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Series D: Education and Rabbinic Career, 1930-1993.

Subseries 3: Rabbinic Career, 1943-1993.

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Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Merger plan.
Morton Berman. 1953.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the
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TEMPLE BETH-EL of Great Neck

OLD MILL ROAD, GREAT NECK, NEW YORK

GREAT NECK 2-0731

GREAT NECK 2-5931

DR. JACOB PHILIP RUDIN

Rabbi

7 OLD COLONY LANE
GREAT NECK 2-3974

RABBI MARTIN J. ZION

Assistant Rabbi

1 KNIGHTSBRIDGE ROAD
GREAT NECK 2-6058

CANTOR LOUIS GORDON

1 KNIGHTSBRIDGE ROAD
GREAT NECK 2-7923

DOROTHY G. CUTLER

Executive Secretary

1 KNIGHTSBRIDGE ROAD
GREAT NECK 4-8052

June 1, 1953

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman
Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun
2419 East Kenwood Boulevard
Milwaukee 11, Wisconsin

Dear Herb:

Just a word by way of comment on number 7 in your recent letter.

You probably know by now that the Metropolitan Association of Reform Rabbis passed a resolution urging the Board of Governors of the College-Institute, to withhold implementation of the recently adopted plan until it will have received further study by rabbis and laymen. A similar resolution was passed at the meeting of the Metropolitan Association of Reform Congregations this past Monday evening.

So the fight is not lost, by any means. There will be further airing of the plan at Estes Park, and I gather that you do not intend to let it go unmentioned in your own paper. There will be many who join in the fight with you, and not limited only to JIR men either. There will be goodly support from HUC graduates as well.

Whether we will be able to get the Board of Governors to make radical changes in the plan, I do not know. But before we are through, I think that Dr. Nelson Glueck will know that he has been in a fight!

See you at Estes Park.

Cordially,

Jack
Rabbi

JPR:SD

LOUIS I. NEWMAN
NEW YORK

271 Central Pk. W.
June 1, 1953

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman
Temple Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun
2419 E. Kenwood Boulevard
Milwaukee, 11, Wisc.

My dear Herbert Friedman:

The current has moved so swiftly that I have not been able to be in touch with you since the new developments following my correspondence with Morton Berman. It has been my intention that whatever I have written him come also to your notice, and he has told me he is in communication with you. We are happy you are going to Estes Park. Aaron Ilson will attend, but I do not think I can. We are meeting Tuesday, the 2nd, at Ed Klein's Study to map out our plans in the light of the resolutions at the Association of Reform Rabbis and the Federation of Reform Synagogues, of which doubtless you have heard.

I will write you very soon, but I wish you to know that whatever goes to Morton is directed also to you, so that you can be kept au courant with the developments. We do not yet know what the outcome will be.

Cordially,

Louis I. Newman

THE TEMPLE

Isaiah Israel

1100 HYDE PARK BOULEVARD • CHICAGO 15, ILLINOIS

May 14, 1953

STUDY OF THE RABBI

Rabbi Herbert Friedman
Temple Beth El
2419 E. Kenwood Boulevard
Milwaukee 11, Wisconsin

Dear Herbie:

Enclosed is some material that I got from the Union Office and from Isaac Kiev. Make whatever use you can of it. You will find the verbatim discussion of the move to New York really very illuminating. Incidentally Wise's address at the inauguration of Glueck as President of the JIR is also a telling document. In a letter from Isaac Kiev he too recalls very definitely Glueck's proposal of two years in Cincinnati, two years in New York and one year at the Hebrew University. He also feels as I do that it was said at the banquet the weekend of the inauguration. I think it was at the Waldorf-Astoria. It is my impression that Glueck repeated the statement in other places.

I spoke to Louis Newman yesterday on the long distance phone. He was in attendance at the meeting of HUC and JIR graduates which had been called by Ed Klein. I do not know what decisions were made there.

At the Board meeting of our Congregation last Tuesday night, a resolution of solemn protest against the Glueck plan was unanimously adopted. The Free Synagogue and the Rodeph Sholom Synagogue also adopted such resolutions. I am planning to send out a number of copies of the resolution to some of our alumni to urge them to act accordingly. Unfortunately I do not want to send it to the press because this year's campaign is still on and I don't want to be accused of busting up the campaign at this point. After Estes Park we may have to revise our plans about next year's campaign.

I received your letter which you are circularizing and it was excellent. Even if you do not get a single reply, you will have alerted the whole Conference.

With affectionate greetings,

Sincerely yours,

Micky

Morton M. Berman

MMB:ee

Enclosures

THE TEMPLE

Isaiah Israel

1100 HYDE PARK BOULEVARD • CHICAGO 15, ILLINOIS

STUDY OF THE RABBI

May 21, 1953

Rabbi Herbert Friedman
Temple Beth El
2419 E. Kenwood Boulevard
Milwaukee 11, Wisconsin

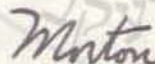
Dear Herbert:

You will find enclosed some of the material on the founding of the HUC and Vic Weissberg's covering letter. I am not altogether in agreement with some of the things Vic said, but I think after reading the Israelites, you can come to your own conclusions.

I am enclosing also a copy of the resolution our Board adopted unanimously on May 12. Also enclosed is an exchange of correspondence with Nelson Glueck which followed on his receipt of the resolution. I think it will be easy to discern his method of intimidation with which he hopes to prevent criticism of his plan. I expect to hear from you after Sunday.

With very best wishes,

Sincerely yours,



Morton M. Berman

MMB:ee

Enclosures

THE TEMPLE

Isaiah Israel

1100 HYDE PARK BOULEVARD • CHICAGO 15, ILLINOIS

STUDY OF THE RABBI

May 8, 1953

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman
Temple Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun
2419 E. Kenwood Boulevard
Milwaukee 11, Wisconsin

Dear Herb:

I am sending you a copy of a letter from a Cincinnati student and a copy of another letter which has come in from one of the Institute boys who was among those who resisted Nelson Glueck's decision to move the second year class to Cincinnati in the fall. The latter shows that if you fight him hard enough, he weakens.

I have also written to New York for the material about the move to New York and I am still waiting to hear from Egelson.

I have not yet received the letter that you are planning to send out to the Conference. I still believe that this is a very important weapon in our fight. We have to get a crowd out and this will help greatly.

I trust that you and Elaine and the new baby and the older babies are all well.

Yours,

Morton M. Berman
Morton M. Berman

MMB:ee

Enclosures

I am really happy to be graduating before all the fireworks starts next year.

By Fireworks I allude to the details of the Merger with JIR which have just been made public to the boys at the College. Many of us are very disappointed, and not a few of us are dejected. The general feeling is one of being sold out. Being sold out for us means that all the effort that the reform movement has expended to enter the Metropolitan New York area has been for naught because the plan calls for only the last year in New York, thus severely limiting the number of students who can serve embryo congregations. The entire effort expended by the Union to form new congregations has by this step been resigned, and we have left the lists to those more far-sighted and more zealous in the Conservative and Orthodox wings. Yup, we have a house of living Judaism In New York, but it will be rootless, and our movement will become provincial.

We shall truly become provincial because we have now in effect done one of the most immoral acts in the history of Judaism. We have dared to close a Yeshivah while staring at the fresh graves of six million Jews in Europe and while wearing a sad face in Quasi-mourning for them. We certainly do not mourn. We seem from our actions to rejoice and say, "They are dead, Let them be forgotten." As the center of European Judaism lays in ruins, we have dared to close one of the very few foundations of higher Jewish study in America. I am shocked and appalled at the action.

I dare say this after deliberations of wiser, and grayer heads than mine. I don't know how they arrived at their conclusion. I am not interested in the politics played behind the scenes; I am interested merely in the justice of the act. This plan has CLOSED the JIR because only the simple would now choose to start their work at one place and then continue at another when it is easier to start and finish at one place. Still another consideration is the fact that though you may start out in one class, there is always the opportunity to accelerate. This would be obviated at the JIR under the new plan because of the uncertainty that credits would be given for subjects taken past the Second Year. Thus only the plodders would start at JIR while those who have ambition would enroll in Cincinnati. A greater sadness is the sadness of faculty. Realizing as I do that there has been a deliberate weakening of the New York faculty and a great reinforcement of the Cincinnati faculty, I see that the New York school will become a plain ordinary preparatory school for the big things to come in Cincinnati. Gone will be the spirit of the boys which any fellow from any other seminary was envious. It will now assume the glib cynicism of the HUC. The saintly spirit of a great knight and crusader (lehavdil) will gradually sink from the scene to be replaced with another Wise, Isaac Meyer. So! A victory for Mid-western Jewry.

Yes, it will be a victory for stagnation and provincialism. Because a year at the Institute in New York will not be commensurate with the five in Cincinnati. Those people who think they are secure by calling themselves "American Jews" because they do not happen to be in Metropolitan New York will raise the banner for HUC, the seminary far from any of the currents which shape the destiny of the American Jew or the world Jewish community. We have relegated ourselves to the backwaters, tepid and slow-moving. We, the sluggard, will have to look to the ant as he captures all the vital heartland of New York.

Dear :

We have just received official word that we are to remain in the New York school, however, with the proviso that if only two boys are left during the fifth year that they be sent to Cincinnati. This is because some of the boys have more credits than others and can graduate 1/2 year ahead of those with lower standing. We feel that this eventuality will not come to pass however, for various reasons. He (Dr. Glueck) has also informed us of his plan to have students enter the school while doing undergraduate work at the New York Universities making the six year program dovetail with undergraduate (and graduate) secular studies. I must say that my respect for the man has been severely shattered and his redemption by allowing our request to stay in New York is not complete in my eyes. Just as his allowance was made in reservation, so too is my "loyalty" returned, with reservation.

As far as we can determine, we have achieved our aim and have been reasonably assured that efforts are being made to retain the contact of our future rabbinical students with the New York community. Perhaps not as much contact as we would like but enough to pacify us at present; and for how long we cannot tell. At any rate our battle has been won and we are very proud.

I must say in an especially personal tone that my deepest appreciation and gratitude go out to you for your encouragement and sympathy, which were completely convincing to me, and allowing me to take my stand with the rest of my classmates. It was the exact measure and prescription that I required at the time.

Our perspective leaves us with nothing more to do except finish our studies as diligently and as well as we can. If, from your more inclusive perspective you feel that there is something more that you can recommend to us, I shall do my best to have it carefully considered by my classmates.

Until that time or until I see you in Chicago this summer, I am,

Gratefully yours,

May 14, 1953

"I have been going through all of I M Wise's published works and the old Israelites of the period of the founding of the College. I find that Wise conceived of the HUC not for K'lal Yisrael, but only for the whole of American Jewry. He hoped for a unified American Judaism which would not include the "Ghetto Beth Hamidrash type Judaism of Eastern Europe" but the cultured Western European Jewry which were then dominant in this young nation. This American Israel would follow the authority of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, a "Union of all Jewish congregations in America from Charleston and Philadelphia to Portland, Oregon." He thought that this unified community would have its own ritual and customs which he called Minhag America. In his discussion of Halacha with Sabato Morias, founder of JTS, he states that the minhagim of America would overshadow those which were in the Shulchan Aruch but which could not apply to conditions here. The Union and College would restore order to the chaotic American scene where everybody called himself, "Rabbi, Dr. of Divinity, and reverend." The college would serve United American Israel. When he changed the name of his newspaper from the Israelite to the American Israelite he stated:

The Israelite has organized an American Israel. This was one of its main objects. The Hebrew is Americanized and his religion naturalized. They are no longer strangers in America... We had no intention to separate the American Israel from the whole house of Israel--we have no such intention now...

Wise--Israelite July 3, 1874.

Wise desired to make the HUC to American Jewry what the German Seminaries in Berlin and Breslau were to Germany. He was most implicit in his view that only one such institution was needed in America. He wanted this institution to be a Mecca for all Jewish students who would study for other professions and garner a fine Hebrew education Gam Yachad under the tutelage of the Board in Cincinnati. He imagined hundreds of students enrolled in all departments, the preparatory, (High school), the collegiate, and the Rabbinic departments where graduates would receive the D. D. degree. He states that he saw a need for only five rabbis per year to be graduated from the HUC (cf photostats). This would be sufficient for American Jewry. (He understood that there would be sufficient rabbis coming from Germany and Europe, and how could he be expected to forsee the destruction of European Jewry in our time or the vast waves of immigrants which only began in the last waning years of his life?) The HUC, he stated, would be the only seminary in American Israel because it would be too expensive to operate more than one.

"If this Hebrew Union College be managed rightly, it must become the center of education to our co-religionists all over the country, of Hebrew learning to uncounted thousands, to rabbis and professors of future days." --Israelite, May 28, 1875.

"This college was established to teach the literature of Israel, to train, educate and license rabbis for real Judaism."

--Speech at founding of the College quoted from Reminiscences, p 393.

Thus, I think that he felt the College was to serve a narrow few who were united by coming from Western Europe. He never felt that it would serve Eastern European Jewry or their seed in America. It was an American Judaism united, but it was not K'lal Yisrael which is a term used most frequently by Schecter in Aspects of Rabbinic Judaism. It was an American Judaism which was in reality frontier and western not Eastern. The congregations of the East held aloof for quite a while, and though Wise was so implicit in selecting Cincinnati as the site of the College because of its geographical location, it was not the center of Judaism in America. It was selected because the students would be sheltered from other types of Judaism. Cincinnati was particularly chosen according to Wise because it was peculiar in having only American Judaism in its midst.

I hope this and the photostats will help you and Rabbi Friedman.
Sincerely,