretary
Paul Jeser
Exec. Vice President
Dr. David Elcott
Program Director

In June, you were kind enough to respond to my series of columns on, "Will There Be One Jewish People in the Year 2000?" I apologize for the long delay in responding to your letter, but for the past two months I have been away, trying to finish a book-length manuscript, and there has been no time for anything else. I appreciated our meeting.

The problem of divisiveness is a complicated one. I sense your own ambivalence, in that you have veered between suggesting that the problem is overstated and offering to sit down and work something out to avoid the split. Candidly, I think that's too easy, to say that there have been divisiveness and sectarianism in the past and that there will be no split. Over the course of history, there have been times when sectarianism led to fundamental splits in the Jewish people. They have tended to be times when the social dynamics, including marriage and personal status recognition, has broken down. That is the process I see happening right now, and why I sounded that alarm. As you know from reading my past work, I am not a gevald shreyer. This split is coming. It will take a major effort to prevent it.

You have every right to say that the Orthodox have been unyielding. I fully concede that the sweep to the right has created an atmosphere of hostility and of aggressiveness that makes it very difficult to have any sort of dialogue. Moreover, the moderates among the Orthodox are now terrorized, and reluctant to take any chances.

On the other hand, I think you have to face your responsibility in the matter. As I indicated, the patrilineal decision makes a lot of sense from an internal dynamics of Reform point of view, but it certainly is helping to create a situation in which those who are seeking a split in the Orthodox are strengthened and, equally important, the social dynamics become worse between the movements. I do not ask you to give up what you feel are the basic policy needs of the community that you represent. What I am suggesting is that every such step should automatically call forth a special effort in the other area. Let it be in the form of

a special attempt to go meet with the others; let it be in the form of an attempt to upgrade standards in areas that may be not only helpful to the movement but win over some of the more traditional elements. Thus, for example, your task force on standards of observance and Jewish education, I think, are excellent examples of the kind of thing that should be done. They need more publicity and more input from Orthodox people.

Perhaps you can help me obtain funds for a more thorough and systematic dialogue among the groups. It is my conviction that if we can recruit a younger group of scholars from all three groups and build them now, over a period of years, the dynamics of the Orthodox response will change down the road. There is also the possibility of more systematic recruitment of lay dialogue among the movements. Each of this needs time and attention and a willingness to participate. I would even suggest the possibility of some Reform matching money, so that we would then have to get Conservative and Orthodox kick-in as well, and share this cost. But I think a major infusion of time and energy in this area is absolutely necessary.

Right now, I cannot deliver the Orthodox establishment to any serious dialogue that would involve give-and-take. However, we are trying to build both grassroots and somewhat higher level rabbinic networks that can begin to create a different dynamics and background atmosphere within Orthodoxy. I also think I can now get some significant lay people to participate. I can only promise you that as we work our way closer I will be glad to take you up on your genuine offer to sit down and to work at it. Let me say that we are looking for some dramatic or high-visibility actions that can dramatize the will to unity. One of them is the possibility of some public symposiums, with broad-gauged community sponsorship, in a number of major cities, in which leading figures of each of the movements might appear together to explore the possibilities of dialogue and of cooperation as well as of growing toward each other. Perhaps when we have one of sufficient stature and visibility to warrant your participation, you would consider participating in such a program. Perhaps you could indicate to me who you think the counterparts should be for a program of that level. May I add, also, that your indication to me that you would sit down seriously with a group is helpful. I don't want to say too much because I can't yet deliver, but I believe we are making slow but steady progress. In the interim, I think that if you in good conscience review the matter, you perhaps could see your way clear to recognizing that the problem is serious and to make clear in a consistent way that you do not underestimate the problem, even if it takes two to tango and you can't do anything about it for the moment.

Warmest best wishes for a good year.

Sincerely yours,



Irving Greenberg

P.S. Your idea of using the Biennial platform to call for increased dialogues (including lay people as well), is a good one.

IG:vjo

Dr. J. P. Schuler

— 100

United States Senate

To: Rabbi Schindler

I agree with your statement
regarding the Bar Mitzvah
in Cracow - when you come
to D.C. I'll tell you of my father's
experience as a judge in family -
also my Rabbi in Minneapolis
criticized the Orthodox over the
High Holy Days in his sermon;
I will tell him I object to that too!



Yury

Excell

Comments by AMS on Reform Bar Mitzva in Cracow Synagogue

The Bar Mitzva was an altogether beautiful idea:
to bring a moment of joy to a dying community
to demonstrate to all the world that the evil designs of our
enemies came to nought, that the Jewish people lives.
Unfortunately the beauty and sanctity of this moment was marred
by orthodox extremists who resented the fact that
Reform Jews were the celebrants.
Their behavior was despicable...a chilul haschem
shunting people from one synagogue to another
tearing off talesim
Don't these people have anything better to do than to fight
their fellow Jews.
What a perversion of history to claim a monopoly on Polish Jewry.
The synagogue in which this service was held was dedicated
as a Reform Temple in 1844.
Polish Jewry was far from monistic.
It embraced many different kinds of Jews.
Among the Jews who lived and were butchered in Poland
were not just orthodox Jews, but also reform Jews and
non-religious and even anti-Religious Jews,
and Zionists and non Zionists and even anti-Zionists.
I suppose I ought to understand this kind of arrogance
and intolerance
orthodoxy has suffered a perceptuous decline over the
past generations
and intolerance is a sure sign of weakness
Besides, the world as a whole has gone mad with fundamentalists
why shouldn't we Jews have our ayatolas
Let the Jewish world know this:
Reform is an adjective it is not a noun.
The noun is Jew
And so we are Jews
and we will not be read out of the Jewish fold:
not in Israel, not in Europe,
nor anywhere else on this earth.

*al x.y. d.
made statement
to Press*

corrected copy

September 24, 1985

Mr. Sheldon Engelmayer
Editor
The Jewish Week
One Park Avenue
New York, New York 10016

Dear Mr. Engelmayer:

Congratulations to David C. Gross for his signed editorial criticizing the Rabbinical Council of America for stating that a non-Orthodox bar mitzvah "would be a betrayal of Jewish history" and for assailing the action of a rabbi who tore a prayer shawl from the shoulders of Rabbi Emily Korzenick at the bar mitzvah in Cracow. The foul deed of the rabbi was indeed despicable, marring the beauty and sanctity of a beautiful idea: to bring a moment of joy to a dying community, to demonstrate to all the world that the evil designs of our enemies came to naught, that the Jewish people lives.

Even more serious, however, is the perversion of history of which the Rabbinical Council of America is guilty in claiming a monopoly on Polish Jewry for Orthodoxy. In fact, Polish Jewry was far from monistic. Among the Jews of Poland slaughtered by the Nazis were not only Orthodox Jews but also Reform Jews and non-religious Jews, Zionists and non-Zionists. Indeed, the Temple synagogue in which the Bar Mitzvah eventually took place was dedicated as a Reform synagogue in 1844, and Polish Jewish life was enriched by the contributions of many Reform rabbis.

I suppose one ought to understand this kind of arrogance and intolerance. Orthodoxy has suffered a precipitous decline in recent generations, and intolerance is a sure sign of weakness.

Let the Jewish world know this: Reform is an adjective, not a noun. The noun is Jew. And we are Jews. We will not be read out of the Jewish fold, not in Israel, not in Europe, nor anywhere on earth.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

bc: Richard Cohen

September 23, 1985

Mr. Sheldon Engelmayer
Editor
The Jewish Week
One Park Avenue
New York, New York 10016

Dear Mr. Engelmayer:

Congratulations to David C. Gross for his signed editorial criticizing the Rabbinical Council of America for stating that a non-Orthodox bar mitzvah "would be a betrayal of Jewish history" and for assailing the action of a rabbi who tore a prayer shawl from the shoulders of Rabbi Emily Korzenick at the bar mitzvah in Cracow. The foul deed of the rabbi was indeed despicable, marring the beauty and sanctity of a beautiful idea: to bring a moment of joy to a dying community, to demonstrate to all the world that the evil designs for our enemies came to nought, that the Jewish people lives.

Even more serious, however, is the perversion of history of which the Rabbinical Council of America is guilty in claiming a monopoly on Polish Jewry for Orthodoxy. In fact, Polish Jewry was far from monistic. Among the Jews of Poland slaughtered by the Nazis were not only Orthodox Jews but also Reform Jews and non-religious Jews, Zionists and non-Zionists. Indeed, the Temple synagogue in which the Bar Mitzvah eventually took place enriched by the contributions of many Reform rabbis.

I suppose one ought to understand this kind of arrogance and intolerance. Orthodoxy has suffered a precipitous decline in recent generations, and intolerance is a sure sign of weakness.

Let the Jewish world know this: Reform is an adjective, not a noun. The noun is Jew. And we are Jews. We will not be read out of the Jewish fold, not in Israel, not in Europe, nor anywhere on earth.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

bc: Richard Cohen

The Cracow affair: A shocking spectacle

By DAVID C. GROSS

The joy that young Eric Strom brought to the aging and ancient Jewish community of Cracow by celebrating his bar mitzvah there was truly a mitzvah of the highest order. For 35 years, there had not been a similar celebration in Cracow, a city that once had a vast Jewish population and countless synagogues and yeshivot.

It is true, of course, that virtually all of Polish Jewry was strictly Orthodox, and it is understandable that some Orthodox Jews and rabbis would have looked askance at the fact that Eric's rabbi was a Reconstructionist and a woman.

In the scheme of things, however, did it really matter? The only thing that really counted was that an American Jewish youth was going to post-Nazi Poland to recite the traditional *haftarah* and to bring joy to a tiny group of elder-

ly Jews who would know that they, and Judaism itself, had not been obliterated in the Holocaust.

That is why it was shocking to read a statement issued by the Rabbinical Council of America, an Orthodox body, which said that the bar mitzvah, being non-Orthodox, "would be a betrayal of Jewish history."

What nonsense! And what a lack of sensitivity in these Days of Awe and soul-searching.

We wonder how many of the members of the Rabbinical Council really agreed with their leader's statement that holding a non-Orthodox bar mitzvah to bring a little *nachas* to a handful of aged Jews in post-Holocaust Poland was a "betrayal of Jewish history."

More importantly, the horrible spectacle—in full view of the world's media—of a rabbi tearing a prayer shawl off Rabbi Emily Korzenick was an unforgivable disgrace, a true *chilul Hashem*.

9/20/85

Richard Cohen Associates

Advertising / Public Relations

30 East 60th Street
New York, N.Y. 10022
(212) 758-6969

September 20, 1985

Dear Alex,

David Gross, former editor (now editorial consultant) of The Jewish Week, wrote the attached signed editorial expressing his outrage at the statement that a non-Orthodox bar mitzvah in Cracow would be "a betrayal of Jewish history." I'd like to send the following letter (signed by you) to The Jewish Week:

Congratulations to David C. Gross for his signed editorial criticizing the Rabbinical Council of America for stating that a non-Orthodox bar mitzvah "would be a betrayal of Jewish history" and for assailing the action of a rabbi who tore a prayer shawl from the shoulders of Rabbi Emily Korzenick at the bar mitzvah in Cracow. The foul deed of the rabbi was indeed despicable, marring the beauty and sanctity of a beautiful idea: to bring a moment of joy to a dying community, to demonstrate to all the world that the evil designs of our enemies came to nought, that the Jewish people lives.

Even more serious, however, is the perversion of history of which the Rabbinical Council of America is guilty in claiming a monopoly on Polish Jewry for Orthodoxy. In fact, Polish Jewry was far from monistic. Among the Jews of Poland slaughtered by the Nazis were not only Orthodox Jews, but also Reform Jews and non-religious Jews, Zionists and non-Zionists. Indeed, the Temple synagogue in which the Bar Mitzvah eventually took place was dedicated as a Reform synaogue in 1844, and Polish Jewish life was enriched by the contributions of many Reform rabbis.

I suppose one ought to understand this kind of arrogance and intolerance. Orthodoxy has suffered a precipitous decline in recent generations, and intolerance is a sure sign of weakness.

Let the Jewish world know this: Reform is an adjective, not a noun. The noun is Jew. And we are Jews. We will not be read out of the Jewish fold, not in Israel, not in Europe, nor anywhere on earth.

I urge this letter because my guess is that The Jewish Week will not run your statement that we sent out last Friday; they were closed Monday and Tuesday for the Jewish holiday, and by this time the story is probably too stale for them. But a letter along these lines will, I think, be published.

If you do send it, please have a copy mailed to me.

Sincerely,

Richard Cohen

Give Gross this letter - send it to Dick

September 17, 1985

Mrs. Gladys G. Goldstein, President
Temple Israel of New Rochelle
1000 Pinebrook Boulevard
New Rochelle, New York 10804

Dear Gladys:

Many thanks for sharing with me a copy of your fine letter to Rabbi Louis Bernstein of the Rabbinical Council of America. I appreciate your taking the time to write to him to express the distress of the families of Temple Israel regarding the situation at the recent Bar Mitzvah in Cracow.

There was a letter to the editor of the New York time from Rabbi Philip Hiat of the Union staff which appeared in the paper today. I trust you saw it. I also am pleased to enclose a statement on the subject which I made in response to a query from the press.

With warm regards and every good wish to you and your dear ones for a healthy and happy New Year, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Encl.

Temple Israel of New Rochelle

1000 Pinebrook Boulevard • New Rochelle, NY 10804 • BEvery 5-1800

September 13, 1985

Rabbi Louis Bernstein, President
The Rabbinical Council of America
275 Seventh Avenue
New York NY 10001

Dear Rabbi Bernstein:

On behalf of our congregation, may I express to you our sense of outrage at the unseemly controversy your organization created in Krakow last Shabbat.

In a country where millions of our fellow Jews died at the hands of those who made no distinction between Orthodox Jews and Jews who did not follow Orthodox ritual, the conflict you generated in the Krakow synagogue is in our opinion a sombre reminder that we have learned nothing from the Holocaust.

How unworthy we are of those who died to kindle before the eyes of the world a sterile divisiveness which diminishes our image and belittles our message of an eternal people. Those who had the courage to bring a Bar Mitzvah to a pitifully small and aged congregation should have been applauded for bearing hope to those beleaguered few who have somehow survived in Poland. Instead, they - and the whole world - were spectators at a kind of black comedy: a futile and eventually self-defeating struggle which the congregation rightly saw to be an intrusive irrelevancy.

The message of the Bar Mitzvah was rebirth and new hope. The message you tried to substitute was the message of Jewish disunity which has served us so ill in the past.

As Jews committed to the preservation of our people and our faith, we should walk together in dignity and abjure the internecine feuds which have been the counterpoint to our tragedies over the centuries.

Sincerely yours,

Gladys G. Goldstein
President

GGG:rkz

*Send this
copy to my statement*

9/12/85-
Comments by AMS on Reform Bar Mitzva in Cracow Synagogue

The Bar Mitzva was an altogether beautiful idea:
to bring a moment of joy to a dying community
to demonstrate to all the world that the evil designs of our
enemies came to nought, that the Jewish people lives.

Unfortunately the beauty and sanctity of this moment was marred
by orthodox extremists who resented the fact that
Reform Jews were the celebrants.

Their behavior was despicable...a chilul haschem
shunting people from one synagogue to another
tearing off talesim

Don't these people have anything better to do than to fight
their fellow Jews.

What a perversion of history to claim a monopoly on Polish Jewry.
The synagogue in which this service was held was dedicated
as a Reform Temple in 1844.

Polish Jewry was far from monistic.

It embraced many different kinds of Jews.

Among the Jews who lived and were butchered in Poland
were not just orthodox Jews, but also reform Jews and
non-religious and even anti-Religious Jews,
and Zionists and non Zionists and even anti-Zionists.

I suppose I ought to understand this kind of arrogance
and intolerance
orthodoxy has suffered a perceptuous decline over the
past generations
and intolerance is a sure sign of weakness

Besides, the world as a whole has gone mad with fundamentalists
why shouldn't we Jews have our ayatolas

Let the Jewish world know this:

Reform is an adjective it is not a noun.

The noun is Jew

And so we are Jews

and we will not be read out of the Jewish fold:
not in Israel, not in Europe,
nor anywhere else on this earth.

PHONE MEMO

TO AMS		DATE 8/15	TIME 3:39 AM
FROM M Danee Vardase		AREA CODE 714-9500	NUMBER
OF Yitz Greenberg's Secretary		EXTENSION	
MESSAGE	He would like to meet you on September 12 or thereafter. He is on vacation till then.		
	<i>over R/H</i>		
	<i>OK</i>		
	SIGNED		
PHONED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CALL BACK <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	RETURNED CALL <input type="checkbox"/>	WANTS TO SEE YOU <input type="checkbox"/>
			WILL CALL AGAIN <input type="checkbox"/>
			WAS IN <input type="checkbox"/>
			URGENT <input type="checkbox"/>

AICO FORM NO. 50-176

10/AM
9/18
have
read by [unclear]
no other [unclear]

R. Orth. C



June 13, 1985

Rabbi Irving Greenberg
National Jewish Resource Center
421 7th Avenue
New York, NY 10001

Dear Yitz:

I have been reading your recent columns with interest, as I always do. I refer now specifically to your leitmotif which speaks of an impending schism within Judaism and the Jewish people between the Orthodox and the Reform.

One of the palliatives you offer and you write and go about the country talking is dialogue, the need for Reform and Orthodox leaders to sit down and to talk and to see whether some common ground cannot be found.

Surely you know that at virtually every step along the way we have done that both as a Union of congregations and through the CCAR especially. All of these efforts have been abortive and we are convinced, of course, that the fault was not ours. There was always the willingness to give on our part but no bending at all on the Orthodox side, either because those who spoke to us were afraid of pressure from the Orthodox right or when the representatives of the Orthodox right were unwilling to make any kind of compromise or even, for that matter, to recognize our integrity as a movement within Judaism.

Nonetheless, I do want you to know that we always stand ready to enter such discussion at any time, in any place, on any subject. Surely you know me well enough to know that I am committed to retaining that unity which is essential to our continuance as a people.

Perhaps what I am really doing is throwing the ball into your court. Bring together those people who are willing to talk, people, moreover, who are in a position to commit the Orthodox establishment to a certain course and you will not find us wanting in response.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

~~Alexander M. Cohen~~

bcc: Leonard Fein & Eric Yoffie

June 13, 1985

Rabbi Irving Greenberg
National Jewish Resource Center
421 7th Avenue
New York, NY 10001

Dear Yitz:

I have been reading your recent columns with interest, as I always do. I refer now specifically to your leitmotif which speaks of an impending schism within Judaism and the Jewish people between the Orthodox and the Reform.

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With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander H. Goldfarb

cc: Leonard Fein & Eric Yoffie

June 13, 1985

Rabbi Irving Greenberg
National Jewish Resource Center
421 7th Avenue
New York, NY 10001

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Perhaps what I am really doing is throwing the ball into your court. Bring together those people who are willing to talk, people, moreover, who are in a position to commit the Orthodox establishment to a certain course and you will not find us wanting in response.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



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

ASSOCIATION OF REFORM ZIONISTS OF AMERICA

Eric H. Yoffie

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FROM: RABBI ERIC H. YOFFIE

TO: RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER, RABBI DANIEL SYME

DATE: June 3, 1985

As I travel around the country and speak on the Law of Return, I often follow Irving Greenberg. Greenberg blames much of the crisis on us for our supposedly inadequate conversion procedures. In addition, however, he also says that the issue should serve as the basis for a serious dialogue between Reform and Orthodox Jews. In the absence of such a dialogue, he fears a schism in the Jewish people.

Greenberg makes some of these points in a pamphlet that he has recently written. (See enclosed JTA article.) When Leonard Fein spoke to us, he expressed similar concerns.

I think we should consider sending a small delegation to talk with Greenberg. Perhaps he would identify those elements in the Orthodox community that would be willing to engage in dialogue, and would help us get such a process going.

ARZA could undertake such an initiative on its own, but I believe that it would be more effective if it came from the Union, with ARZA participation. Your comments would be appreciated.

EHY:dg

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RABBI FEARS IRREVOCABLE SPLIT BETWEEN ORTHODOX, LIBERAL JEWS

NEW YORK (JTA) -- A leading Orthodox rabbinical scholar has asserted that American Jewry is now on a course which, within decades, "will lead to a sundering of the Jewish people into two religious or two social groups."

Rabbi Irving Greenberg said the two groups would be fundamentally divided and that its adherents will be unwilling to marry each other. Rabbi Greenberg, president of the National Jewish Resource Center (NJRC), presented his evaluation in a new publication, "Will There be One Jewish People by the Year 2000?" issued by the NJRC.

Greenberg charged that such polarization was strategically, morally and theologically wrong, and he urged the development of "a systematic religious dialogue to confront and avert this impending crisis."

He described the dangerous issues leading to the threat as those which effect Jewish identity and personal status, citing the "Who is a Jew Controversy" and the so-called patrilineal identity descent proposal offered by the American Reform movement.

He estimated that the schism, if it occurs, will mean that by the year 2000, almost one fifth of American Jews could have their status as Jews contested by more traditional Jews, i.e., Orthodox Jews.

Greenberg blamed the "self-centeredness" of fundamental and liberal Jews for the escalation of this problem. He contended that each movement prefers to solve social and religious problems in ways most convenient and attractive to them-

selves, thereby, in effect, "writing off the concerns of the needs of the other denominations." He called that pattern "suicidal" because each group "needs and helps the presence of the others," adding that "the strengthening of each (Jewish) group is the best insurance for the survival of all groups."

TEENAGERS VISIT ELDERLY IN QUEENS JEWISH Y PROGRAM

NEW YORK (JTA) -- Teenage volunteers of all races and religions visit homebound elderly residents, most of them Jews, in the Little Neck-Douglaston section of Queens in a year-old program described as the first of its kind in the borough.

The Intergenerational Escort program is a project of the Samuel Field YM-YWHA in Little Neck, a member agency of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies.

Currently, there are 20 senior citizens between the ages of 60 and 90 enrolled in the program and 24 young people, ranging in age from 13 to 20. The project cuts across religious, ethnic and cultural lines deliberately, according to Reva Tokayer, the program director. She said the participants usually find they have more in common than they realized and that their differences make for more interesting relationships.

In addition to the visits, which last from one to two hours, the volunteers escort the older persons on errands and do shopping for them when that is needed, Tokayer said.

Bella Schlanger, 88, looks forward to her weekly visits from two Korean high school students, Stella Bae, 18, and Wendy Min, 16. Schlanger, a widow, lives alone in a small apartment in Little Neck. She teaches the girls Yiddish phrases and songs from her native Austria and they tell her what high school is

Richard Cohen Associates / 30 East 60th Street / New York, NY 10022

→ Rabbi Schindler (mail)

Thought this material might be
of interest to you. Any comments
would be most welcome.

Richard Cohen

[212] 758-6969

Interesting!

Rafel
Orlbo

July 23, 1985

Rabbi A. Stanley Dreyfus
Rabbinical Placement Commission
21 East 40th Street
New York, New York 10016

Dear Stanley:

Thank you for sending me copies of the West London Synagogue Review.

I presently plan to address myself to the Orthodox problem, taking Itz Greenberg's articles as my point of departure. That's my present thinking. I might change my mind tomorrow. In any event, I appreciate the information which you so helpfully provide for me.

Warm good wishes from house to house.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

RABBINICAL PLACEMENT COMMISSION

Central Conference of American Rabbis / Hebrew Union College — Jewish Institute of Religion / Union of American Hebrew Congregations
21 EAST 40TH STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016 (212) 684-4990

July 22, 1985

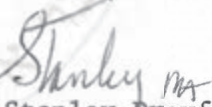
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex:

I am enclosing photo copies of two pages of the West London Synagogue Review. The first I think you will find deeply moving. The second is profoundly dismaying. Hugo Gryn and his colleagues at West London must have felt under very great pressure to reassure a number of uneasy congregants who were frightened by propaganda spewed out by certain ultra-Orthodox groups denying the validity of our marriages. No doubt such a crusade is already under way in Borough Park and Williamsburg, and in no great time it will be taken up by other Orthodox bodies. Should some notice of this be taken at the Biennial?

With kindest regards from house to house,

Yours sincerely,


A. Stanley Dreyfus

ASD;bf

Enc.

Rabbi Ronald B. Sobel, New York, NY, CHAIRMAN; Mr. Donald Bean, Philadelphia, PA, VICE CHAIRMAN; Mr. Michael A. Bamberger, New York, NY; Rabbi Herbert M. Baumgard, Miami, FL; Rabbi Sidney H. Brooks, Omaha, NE; Mr. Leonard A. Cohn, San Francisco, CA; Mr. Norman Gross, New York, NY; Rabbi Meyer Heller, Beverly Hills, CA; Prof. Robert L. Katz, Cincinnati, OH; Prof. Leonard S. Kravitz, New York, NY; Mrs. Lillian Maltzer, Huntington Woods, MI; Mr. L. Kenneth Rosett, White Plains, NY

DIRECTOR OF PLACEMENT: Rabbi A. Stanley Dreyfus

DIRECTOR EMERITUS: Rabbi Malcolm H. Stern

July 9, 1985

Mr. Alexander Gottdiener
801 North Broad Street
Elizabeth, New Jersey 07208

Dear Mr. Gottdiener:

No one is trying to avoid you, although I must confess that the tone of your letter borders on a kind of insolence or at least irrationality that does not customarily elicit a response.

While Ari Goldman did not quote me precisely, it is true that Reform does not operate under the framework of Halacha. We accord Halacha a vote but not veto, as do the Orthodox, and only the Orthodox.

I would venture to say that probably ninety percent of world Jewry shares the approach of the Reform Movement.

This is an approach which has been in effect for close to 200 years now and which has retained for the Jewish people hundreds and thousands if not millions of loyal souls who work for the creative continuity of our people, and have done exceedingly much to assure Jewish survival. It was, after all, not Orthodox Jewry that created the State of Israel in our time.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

4
37

for type

ALEXANDER GOTTDIENER
801 NORTH BROAD STREET
ELIZABETH, NEW JERSEY 07208
(201) 353-4481

July 4th, 1985

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

Re: A N.Y. Times Report "Rabbinical Dialogue: 3 Branches of
U.S. Judaism Talk of Differences" by Ari L. Goldman.

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

This is a follow-up of my Open Letter of 9/4/84 I wrote to you to no avail. Your Assistant, Ms. Edith J. Miller responded on 11/27/84 saying that you are away from your office and that was the end of it.

Well, one or more disappointments didn't make or break me. By avoiding any kind of response, you tried to pretend that there is no problem which is not the case. You probably concluded that an unknown fellow who had the nerve to write to a Rabbi Schindler, could be ignored without any consequences.

Sir, I have no intention to let those burning questions being swept under the rug. Yes, we both have plenty of problems. Reading an account of the captioned subject on 7/2/85, I can see problems are popping up in ever increasing numbers.

Presently I will confine myself to only one Statement you made and I quote: "We have chosen to be outside (the Halacha) Unquote.

I really do not know your background or if you ever attended a Yeshivah? But it is irrelevant. Still I assume that your Parents and their Parents were orthodox Jews, as were the Parents and Grandparents of most of your Congregants.

with Now, in such times when our people has million problems, and our last hope Israel is surrounded the deadliest enemies, instead of trying to be helpful and heal wounds, what did you try to accomplish with your inflammatory Statement?

Do you want to extricate yourself from your own Parents, deny them the respect every human being is obligated to adhere to? And the same time steering masses of Reform Jews to follow suit, thus violating a cardinal aspect of the "Ten Commandments" Kibud Av V'em Honor thy Father and thy Mother.

Anybody who ever studied Judaism must know the meaning of "Halacha" Our whole Torah, the Talmud are based on it. Are you denying our Sages, the Tanaim and the Amoraim, the basics of our Laws? Do you wish to become an outlaw and drag masses of others with you? Or are you bent to carry out the work and give a helping hand to the Missionaries? No, I cannot believe it. There is something very wrong I am unable to fathom.

Or are your followers so ignorant or brainwashed that they follow you blind folded?

Sir, I would like to believe that our decent G-d fearing Jewish community will recover from their shock and get organized to ~~get organized~~ and undo your un-G-dly attempt to destroy us.

Please turn to page 2.

ALEXANDER GOTTDIENER
801 NORTH BROAD STREET
ELIZABETH, NEW JERSEY 07208
(201) 353-4481

Letter to Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Page 2 9/4/84

Like Mordechai, it is obvious to say, if you will deny help from Israel, Almighty will provide it from other sources. I rather not continue the subject further for my own reasons.

6) Many of the Liberal circles, and I do not know if you belong to the same group, are turning against President Reagan because of his proChurch actions, School prayers, anti abortion etc arguing that Church and State are separated.

How come that the same groups vis-a-vis Israel are taking just the opposite stand, demanding and interfering in a very critical and grave major religious issue which may become a matter of life or death for our people.

7) I will use an everyday custom to illustrate my point: Most of the U.J.A. or Israel Bond and similar affairs are serviced by an orthodox kosher caterer to make it possible to attend by any and all. It is a proven system and it works. Nobody ever objected to it. Well, we have many valid reasons to keep Israel orthodox kosher when our spiritual life and the future of our people is at stake.

I am afraid I overstepped the limits as far as space goes. Next time I have a few questions to Mr. Theodore Mann, head of American Jewish Congress.

It is a must that the heads of the 3 religious branches get together and iron out a solution. We simply cannot afford to start a war.

A happy and a healthy New Year to all.

With brotherly greetings


Alex Gottdiener

Cc.
Agudath Israel of America
Jewish Horizon
Jewish Week
Israel Today
Rabbi Pinchas Teitz of Elizabeth, N.J.
Commentary.

Rabbinical Dialogue: 3 Branches of U.S. Judaism Talk of Differences

By ARI L. GOLDMAN

American rabbis, deeply divided on such basic issues as how to define Jewish lineage and whether to ordain women, are beginning to discuss theological differences together on a national level for the first time in decades.

One major effort to initiate these discussions took place in Minneapolis last week when the head of the Conservative rabbinate addressed more than 400 Reform rabbis at the annual meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

The Conservative leader, Rabbi Alexander M. Shapiro, asked the Reform group to reverse itself and return to the traditional standard that says Jewish lineage can be traced through the mother only. In 1983 the Reform rabbis voted that the children of Jewish mothers or fathers would be considered Jewish.

An Orthodox leader warned of deep divisions within American Judaism if there were no serious dialogue over differences among the three branches. The leader, Rabbi Irving Greenberg, president of the Interdenominational National Jewish Resource Center, wrote in a recent column in *The Long Island Jewish World*, "Within decades, the Jewish people will be split apart into two mutually divided, hostile groups who are unable or unwilling to marry each other."

Polite Stand on Differences

Rabbi Shapiro's Reform audience here was polite but not overly receptive to the proposal. "It would be better for Rabbi Shapiro to lead his movement into the future than ours into the past," said Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the association of Reform synagogues.

Rabbi Schindler, a chief sponsor of

the 1983 adoption of the liberalized standard on lineage, predicted that Conservative Judaism would follow the Reform lead in another decade. "It usually takes them about 10 years — like on the woman's issue," he said.

Rabbi Schindler was referring to a decision by the Conservative rabbinate earlier this year to accept women as rabbis. The Reform movement began ordaining women in 1972. The Orthodox continue to ordain only men.

Rabbi Schindler questioned the usefulness of dialogue on theological differences, saying it was more beneficial to discuss issues that united the Jewish community, such as support for Israel, Soviet Jewry, economic justice and improved Christian-Jewish relations.

"On theological problems," he said, "either you accept halacha or you are outside halacha. We have chosen to be outside."

Traditional Jewish Law

Halacha is traditional Jewish law, such as kosher laws and Sabbath observance, that are embraced by the Orthodox as given by God for all time. The Conservatives believe that halacha, while still a guiding force, can change to serve modern needs.

For example, Conservatives permit people to ride to a synagogue in automobiles on the Sabbath while the Orthodox prohibit such travel. Reform Judaism believes that halacha is not relevant in modern times, although traditional practice, such as the lighting of Sabbath candles on Friday night, is valued.

Rabbi Schindler, the Reform leader, said he was not concerned about divisions that could result from the split over lineage standards.

"There have been many, many more deep-rooted cleavages than this in Jewish history," he said. "The Jewish world will remain whole. That which

unites us is much greater than that which divides us."

Rabbi Shapiro, the Conservative leader, also reached out for dialogue with the Orthodox in an appearance last month before the Rabbinical Council of America at its annual meeting in the Catskills. It was the first time in the 50-year history of the council that a non-Orthodox rabbi was allowed to address the assembly.

His reception there was cooler than the one here in Minneapolis before the Reform group. At the Catskills meeting, 5 of the 150 rabbis there walked out in protest.

Rabbi Shapiro appealed to the Orthodox to establish a joint rabbinical court, or beth din, that could rule on

matters of lineage, conversion and divorce for all American Jews.

A person can become a Jew simply by being born into a Jewish family. Judaism also accepts converts, although conversion standards differ within the three major branches.

Negotiations in the 1950's and 1960's aimed at establishing a joint beth din fell apart when the different branches could not come to terms on theological issues.

Rabbi Louis Bernstein, president of the Orthodox group, said he would study the beth din proposal but rejected another call by Rabbi Shapiro that the American Orthodox help the Conservative rabbinate gain recognition in Israel.

In Israel, religious matters are controlled by the Orthodox rabbinate. Conversions and divorces performed by the Conservative and Reform are not recognized.

One Reform leader who was receptive to the idea of increased dialogue on theological issues was Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser, executive vice president of the Reform rabbinical group.

Rabbi Glaser said he was willing to make concessions to the more traditional groups in order to realize the vision of one unified American Jewish community. "If I have to wear a yarmulke to do it, I'll do it," he said. "If I have to give up lobster, I'll do it, although that would hurt. But there has got to be a lot of give on their part, too."



"The days of thy life" indicates the days; "all the days of thy life" indicates that the nights are included. But the other Sages say: "The days of thy life" indicates the present world; "all the days of thy life" indicates that the times of the Messiah are included.

BLESSED IS THE All-Including, blessed is He who gave a Torah to his people, Israel. The Torah has spoken concerning four sons—one wise, and one wicked, and one simple, and one who wits not to ask.

What says the WISE SON?—

"What are the testimonies and laws and behaviors, which the Lord, our God, has commanded you?" Do thou, then, tell him precisely the practices of the Passover: One does not break up the Passover ceremony by announcing: "To the aftermeal entertainment!"

What says the WICKED SON?

—"Of what use is this service to you?" To you, and not to himself! By excluding himself from the Community, he has denied the Deity. Do thou, then, set his teeth on edge! Say to him: "This is on account of what the Lord did for me when I went forth from Egypt." For me, and not for him; had he been there, he would not have been redeemed.

חַיִּיהָ. יְמֵי חַיִּיהָ—הַיָּמִים; כָּל יְמֵי חַיִּיהָ—הַלַּיְלֹת. וְחֻכָּמִים אוֹמְרִים: יְמֵי חַיִּיהָ—הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה; כָּל יְמֵי חַיִּיהָ—לְהַבְיֹא לִיְמוֹת הַמָּשִׁיחַ.

בָּרוּךְ הַמָּקוֹם, בָּרוּךְ הוּא. בָּרוּךְ שֶׁנָּתַן תּוֹרָה לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל, בָּרוּךְ הוּא. כְּגַד אַרְבָּעָה בָּנִים דִּבְרַת תּוֹרָה. אֶחָד חָכָם, וְאֶחָד רָשָׁע, וְאֶחָד תָּם, וְאֶחָד שֹׂאִינִי יוֹדֵעַ לִשְׁאוֹל.

חָכָם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר?—מָה הַעֲדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְכֶם? וְאִי אִתָּה אָמַר לוֹ כִּהְלָכוֹת הַפֶּסַח: אֵין מַפְטִירִין אַחֵר הַפֶּסַח אַפִּיקוֹמָן.

רָשָׁע מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר?—מָה הָעֲבָדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם? לָכֶם—וְלֹא לוֹ. וּלְפִי שֶׁהוֹצִיא אֶת עַצְמוֹ מִן הַכֶּלֶל, כִּפְּר בַּעֲקָר. וְאִי אִתָּה הִקְהָה אֶת שְׁנֵי, וְאָמַר לוֹ, בַּעֲבוּר זֶה עָשָׂה יי לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם. לִי—וְלֹא לוֹ. אֱלֹהֵי הָיָה שָׁם, לֹא הָיָה בְּנֹאֵל.

Richard Cohen Associates

PUBLIC RELATIONS COUNSEL

30 East 60th Street
New York, N.Y. 10022

(212) PL 8-6969

May 24, 1985

Dear Alex,

Please note the latest attack by Young Israel -- this time on our Catholic-Jewish program.

In fact, the criticism is based on an error in The New York Times story, which Harold Jacobs picked up. The Times said that among the proposals adopted by the board was one to "hold joint classes and exchange teachers" with Catholics. My news release did not say that. What my story said (para. 5, page 1) was that there would be an "exchange of teachers and team-teaching by priests and rabbis in Catholic parochial and Jewish religious schools," which is correct. Where Ari got his misinterpretation from I don't know. I never said "joint classes."

In any case, I suggest that you write to Harold Jacobs and explain that The Times was wrong about "joint classes," which was never our intention. You will note that he also criticizes the teacher exchange; we have every right to defend that aspect of the program (and Jacobs to criticize it), but he should restrict his criticism to what we're doing, not what we are not doing.

I haven't seen any publicity on his release yet. If it does get published, I think we ought to issue a statement explaining our side of the story.

Sincerely,



Richard Cohen

P.S. If it gets serious, we could request a correction from The Times, although I would prefer not to embarrass Ari Goldman in this way with his bosses. Aside from this boo-boo, he did a splendid job and was most cooperative in doing the story on his day off.

✓

June 7, 1985

Mr. Harold M. Jacobs, President
National Council of Young Israel
3 West 16th Street
New York, New York 10011

Dear Harold:

I saw your press release of May 21 which takes issue with the Union's stance on Catholic-Jewish relations. I am disappointed on two counts:

1/ You know well enough that newspaper reports are often skewed. IN this case, the New York Times was wrong. We did not suggest "joint classes." What we did agree to undertake was an "exchange of teachers and team-teaching by priests and rabbis in Catholic Parochial Schools" Can you really take issue with that? If you had only bothered to ask for a copy of our release or called my office before you let go with your blast you would have learned the truth.

2/ The second reason for my disappointment is really with the regularity with which you attack the Reform Movement and Reform Jews. Don't you have anything better to do than attack fellow Jews? Don't we Jews have enough enemies without being at each other's throats?

All this, of course, is an institutional and not a personal comment. You know that I hold you personally in high regard and great affection.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

News from . . .

**NATIONAL
COUNCIL
OF YOUNG
ISRAEL**



3 WEST 16 STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10011
212-929-1525

Contact: Yaakov Kornreich

ב"ה

For Immediate Release: May 21, 1985

**YOUNG ISRAEL PRESIDENT CHALLENGES REFORM PROPOSAL
FOR JOINT CLASSES WITH CHURCHES**

Harold M. Jacobs, the president of the Young Israel Orthodox synagogue movement, has challenged the proposal of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to its member Reform synagogues to "hold joint classes and exchange teachers in religious school programs" with local Catholic churches. The Young Israel leader characterized the recommendation of the UAHC board of trustees as "a step which could endanger the Jewish identity of many members of Reform congregations whose understanding of their own religious traditions is too limited to allow intelligent comparison with Catholicism."

While the Young Israel leader applauded the progress that has been made to encourage mutual respect and understanding between the Jewish and Catholic communities, and another Reform proposal that committed Jews and Catholics find effective ways to work together on common social concerns, he criticized the joint classes and teacher exchange proposal as "overstepping the clear theological lines which separate the two faith communities. We must not arouse the suspicion of non-Jews that we seek to proselytize those outside our faith, nor encourage them to missionize Jews within the precincts of our own synagogues. In a free society such as ours, there is ample opportunity for Jews and Catholics to satisfy their curiosities about one another's faith without trespassing the sanctity of our houses of worship or religious education."

Jacobs urged the Reform leadership, "to concentrate instead on providing a more adequate Jewish education for its members and children. Our rich Jewish religious heritage and practices have, for too long, been short-changed by the Reform movement, and the Jewish people today is paying the price for that neglect in the skyrocketing rates of assimilation and intermarriage."

The Young Israel leader concluded by observing that, "all faith communities in the highly secularized American culture of the 80's are faced with a substantial challenge in merely inculcating the principles of their own religion in their constituencies. Contrary to this proposal, we believe that the most effective means of encouraging mutual respect and co-operation between Jews and Christians would be for each to become inspired with a more profound belief and understanding of their own faiths."



איחוד
ליהדות
מתקדמת
באמריקה

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

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

Contact: Richard Cohen
(212) 758-6969
or (212) 088-8042

NEW YORK, May 19 -- The leaders of Reform Judaism called on American Jews and Catholics today to join in a new and wide-ranging program aimed at promoting inter-religious understanding at the church and synagogue level.

The action by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations is believed to mark the first time a Jewish denomination has sought to bring together synagogue-members and church-goers in activities seeking to create better understanding of each other's beliefs.

The program was adopted by unanimous vote of 150 members of the UAHC board of trustees at its semi-annual meeting in the Grand Hyatt Hotel. In a resolution, the board urged the UAHC's 780 member-synagogues, composed of 1.3 million Jews, to undertake:

...Catholic-Jewish dialogues to explore the issues that divide as well as those that unite the two communities.

...The exchange of teachers and team-teaching by priests and rabbis in Catholic Archdiocesan and Jewish religious schools.

...Catholic-Jewish dialogue and joint action on nuclear disarmament, economic justice and other issues on which the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations have adopted parallel policy positions.

The resolution hailed the 20th anniversary of the issuance by the Second Vatican Council of "Nostra Aetate," which repudiated the charge of deicide against Jews and condemned anti-Semitism. But while welcoming the progress in Christian-Jewish relations since then, the UAHC trustees said:

Ignorance at the Grass Roots

"The most effective efforts to eliminate mistrust and misunderstanding have taken place so far on the national and diocesan level, rather than in the local community.

...The people in the pews too often remain ignorant of the vast changes in the attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Jews, so that misunderstanding may still persist on the grass roots level."

The board also instructed UAHC's educational arm to prepare materials commemorating the 20th anniversary of Vatican II and "to assure that information regarding the changes in Catholicism since then is disseminated on a regular basis to congregations, religious educators and youth."

The Reform Jewish leaders acted after hearing from both Catholic and Jewish experts on interfaith relations and interfaith dialogue, and after Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, president of the UAHC, told the meeting: "We do not say that all differences have been obliterated, for they have not, and tensions remain: the Vatican's failure to establish formal diplomatic relations with Israel, the Pope's meeting with Arafat, the Vatican's role during the Holocaust. But the deadly sting has been removed, and our differences are reduced to their proper proportion.

(more)

Schindler: 'Time for Affirmative Action'

"The need for understanding and reconciliation between Catholics and Jews is made even more urgent by the demands of economic justice and nuclear disarmament. The prophetic cry of peace with justice is part of a shared vision that impels us to work together.

"The basis for that cooperation was laid 20 years ago in 'Nostra Aetate,' which luminously transformed the way Catholics and Jews look at one another. Pope John XXIII did what President Reagan failed to do when he visited Bitburg: he recognized the past for what it was, and instead of absolving the Church he determined to transform it.

"But if Catholic dogma has been transformed, not enough Catholics have been -- and too few Jews are involved in dialogue. We can sit back and wait for it to happen, or we can take affirmative action to make it happen. I propose that we act, and I believe we will find a cooperative spirit and an eagerness to join with us, both in repairing the errors of the past and in building together a better world for tomorrow."

Rabbi Schindler cited the joint publication last month by the UAHC and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of "The Challenge of Shalom for Catholics and Jews," a discussion guide to the Bishops' 1983 pastoral letter on peace and war. He noted that the 97-page booklet also examines areas of agreement and divergence between Catholics and Jews on such issues as economic justice, capital punishment and abortion.

The guide was written by Eugene Fisher, executive secretary of the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference on Catholic Bishops, and Annette Daum, coordinator of the UAHC's department of interreligious affairs.

Father Flannery: 'Unparalleled -- or Faltering -- Progress?'

The Rev. Edward H. Flannery, author of "The Anguish of the Jews" and a pioneer in ecumenical efforts, told the Reform Jewish leaders that "against the backdrop of the near 2,000 years that preceded 'Nostra Aetate,' the progress we have made over the past two decades in interfaith understanding has been an unparalleled triumph in human relations.

"Looking at the past 20 years in the shorter run, however, they appear -- in light of the magnitude and urgency of the task before us -- as faltering and slothful."

On the issues of abortion and church-state relations, where Jews and Catholics generally have expressed opposing positions, Father Flannery declared:

"I do not consider these Jewish-Christian issues at all. Is not abortion a universal moral issue as pertinent to Muslims, Buddhists or secularists as to Jewish and Christian interests? And is not separation of church and state, as we argue it, a uniquely American political issue that does not apply to Israel, England, France and dozens of other countries?"

The Catholic ecumenist, who now serves as director of the Office of Continuing Education of the Clergy in the Diocese of Providence, R.I., continued:
(more)

"Anti-Semitism is the supreme challenge of the Jewish-Christian dialogue. That is because Christians generally are all but totally ignorant of what happened to Jews in Christian history and of the complicity of the church in the development of anti-Semitism -- the latter a page torn from our history books.

"From the widespread ignorance of the anti-Semitic record results an indifference not only to the problem of anti-Semitism but to the entire Jewish encounter. This indifference creates on the Christian side the chief obstacle to progress in our relations. At the same time, exposure to the magnitude and scandal of this record generates in every open-hearted Christian a sense of urgency vis-a-vis Jewish-Christian relations as nothing else can.

"On this 20th anniversary of 'Nostra Aetate,' let us acknowledge that though this precious document has been well promulgated by the Vatican and some national hierarchies, and followed up by other excellent documents, it has not been implemented in most dioceses, let alone parishes, pulpits and schools.

"And let us realize that until the complete and unvarnished record of Jewish persecution is inserted into our history books and classes, the resultant ignorance will continue to blur our perceptions of the anti-Semitic phenomenon and will condemn the Jewish-Christian encounter to a stunted growth."

Father Flannery said the "highest priority" should be given to "the painful and well-veiled fact that anti-Semitism is an all-but universal attribute of Christians. I hasten to add that Christian anti-Semitism is in decline and also weaker than the various non-Christian varieties of today.

"Yet if our dialogue is to thrive, greater effort must be made to acquaint the wider Christian audience with that page of history which Jews know so well and Christians ignore."

Israel as Litmus -Test

Father Flannery said the "litmus-test" of Jewish-Christian relations was the State of Israel. He told the Reform Jewish leaders:

"To Jews, Israel was and is central to their concerns and to their Judaism. To Christians it is a peripheral issue, laden with misunderstanding, often unwelcome in the dialogue, often seen as an illegitimate injection of politics into a dialogue that is religious in nature and purpose.

"This disparity of views on so vital an issue can only invite trouble for our interfaith efforts."

Father Flannery quoted a statement from the 1975 guidelines and suggestions for implementing "Nostra Aetate" issued by the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations With Jews, in which Catholics were encouraged to "strive to learn by what essential traits Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience."

Calling this "a cardinal principle of the Jewish-Christian dialogue," Father Flannery declared: "In ensuing discussions Jews defined not only themselves but Judaism itself as Zionist. Israel by this very fact became a religious and therefore
(more)

- 4 -

ecumenical matter, entitled to an unchallengeable place in the dialogue.

"To ask the loyal Jew to ignore or suppress this Zionist attachment or to keep it out of the interreligious dialogue is, in fine, to ask him/her to divest him/herself of Judaism. And to disfavor in any way the full discussion of Israel in dialogue obviously violates the first rule of dialogue: the right to self-definition.

"The full clarification of the historical, spiritual and theological bond joining the Jewish people to their land must remain an uppermost dialogical priority until achieved."

Rabbi Davidson: 'How Grateful Need We Be?'

Rabbi Jerome K. Davidson of Temple Beth El in Great Neck, chairman of the UAHC's committee on interreligious affairs, told a session of the week-end meeting that many Jews were skeptical of 'Nostra Aetate' when it was issued 20 years ago. A commonly-held view, he said, was: "It's about time. How grateful need we be for being told we have a right to exist?" He continued:

"But surely now we can see what potential this document held for a new era. Catholic textbooks have been purged of anti-Jewish material, anti-Semitic prayers have been removed from liturgy and seminaries are changing their teachings about Jews and Judaism. Catholic schools are incorporating the study of the history of modern Jews and Judaism into their curricula, including an understanding of the Holocaust as well as the role of Israel for the Jewish people.

"Rabbis and Jewish educators now frequently teach in Catholic seminaries and parochial schools. There can be little doubt that relations between Catholicism and Judaism hold the potential for being better than they have ever been."

But Rabbi Davidson was critical of the Jewish community's interreligious activity, asserting: "We have certainly not measured up to the opportunities of this new time. The baggage of suspicion and distrust of non-Jews which we carry around is nearly as weighty as ever. Clearly, 2,000 years of Christian-inspired oppression of Jews cannot and should not be forgotten overnight, even in 20 years. But we seem to prefer to live with our hurts than to seek the healing that might prepare a better era for the generations to come.

"It is an attitude we must learn to shake, just as we must abandon the anti-goyim mentality that isolates us from constructive relationships with the Christian community."

Rabbi Davidson said that "though Catholics and mainline Protestants have or are in the process of dramatically changing their theology toward Jews, most of us don't know it. Interreligious activity in America, such as it is, chiefly involve professionals who go to conferences and give learned papers. Most American Jews don't even know what's happening."