



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.

Series I: General Correspondence, 1914-1969, undated.

Sub-series A: Alphabetical, 1914-1965, undated.

Reel
19

Box
6

Folder
401

Central Conference of American Rabbis, and Houston
Congregation, 1943-1944.

Resolution prepared and recommended by Policy Committee of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas (an American Reform Congregation), on October 5, 1943, and unanimously adopted by Board of Trustees.

The members of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, Texas (which Congregation was established May 8, 1856) view with great concern and with much regret the persistent, consistent and growing deviation of organized American Reform Judaism from the ideals and pattern which, at its founding under the leadership of Isaac M. Wise, endowed it with the promise of one of the great liberal religions of history. We are deeply concerned by the processes which, during the last two decades, have vitiated the broad universalism of this Judaism and have set in motion within it, forces which do not belong to the new world of emancipation and promise, but which are attuned to and a part of the old world's concept of segregation and despair for Jewish life.

The three great institutions of American Reform Judaism are still those instrumentalities born of the vision of Isaac M. Wise, THE UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS, THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE, and THE CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS. Whatever strength this Judaism may have must come by way of leadership from these three institutions. Whatever defection there may be from the classical patterns of this Judaism must similarly, in very large measure, be the responsibility of these institutions.

Therefore, as a member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and, as an American Reform Congregation that has in the past and hopes to continue in the future to look to the Hebrew Union College and to the Central Conference of American Rabbis for its spiritual leadership and guidance, we respectfully submit the following resolution in the devout hope that the action of this Congregation may inspire similar action in other congregations and that, united in action, we may be able to revive, strengthen, and re-inforce the heart and soul of that Judaism so long and honorably associated with the term "American Reform".

(A)

WHEREAS, the UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS is the official organization of the laymen of American Reform Judaism, and was called into being by Isaac M. Wise to provide support for the Hebrew Union College and to effectively provide a vehicle for the active participation by Reform Jewish laymen in the development and progress of American Reform Judaism, and,

WHEREAS, because of its position of leadership a large share of the subversion that has taken place in Reform Judaism must be considered dereliction of leadership upon the part of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that as a member congregation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, we register a severe criticism to that body for the recurring and constant compromise of the principles of Reform Judaism and particularly upon the following specific counts:

1. The failure of the delegates of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to the recent American Jewish Conference to forthwith register and publicly announce a dissent from that Conference's Palestine Zionist resolution, which said resolution far exceeded the Palestine resolution accepted by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and presented to its delegates as instructions before the American Jewish Conference convened. Their silence gave the impression of assent and any subsequent action must fail to overcome the dereliction of the responsibilities of delegates representing the laymen's reform movement to publicly disavow a commitment of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to the full, maximal Zionist political program as endorsed by the Conference; further, the failure of the Executive Board to disavow the action of the American Jewish Conference and to withdraw from said Conference but instead to refer the Palestine resolution to the next biennial convention, which is eighteen months hence, has the practical effect to place the prestige and influence of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations during this period, which may be the critical period of decision, fully behind the maximal Zionist political program which is contrary to the historical position of the Reform Congregations and the members thereof upon this question;

2. The recent tendency to eliminate the word "Reform" as the descriptive title of American Judaism and the gradual substitution of the word "liberal", as, for example, in the new magazine, "Liberal Judaism", the official organ of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. We submit that "Reform Judaism" has an established and honorable connotation in American life, both Jewish and non-Jewish; that it represented and represents certain definitive characteristics of religion in general and Judaism in particular; that the term, "liberal" is vague, non-definitive as applied to our particular American branch of Judaism and open to misunderstanding; and that in all probability this unexpected switching of term without rhyme or reason, represents still another concession to those who are not "Reform" but who desire to have the advantages of Reform Judaism's established position in the American scene;

3. The employment in its educational department of men in authority who are admittedly nationalistic in viewpoint with the resultant publication or endorsement of educational materials for both adults and children which give a predominantly nationalistic interpretation of Jewish life and history;

4. The subordination of text substance of text-books of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations press to the commercialization for sale of such books to the end that such books being used in our religious schools cannot longer be used for the advancement of Reform Judaism because they are designed so as to be saleable also to conservative and orthodox religious schools as well, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that these examples in our judgment call for a thorough investigation of all of the departments of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and of the officials, both salaried and un-salaried, with the underlying and avowed purpose of having the policies and personnel of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations vigorous and enthusiastic in the advancement, without apology or compromise, of the historic principles of American Reform Judaism, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in the future conventions of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations consideration be given, through amendment to by-laws or otherwise, to insuring that the accredited delegates be preponderantly laymen in American Reform Judaism; that congregations be notified that their accredited delegates should by preference be laymen; that rabbis attend in advisory capacities; that addresses and committee actions be consciously designed, however, to express the laymen's viewpoint; and that for purposes where joint action is called for, between Reform Rabbinate and Reform laymen, some effective modus operandi be designed which should give equal representation to rabbis and laymen, and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in all important standing commissions of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, particularly those having to do with education, ceremonies, public information about Jews and Judaism, etc., the membership of laymen, in advisory capacities be greatly increased, in order that in these important and controversial areas, the opinion of the Reform Jewish laity may be adequately represented.

(B)

WHEREAS, the Hebrew Union College is the rabbinical seminary founded by Isaac M. Wise for the exclusive and specific purpose of providing American Reform Jews with leadership trained in and harmonious with the traditions of American Reform Judaism, and,

WHEREAS, there are today, as there were in the days when the Hebrew Union College was founded, ample rabbinical institutions to supply American Jewry with rabbis of either conservative or orthodox qualifications, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that this Congregation, an American Reform Congregation, joined by such others as may entertain similar views, which Congregations traditionally look to the Hebrew Union College for spiritual leaders, urgently request and expect of the responsible College authorities a thorough and complete investigation of the curriculum, requirements and personnel, some or all of which must provide the basic reasons for producing over the recent years, an overwhelming preponderance of graduates who have openly expressed little sympathy with and who have actively sought little expansion of the historic principles of Reform Judaism, and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that such investigation and study be made by laymen, sufficiently qualified to both find and evaluate the reasons for this transformation in the Hebrew Union College graduates, such group to be duly authorized to utilize in an advisory capacity any rabbinical assistance desired by it, and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in the course of such investigation, particular attention be placed upon the following factors which would seem to have an important bearing upon the attitudes of recent Hebrew Union College graduates;

1. Increasing emphasis by College authorities upon the knowledge of Hebrew which, while highly meritorious, is becoming of decreasing importance in an age when the great treasures of Jewish life are being made available in English and, when there is a lesser rather than a greater knowledge of Hebrew in the constituency of Reform Congregations. It is our information and belief that such an emphasis has a tendency to make it more difficult for young men with the background of American Reform family upbringing to qualify as students at Hebrew Union College, since a profound knowledge of the Hebrew language has never been a cardinal tenet of Reform Judaism. Thus, while pursuing the pathway of Reform Judaism, we are in effect disqualifying our own Reform-educated boys from future leadership in the movement in which they were raised as Jews. This is but a process of self-defeat. The tendency is to attract to Hebrew Union College greater proportionate students from Orthodox and Conservative backgrounds than from Reform. It is, moreover both illogical and unnecessary as the knowledge of Hebrew becomes ever less indispensable to a knowledge of Jewish life and lore.

2. The total lack or at least the inadequacy of any thorough course at the Hebrew Union College that is designed to provide an understanding of the history and the ideology of Reform Judaism itself. We do not minimize the need of a knowledge of the totality of Jewish life and thought but the Hebrew Union College is an American Reform institution and its graduates are held forth as Reform Rabbis who have been educated at the expense of American Reform Jews, therefore, we submit that it is not expecting too much that they should be specialists in the promulgation and the defense of that particular interpretation of Judaism.

3. The overcrowding of the profession, unless the graduates leave the Hebrew Union College fired with the zeal to carry the message of Reform Judaism to the millions of unaffiliated Jews who have had no contacts with the outlook and the philosophies of American Reform Judaism and thereby stimulating the creation of new and additional Reform congregations where needed. In such event, Reform Judaism can become the factor in the United States so devoutly hoped for by its founders. Unless this can be accomplished this overcrowding of the profession has the tendency to deprive the Rabbi of a feeling of security and further tends to reduce his status from that of leader and teacher to a position of conciliator and politician.

(C)

WHEREAS, the Central Conference of American Rabbis is the Rabbinical body obligated with leadership for American Reform Judaism, and

WHEREAS, its own members, above all others, should recognize and acknowledge that the Judaism over which they have been given the leadership and supervision has certain distinctive qualities which called it into being as an interpretation of Jewish life, and

WHEREAS, in the past few years the energies of the Central Conference of American Rabbis seem by both impression and record to have been in the direction of apologizing for the differences between Reform Judaism and other branches of Judaism, rather than to have been directed toward planning the strengthening and the extension of Reform Judaism, and

WHEREAS, the historic pattern of Reform Judaism has been one of opposition to political Zionism and Jewish nationalism, regardless of what may or may not have been the relationship between these forces and other branches of Judaism, now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that this congregation, an American Reform Congregation, served by members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis does hereby protest against that body's departure from the historic pattern of American Reform Judaism, as first enunciated by Reform Rabbis in conference in this country at Philadelphia in 1869 and at Pittsburg in 1885, as re-stated at Rochester in 1920 (after the Balfour declaration) and as further re-defined in the Columbus platform of 1937, which departures are indicated by the following actions of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

1. The entertainment and subsequent adoption of a resolution endorsing a "Jewish Army" at its 1942 convention, which action was a definite embroilment of a religious interpretation of Jewish life in a political quarrel and the commitment of that religious interpretation of Jewish life to a partisan, political program;

2. The entertainment and adoption of a resolution at its 1943 convention, asserting that there is "no essential incompatibility between Reform Judaism and Zionism," when as a matter of historic fact and action, the very essence of Reform Judaism has been opposition to both Jewish nationalism and to such emphasis upon the racial, folkloristic, tribal vestiges of Judaism as stem from it;

3. The inclusion in the latest, revised version of the Union Prayerbook Volume I, of service numbered "V", for the Sabbath Evening, which is admittedly nationalistic in character when, again, the whole structure and tradition of Reform Judaism has been one of departure from and emancipation above and beyond a religion of nationalistic limitations and delineations, as evidenced in the historic fact that among the modifications for which early Reform contended was the elimination of prayers which alluded either to the restoration of or the return of Israel to a physical Zion;

4. The accession of the delegates officially representing the Central Conference of American Rabbis to the American Jewish Conference to the maximal Zionist program of that Conference, despite the fact that the official platform of the Central Conference of American Rabbis adopted in Columbus in 1937, is violated in spirit and in letter by such maximal, Zionist resolution. The American Jewish Conference's resolution, from which the Central Conference of American Rabbis delegates registered no dissent far exceeds any declaration upon Palestine upon which Central Conference of American Rabbis membership has been permitted a free and democratic vote and does not represent, as a result of any referendum or otherwise, the recorded or ascertained convictions of the membership of the Central Conference of American Rabbis;

5. The acceptance through their silence of the Central Conference of American Rabbis delegates to the American Jewish Conference, (and the participation by some), in the undignified, abusive, and unwarranted attacks upon fellow rabbis and laymen who are members of Reform Congregations and whose "crime" consisted in the exercise of the right of free speech to state what has been the traditional position of Reform Judaism in the United States upon the question of political Zionism.

(D)

WHEREAS, it is the judgment of this Congregation, that in the final analysis, the life and the destiny of American Reform Judaism depends upon the vitality of the belief in such Judaism among the members in the Congregations, and

WHEREAS, in its inception, Reform Judaism was a movement that was born of the vision and desire of laymen who sought a Judaism in consonance with the emancipation of their lives, and,

WHEREAS, in the less than a century of its active participation in the American scene, Reform Judaism has rendered notable service and made lasting contributions for all Judaism here, now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the members of Congregation Beth Israel, that we call upon the congregations of American Reform Judaism once again through their lay officers and members to strike out courageously with vision and leadership; that they study this frank protest and join with us in the call upon the institutions of this Judaism to survey the whole status of American Reform against the pattern of its historic principles and demand of the next convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations that it take immediate steps to formulate a program and to implement it with action of an aggressive kind, designed to restore to American Reform Judaism that liberal, universal emphasis which made it historically significant and distinctive as an interpretation of Jewish life and a factor among the religions of the western world.

B. de Sola Pool

Rabbi

Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue

Shearith Israel

Founded 1655

99 Central Park West

New York City, N. Y.

(23)

November 8, 1943.

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
E. 195th St. & Ansel Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio

My dear Rabbi Silver,

Have you seen the mimeographed form of application for membership used by Congregation Beth Israel in Houston, Texas? The applicant has to subscribe to certain basic principles which are listed. Among them are a declaration that we are no longer a nation, and do not expect to return to Palestine. "We are neither a nation, a nationality, nor a race..." "Our nation is the U.S.A., our nationality is American, our flag is the stars and stripes, our race is Caucasian." Later on the declaration of principles compels the applicant for membership to reject rabbinical and Mosaic Laws which regulate diet, priestly purity, dress and similar laws, and it compels the applicant to accept whatever changes the Ritual Committee of the congregation may make from time to time.

While the applicant must urgently desire the cultivation of the Hebrew language, "the Hebrew language is becoming unintelligible to the vast majority of our co-religionists, therefore it must make way, as is advisable in existing circumstances, to intelligible language in prayer, which if not understood is a soul-less form.

Note that these rejections of the Jewish People, of Eretz Israel, of Biblical laws, of the use of, if not the desire for, the Hebrew language, are made mandatory on one who desires membership in the congregation.

I wonder why the laymen, or could it have been rabbis, who drew up these principles, did not preface them with the statement "No Jews Need Apply."

I suppose that the U.A.H.C. can not interfere with the autonomy of any of its constituents, even if they pillory themselves as hotbeds of Jewish anti-Semitism, but it does seem to me that somehow out of the Reform camp this truly shocking statement should not be allowed to pass unchallenged.

Sincerely yours,

DSP/te

Resolution adopted by the members of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas (an American Reform Congregation) at a special meeting of the Congregation held on November 23, 1943.

— PREAMBLE —

The members of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, Texas (which Congregation was established May 8, 1856) view with great concern and with much regret the persistent, consistent and growing deviation of organized American Reform Judaism from the ideals and pattern which were established at its founding under the leadership of Isaac M. Wise. We are deeply concerned by the processes which, during the last two decades, have vitiated the broad universalism of this Judaism and have set in motion within it, forces which do not belong to the new world of emancipation and promise, but which are attuned to and are a part of the old world's concept of segregation and despair for Jewish life.

The three great institutions of American Reform Judaism are still those instrumentalities born of the vision of Isaac M. Wise, THE UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS, THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE, and THE CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS. Whatever strength this Judaism may have must come by way of leadership from these three institutions. Whatever defection there may be from the classical patterns of this Judaism must similarly, in very large measure, be the responsibility of these institutions.

Therefore, as a member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and, as an American Reform Congregation that has in the past and hopes to continue in the future to look to the Hebrew Union College and to the Central Conference of American Rabbis for its spiritual leadership and guidance, we respectfully submit the following resolution in the devout hope that the action of this Congregation may inspire similar action in other congregations and that, united in action, we may be able to revive, strengthen, and re-inforce the heart and soul of that Judaism so long and honorably associated with the term "American Reform".

WHEREAS, the UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS is the official organization of the laymen of American Reform Judaism, and was called into being by Isaac M. Wise to provide support for the Hebrew Union College and to effectively provide a vehicle for the active participation by Reform Jewish laymen in the development and progress of American Reform Judaism, and,

WHEREAS, because of its position of leadership a large share of the retrogression that has taken place in Reform Judaism must be considered dereliction of leadership upon the part of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that as a member congregation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, we register a severe criticism to that body for the recurring and constant compromise of the principles of Reform Judaism and particularly upon the following specific counts:

1. The failure of the delegates of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to the recent American Jewish Conference to forthwith register and publicly announce a dissent from that Conference's Palestine Zionist resolution, which said resolution far exceeded the Palestine resolution accepted by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and presented to its delegates as instructions before the American Jewish Conference convened. Their silence gave the impression of assent and any subsequent action must fail to overcome the dereliction of the responsibilities of delegates representing the laymen's reform movement to publicly disavow a commitment of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to the full, maximal Zionist political program as endorsed by the Conference; further, the failure of the Executive Board to disavow the action of the American Jewish Conference and to withdraw from said Conference but instead to refer the Palestine resolution to the next biennial convention, which is eighteen months hence, has the practical effect to place the prestige and influence of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations during this period, which may be the critical period of decision, fully behind the maximal Zionist political program which is contrary to the historical position of the Reform Congregations and the members thereof upon this question;

2. The recent tendency to eliminate the word "Reform" as the descriptive title of American Judaism and the gradual substitution of the word "liberal", as, for example, in the new magazine, "Liberal Judaism", the official organ of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. We submit that "Reform Judaism" has an established and honorable connotation in American life, both Jewish and non-Jewish; that it represented and represents certain definitive characteristics of religion in general and Judaism in particular; that the term, "liberal" is vague, non-definitive as applied to our particular American branch of Judaism and open to misunderstanding; and that in all probability this unexpected switching of term without rhyme or reason, represents still another concession to those who are not "Reform" but who desire to have the advantages of Reform Judaism's established position in the American scene;

3. The employment in its educational department of men in authority who are admittedly nationalistic in viewpoint with the resultant publication or endorsement of educational materials for both adults and children which give a predominantly nationalistic interpretation of Jewish life and history;

4. The subordination of "text substance" of text-books issued by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to the "commercialization for sale" of such books to the end that such books being used in our religious schools cannot longer be used for the advancement of Reform Judaism because they are designed so as to be saleable also to conservative and orthodox religious schools as well, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that these examples in our judgment call for a thorough investigation of all of the departments of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations with the underlying and avowed purpose of having the policies and personnel of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations vigorous and enthusiastic in the advancement, without apology or compromise, of the historic principles of American Reform Judaism, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in the future conventions of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations consideration be given, through amendment to by-laws or otherwise, to insuring that the accredited delegates be preponderantly laymen in American Reform Judaism; that congregations be notified that their accredited delegates should by preference be laymen; that rabbis attend in advisory capacities; that addresses and committee actions be consciously designed, however, to express the laymen's viewpoint; and that for purposes where joint action is called for, between Reform Rabbinate and Reform laymen, some effective modus operandi be designed which should give equal representation to rabbis and laymen, and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in all important standing commissions of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, particularly those having to do with education, ceremonies, public information about Jews and Judaism, etc., the membership of laymen, in advisory capacities be greatly increased, in order that in these important and controversial areas, the opinion of the Reform Jewish laity may be adequately represented.

(B)

WHEREAS, the Central Conference of American Rabbis is the Rabbinical body obligated with leadership for American Reform Judaism, and

WHEREAS, its own members, above all others, should recognize and acknowledge that the Judaism over which they have been given the leadership and supervision has certain distinctive qualities which called it into being as an interpretation of Jewish life, and

WHEREAS, in the past few years the energies of the Central Conference of American Rabbis seem by both impression and record to have been in the direction of apologizing for the differences between Reform Judaism and other branches of Judaism, rather than to have been directed toward planning the strengthening and the extension of Reform Judaism, and

WHEREAS, the historic pattern of Reform Judaism has been one of opposition to political Zionism and Jewish nationalism, regardless of what may or may not have been the relationship between these forces and other branches of Judaism, now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that this congregation, an American Reform Congregation, served by members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis does hereby protest against that body's departure from the historic pattern of American Reform Judaism, as first enunciated by Reform Rabbis in conference in this country at Philadelphia in 1869 and at Pittsburg in 1885, as re-stated at Rochester in 1920 (after the Balfour declaration) and as further re-defined in the Columbus platform of 1937, which departures are indicated by the following actions of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

1. The entertainment and subsequent adoption of a resolution endorsing a "Jewish Army" at its 1942 convention, which action was a definite embroilment of a religious interpretation of Jewish life in a political quarrel and the commitment of that religious interpretation of Jewish life to a partisan, political program;

2. The entertainment and adoption of a resolution at its 1943 convention, asserting that there is "no essential incompatibility between Reform Judaism and Zionism," when as a matter of historic fact and action, the very essence of Reform Judaism has been opposition to both Jewish nationalism and to such emphasis upon the racial, folkloristic, tribal vestiges of Judaism as stem from it;

3. The inclusion in the latest, revised version of the Union Prayerbook Volume I, of service numbered "V", for the Sabbath Evening, which is admittedly nationalistic in character when, again, the whole structure and tradition of Reform Judaism has been one of departure from and emancipation above and beyond a religion of nationalistic limitations and delineations, as evidenced in the historic fact that among the modifications for which early Reform contended was the elimination of prayers which alluded either to the restoration of or the return of Israel to a physical Zion;

4. The accession of the delegates officially representing the Central Conference of American Rabbis to the American Jewish Conference to the maximal Zionist program of that Conference, despite the fact that the official platform of the Central Conference of American Rabbis adopted in Columbus in 1937, is violated in spirit and in letter by such maximal, Zionist resolution. The American Jewish Conference's resolution, from which the Central Conference of American Rabbis delegates registered no dissent far exceeds any declaration upon Palestine upon which Central Conference of American Rabbis membership has been permitted a free and democratic vote and does not represent, as a result of any referendum or otherwise, the recorded or ascertained convictions of the membership of the Central Conference of American Rabbis;

5. The acceptance through their silence of the Central Conference of American Rabbis delegates to the American Jewish Conference, (and the participation by some), in the undignified, abusive, and unwarranted attacks upon fellow rabbis and laymen who are members of Reform Congregations and whose "crime" consisted in the exercise of the right of free speech to state what has been the traditional position of Reform Judaism in the United States upon the question of political Zionism.

(C)

WHEREAS, the Hebrew Union College is the rabbinical seminary founded by Isaac M. Wise for the exclusive and specific purpose of providing American Reform Jews with leadership trained in and harmonious with the traditions of American Reform Judaism, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that this Congregation, an American Reform Congregation, joined by such others as may entertain similar views, which Congregations traditionally look to the Hebrew Union College for spiritual leaders, urgently request of the responsible College authorities a thorough and complete investigation of the curriculum, requirements and personnel, some or all of which must provide some of the basic reasons for the fact that over the recent years, an overwhelming preponderance of graduates have openly expressed little sympathy with and have actively sought little expansion of the historic principles of Reform Judaism, and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in the course of such investigation, particular attention be placed upon the following factors which would seem to have an important bearing upon the attitudes of recent Hebrew Union College graduates;

1. Increasing emphasis by College authorities upon a considerable background of Hebrew to pass the entrance examinations. It is our information and belief that such an emphasis has a tendency to make it more difficult for young men with the background of American Reform family upbringing to qualify as students at Hebrew Union College, since a profound knowledge of the Hebrew language has never been a cardinal tenet of Reform Judaism. Thus, while apparently pursuing the pathway of Reform Judaism, we are in effect disqualifying our own Reform-educated boys from future leadership in the movement in which they were raised as Jews. This is but a process of self-defeat. The tendency is to attract to Hebrew Union College greater proportionate students from Orthodox and Conservative backgrounds than from Reform.

2. The failure to provide a more thorough course at the Hebrew Union College that is designed to provide an understanding of the history and the ideology of Reform Judaism itself. We do not minimize the need of a knowledge of the totality of Jewish life and thought but the Hebrew Union College is an American Reform institution and its graduates are held forth as Reform Rabbis who have been educated at the expense of American Reform Jews, therefore, we submit that it is not expecting too much that they should be specialists in the promulgation and the defense of that particular interpretation of Judaism.

CONCLUSION

WHEREAS, it is the judgment of this Congregation, that in the final analysis, the life and the destiny of American Reform Judaism depends upon the vitality of the belief in such Judaism among the members in the Congregations, and,

WHEREAS, in its inception, Reform Judaism was a movement that was born of the vision and desire of laymen who sought a Judaism in consonance with the emancipation of their lives, and,

WHEREAS, in the less than a century of its active participation in the American scene, Reform Judaism has rendered notable service and made lasting contributions for all Judaism, now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the members of Congregation Beth Israel, that it is our earnest hope that the congregations of American Reform Judaism once again through their lay officers and members will study this frank protest and survey the whole status of American Reform against the pattern of its historic principles and demand of the next convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations that it take immediate steps to formulate a program and to implement it with action of a constructive kind, designed to restore to American Reform Judaism that liberal, universal emphasis which made it historically significant and distinctive as an interpretation of Jewish life and a blessing to Israel and mankind.

DR. JOSHUA LOTH LIEBMAN
TEMPLE ISRAEL
BOSTON 15, MASS.

STUDY OF THE RABBI
LONGWOOD AVE. AT PLYMOUTH ST.

December
Second
1943

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver,
The Temple,
E 105th St and Ansel Road,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Dear Friend:

I did go to Houston under the impression that I would have the opportunity to meet with the leaders of the Reform Congregation and the membership of the Reform Congregation, with the possibility of presenting the point of view which we both share on Reform Judaism and Zionism. As you can well understand, I was forced to cancel many important obligations here in New England, particularly during this time of emergency on the anti-Semitic situation here in this area. I was glad to do so in the conviction that I might serve the cause at a very crucial time of decision.

When I arrived in Houston, I found that the dominant element in the congregation had made clear to some of our national leaders, their unwillingness to expose themselves or the congregation to new ideas. Both Freehof and Eisendrath were made to understand that their presence was not desired in Houston. Under these circumstances, my task, which was to help prevent the congregation from making an un-Jewish and un-Democratic decision, was rendered almost impossible of fulfillment. Perhaps I did serve a function in giving strength and morale to the members of the congregation who did find the courage to come to hear me. A relative of mine in Houston informed me that the leaders of the anti-Zionist forces used real pressure to prevent the community from attending and hearing my address.

I am enclosing an excerpt from a letter which Henry Montor sent me yesterday which perhaps will be of interest to you. If I have any other material on the Houston situation I shall forward it to you.

Hoping to hear from you and with warmest personal greetings to you and your dear ones, I remain -

JLL:brb

Most cordially yours,

Joshua

EXCERPT OF LETTER FROM DAVID H. WHITE
OF HOUSTON, TEXAS

NOVEMBER 26, 1943

One contributing factor was the visit of Rabbi Joshua Liebman. I suppose as votes go he may not have been considered a success, but when you analyze this situation as I have done, when you have worked with the people as I have done you can appreciate what his visit really did. In the first place, one of the members of the Board who did come down to meet Liebman and who was one of their prepared speakers refused to speak that evening although he did vote with them. Secondly, about 175 out of an audience of approximately 600 were Temple Beth Israel members and he impressed the audience as no audience has been impressed before. One of these boys, a brother-in-law of one of the Temple Board Members, has taken upon himself the task of raising funds for the JNF as a token appreciation of what the Rabbi left with him. He is not raising funds from our people, but from among those members who voted for the Principles and he came in today with three contributions - two for a hundred a piece and one check for \$250.00. In our own ranks we had a stiffening of the spines with his visit and had we had time we might have been able to cash in on this new spirit.

But it is an excellent beginning and the new organization which sponsored his appearance - the Jewish Cultural Society, has now become a definite organization known as the Jewish Forum and will function, and I needn't tell you that it will function for the advancement of our cause on a city-wide basis. This project has been one in which I have been vitally interested and I feel that with the push that Rabbi Liebman gave it we are on the way to a better community understanding - if you will help us along with speakers.

Now about the meeting proper, but first another observation on the Liebman meeting. With the announcement of Liebman's coming we sent an invitation to each member of the Temple to be present. In addition we arranged a small private dinner to which Mose Feld invited seven members of the Board and a cocktail party to which we invited two hundred people in the name of Julius Fohs and held at a downtown Hotel. Of the seven Board members invited one showed up and the result I reported on the first page. For the cocktail party we had a hundred turn out. Both of these meetings were fine. The Rabbi was superb and hit the right spot.

As to the lecture proper. When the Board leaders found out about his coming they got their committee working on the phone and each member was called and told to stay away from the meeting as this was purely a Zionist venture. The number of Temple members present at the meeting Monday I reported to you on the first page of this letter. And incidently, I was told that Schachtel's secretary was there and took down the address.

President of
MT. SINAI CONGREGATION
Sioux City, Iowa

Answers

RABBI SOLOMON B. FREEHOF
President

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

on

BETH ISRAEL RESOLUTIONS



Reprint from *The Jewish Post*

April 21, 1944

Central Conference of American
Rabbis,
Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof, President.

Dear Rabbi Freehof:

As president of Mount Sinai Congregation of this city, I received a few days ago your message of March 5 enclosing a copy of your reply to the protest directed to you by Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas. I make this response to you in my private, not my official capacity, and not as a defense for Houston, for they need none, but as a statement of the reaction to your letter. I shall submit a copy to the Board of Trustees of Mount Sinai at our meeting April 19, and I am sending a copy to Houston and to *OPINION* because of its immoderate attacks on the gentlemen from Houston.

At the outset, let me identify myself and my position. I am a Reform Jew of the liberal school; my parents were of the Conservatives; and my grandparents, both paternal and maternal, were rigidly Orthodox. I concur wholeheartedly with the substance of the views stated by Houston. I expressed those opinions publicly and in writing in our own Congregation here as early as 1922 and have adhered to them ever since. . . . I am a subscriber to *The American Council for Judaism, Inc.*, and as early as 1934 I openly asserted the views which the Council was formed to advance. . . .

Your reply to Houston is in two parts. In the first, you state the Houston charge to be that "the Central Conference has departed from the 'classic' pattern of Reform Judaism." You admit that charge, in substance, and then proceed to occupy more than half your message to show that it is not philosophically sound to make such a protest. In so doing, you make use of the common dialectic device of stating a case different from the one at issue, and then answering that different case rather than meeting the true issue. If your statement of the Houston charges were correct, you would be quite right in asserting that the effect of the Houston doctrine would be to petrify Reform Judaism into a fixed pattern of fifty years ago (though, at the same time, the views apparently entertained by "most members of the Central Conference" would carry us back and tie us to a Procrustean bed of two thousand years ago).

As you well know, the Houston charge is not that you have departed from the "classic" pattern of Reform Judaism. It strikes much deeper, as we shall see. True, the Houston Preamble uses the words "classical patterns;" but the Resolutions and the Conclusion deal wholly with "historic principles" and with "the historic pattern" evolved through the years 1869 to 1937, not a fixed mold set 50 years ago. But I shall not pause to quibble about words; as Mr. Justice Cordozo

and other members of the Supreme Court of the United States have so often reminded us, tags and tickets, labels and definitions aid us but little in the quest for the truth. For here we deal with vital concepts with dynamic movements.

You recognize and later state, but do not answer, the indictment really brought by Houston. These are your words: "The only question is whether the changes which have occurred have violated the *essential* (not necessarily the *classical*) principles of Reform Judaism." Why do you not answer *that* question?

The charge made by Houston, and the charge I make, is that the changes have violated the essential principles. Most of the members of the Central Conference are graduates of The Hebrew Union College. The College, as late as November, 1943, stated its basic purpose in these words (I quote only the part that you would change):

"But it (Judaism) would also recognize its duty of existence and self-expression and claim the right to fulfill the obligation which both necessity and history confer upon it, of adapting itself to the life which its children must live as loyal citizens of this American nation, and participants in and eager contributors to evolving American culture. Only with this conscious program could Judaism live and grow in America."

"Jewish ideals and American ideals must be welded together into one living, compelling reality by men who could teach and lead and cre-

ate with authority and consecration."

And in the 1943-44 Catalogue of the College, at pages 1 and 3, we find these statements concerning the College:

"It holds that Judaism is both in spirit and fact a continuously progressive religious discipline, and that it must be kept constantly liberal and spiritually alert. It believes that if Judaism is to live and expand here in America it must be open to every positive influence of modernism, must square itself with every advance in scientific thought, and must engender that type of religious devotion which will evoke the uncompromising loyalty of every Jew. The future of world Jewry, certainly for our generation, rests in America."

Finally, on October 16, 1943, at the College, its President, Dr. Julian Morgenstern, in a masterpiece of Jewish statesmanship, an address entitled, "Nation, People, Religion—What Are We?" said:

"We Jews, wherever we may dwell, will feel ourselves completely citizens of our respective nations. We will be, still and ever, an integral part of the eternal Jewish people, our religious people . . . seeking its living expression and creative functions in sympathetic and whole-hearted integration with the spirit and culture, achievement and progress of the nations or states of

which we are responsible citizens . . . we will understand that cultural inter-relations are always of a give-and-take nature, and that even while we are being influenced and molded in spirit, so, simultaneously and commensurately, we influence and give of our best to the cultural treasure and heritage of our nation, of the various religions in fellowship with whom we live, and of all humanity."

The charge brought against you is that you have violated these essential principles; that you reject this vital, dynamic modernism; that you would move us out of these broad currents of generous cultural assimilation, and confine us to the narrow, ghetto-like isolation and seclusion of ancient concepts. Your emphasis on Political Zionism is only one of the charges in the indictment.

In the second part of your Reply to Houston, you evade the five specific charges made by Houston. The Resolution of the Houston Congregation particularizes those charges with great clarity. You might have undertaken to answer them with equal directness. From your failure to do so, we may fairly conclude that the particulars of the charges are true. I think it is obvious that they are true. Instead of answering directly and clearly, you again evade the issue by stating the question as one that it is not. You say that "the one charge which Houston clearly means to make," is this: "The Central Conference has become Zionist and has

thereby abandoned the essentials of Reform Judaism." You answer your own question, not the Houston questions, by saying: "The Conference has not become Zionist." The record seems to show that that answer is essentially untrue; that there is no need to pause to debate it, for the true charges are much more serious. They are these:

You have done, you do, precisely what you say you do not do, precisely the sort of thing for which you upbraid Houston. You say, "Each member of our Conference may decide for himself whether to accept or reject Zionism, whichever way he decides will not affect his status or his moral right to be part of our Conference." Why do you not permit Houston the untrammelled right to formulate its own views on Reform Judaism and on Zionism and more particularly, on Political Zionism? Why do you not permit each member of each congregation to have his own opinion on Zionism? Why do you preach Zionism from the pulpit? Why do you preach Zionism in the Union Prayerbook (See Houston charge No. 3)? Why does the Conference, *as a Conference*, adopt resolutions of approval of Zionism (see Houston charge No. 2), instead of allowing each member rabbi to state his own views? Why do you condone and participate in the outrageous vilification of your fellow members who have the courage and the foresight to state views on Zionism contrary to those held by your "majority" (see Houston charge No. 5)? Why do you deliberately, and as an official, formal body, commit Re-

form Jewry (whom you have the high privilege and great responsibility to represent) to highly controversial and perhaps perilous political programs (see Houston charges Nos. 1 and 4)?

Those are the vital charges, and those are the charges that your Reply to Houston leaves without answer. You approach the jugular when you say: "Whether we are justified in thus changing a past emphasis, or whether what we have changed is essential, indispensable doctrine, may well be debated." In these words, you confess the truth of the protest Houston levels at you; whether you are right, or whether the Houston doctrine is right, *may well be debated*. At the moment, most agree with you; some agree with Houston. Right there is the highest, the most vital issue: *Why do you seek so strenuously to foreclose debate?* Do you count that as being "in harmony with liberal principles?" Practically all Americans will think that it is not. If I am correct in my appraisal that "At the moment, most agree with you," it is true only because we have been subjected for 25 years or more to unreasoned, emotional propaganda, and because during these years our Reform rabbis have been derelict in their solemn duty of enlightened leadership.

Some few have awakened to their serious responsibilities; these few you would silence. If at the moment you may count for yourselves a numerical majority, do you reckon that that entitles you to commit Reform Jewry irrevocably to your present doctrine? Are minorities to be no longer safe, to

be no longer heard? May the Jew, as a minority group, hope to secure, if he metes out to the minorities within his own ranks only bigotry, intolerance, libel and slander?

"If the counsel" contained in your letter to Houston is to prevail, there is truly occasion to be "nervous about the future of Reform Judaism." Is Reform so frail that it cannot withstand fearless, free and frank discussion? Is Reform leadership so unsure of itself that it must silence opposition, that it cannot brook criticism? You concede that the change which you have made may well be debated; and you ask: "If the judgment of the majority of the Reform Rabbis on this question is not acceptable to you, whose judgment will you accept?" There is no imperious necessity that that judgment be accepted and most assuredly not if it is not willing to subject itself to debate on a theme that "may well be debated." Each of us may, as you yourselves suggest, formulate our own independent judgment, at least until full discussion ripens into mature conclusion. It is the history of judicial decision in the United States, indeed it is the history of the United States, that the dissent of today becomes the majority of tomorrow.

I submit this protest humbly, conscious of the importance of the issues and of my own limitations in addressing a rabbinical body.

Respectfully,

LOUIS S. GOLDBERG,
Sioux City, Ia.

Congregation Beth Israel

OFFICERS

LEOPOLD L. MEYER, PRESIDENT
MAX H. NATHAN, 1ST VICE-PRES.
WM. SALMAN, 2ND VICE-PRES.
SIDNEY L. MAYER, SECRETARY
HENRY GREENFIELD, TREASURER

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
C. M. WUNDERMAN

ORGANIZED 1856

KEYSTONE 3-6670

KEYSTONE 3-6679

HOLMAN AND LA BRANCH STREETS
HOUSTON, TEXAS

TRUSTEES

SYDNEY H. COHEN
M. N. DANNENBAUM
MELVIN T. DAVIDSON
DR. THOS. FREUNDLICH
IKE L. FREED
I. FRIEDLANDER
MRS. CARL J. HERMAN, SR.
HERBERT E. LEVY
MRS. M. D. LEVY
RENE S. LEVY
SAM W. LEVY
MRS. LASKER M. MEYER
ALBERT MEYERSON
MRS. W. W. MUNZESHEIMER
MELVIN ROUFF
TOBIAS SAKOWITZ
IRVIN M. SHLENKER

May 15, 1944.

TO THE OFFICERS, TRUSTEES AND RABBIS
OF THE REFORM CONGREGATION ADDRESSED:

Gentlemen:

You were recently favored with a communication from Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof, President Central Conference of American Rabbis, and as the issues discussed therein and concerning the subject matter embodied in the Resolution of Beth Israel Congregation, Houston, Texas, are in no-wise disposed of, we are replying to Rabbi Freehof per printed copy attached.

It is also a pleasure to enclose "A Hand Book of True Facts Concerning the 'Basic Principles' of Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, Texas, An American Reform Congregation," in which we believe you will find set forth highly elucidating data and material in support of Beth Israel's position.

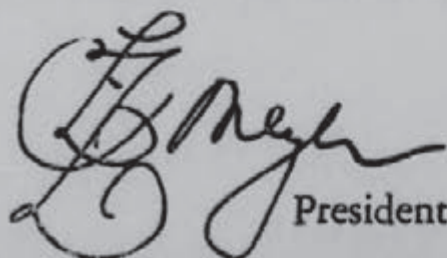
It is the conviction of Beth Israel that it is morally obligated to continue to pursue the aims and objectives embodied in its Basic Principles and in its Resolution; accordingly, Beth Israel will continue to keep all Reform Congregations informed of its actions and deliberations, through the mails, as there is not presently available any other medium at Beth Israel's disposal.

We solicit not only your careful perusal of the accompanying printed matter, but also your influence and assistance in the attainment of revisions and reforms in our national agencies, U. A. H. C., C. C. A. R., and H. U. C., in which must lie our hope for the redemption and revitalization of American Reform Judaism.

Your comments are earnestly solicited.

Very truly yours,

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL


President



**ANNUAL REPORT
CONGREGATION
BETH ISRAEL**

HOUSTON, TEXAS

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES



*from Mr. Klein
502 Mc Gowan ave
Houston, Texas.*

**ANNUAL MEETING
TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL**

**TUESDAY, MAY 30
1944**



DEDICATION . . .

WITH a deep sense of gratitude and feelingful appreciation for the forty-four years of faithful service rendered by Dr. Henry Barnston to Beth Israel, and with prayerful hope that the affectionate regard in which Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel is held by the members of his Congregation will blossom into an abiding love, this brochure is dedicated to these two illustrious gentlemen as an expression of the reverent esteem of their devoted congregants.

For Dr. Barnston we pray that his period of retirement will be replete with joy and most pleasant reflection upon a life well spent and piously dedicated to the service of God and of his fellow men; for Rabbi Schachtel we ask God's blessing and indulge the hope that his career, so brilliantly launched, will attain full development and fruition in our midst, and that as an exemplar of all that is good and noble, his services will redound to the everlasting glory of all Israel.

LEOPOLD L. MEYER, President

DR. HENRY BARNSTON
RABBI EMERITUS

THE past year has been epochal in the history of Congregation Beth Israel. Last year your spiritual leaders were Rabbi Kahn and myself. My colleague, Rabbi Kahn, has resigned, and I am now Rabbi Emeritus. Rabbi Schachtel is now Chief Rabbi, and under his able ministry I hope and trust and pray that the Congregation will continue its forward stride.

In the English Parliament the minority is known as His Majesty's loyal opposition. I hope our minority will remain loyal to the traditions of Beth Israel and will help our Congregational Ship of State to sail on. Let us forget our differences and let bygones be bygones. Whether we agree or disagree with the Principles, we may rest assured that our Board had the welfare of the Congregation at heart when they drew them up. We may well shrug our shoulders at the vitriolic abuse which has been poured upon Beth Israel. This only shows how very far we Jews are from being able to govern ourselves as a distinct nation. Let us reply to this abuse by closing up our ranks and pulling together for the glory of Judaism.

Let our watchword be peace—peace to those who are near and peace to those who are afar.—HENRY BARNSTON



RABBI HYMAN JUDAH SCHACHTEL

TEMPLE Beth Israel, by its courageous and inspiring action of November 23, 1943, has become the champion of classical American Reform Judaism in the United States. I deem it the highest honor and the most sacred challenge to have been entrusted with the spiritual leadership of this pre-eminent Congregation.

We all realize that what began as a local action has become of national, if not international, significance. Much more will be expected of us now that the world knows where we stand. In a time of confusion and excitement, when many leaders surrendered to blackest despair and abandoned all hope in mankind, the vision and affirmations of our Congregation have come to many of our brethren like the dawn appears to those who thought the night would never end. Already thousands of our like-minded co-religionists, both here and abroad, civilians and members of the armed forces, have turned to us for guidance and strength. We shall not fail them.

Our course of action is clear and unmistakable. We must be tireless in our zeal to revitalize American Reform Judaism. God, in His goodness, has granted us the privilege of contributing greatly towards achieving the fulfillment of all that the sainted Isaac Mayer Wise dreamed when he laid the foundations of Reform Judaism in America.

Formidable are the obstacles on the path we have taken. Hard, always, is the road of the faithful who dare not weary nor weaken. But how glorious and radiant is our chosen destiny of helping to bring to our co-religionists that interpretation of our noble faith which is true both to the spiritual imperatives of our illustrious past and the high realities of a post-war world in which the followers of Judaism, together with all God revering people, shall be worthy of freedom and justice and peace. May God speed us on our journey of faith in Him, in Israel and mankind.

—HYMAN JUDAH SCHACHTEL





I am convinced that no higher honor can be bestowed upon a member of Congregation Beth Israel than to be chosen as its President; and, further, I am definitely of the opinion that the job can be as big as any man who may aspire to filling it.

LEOPOLD L. MEYER,
PRESIDENT, CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

To the Members of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel:

The President of your Congregation has experienced quite a peculiar reaction in the contemplation of his report to the membership concerning the happenings of the bygone twelve months. The writer recalls having made the statement in his previous annual report to the effect that he was making his accounting purely in conformity with custom and in the discharge of what was presumed to be a moral obligation, but that he felt that there was little to report of any especial importance, as merely a routine year had been experienced.

There is little doubt that all members of our Congregation will agree that the year 1943-1944 has been an unusual one, presenting complexities of an unaccustomed order, and vital issues of far reaching effect which have not only taxed the resourcefulness of your President and his associates on the Board, but which would have challenged the intellectual and moral stamina of persons of much more profound learning and of much broader experience. This particular phase of the current administration's activities could well be elaborated upon as the sole subject of this report; but rather than indulge in an appraisal of only the major issues which have

literally precipitated a nation-wide upheaval within Jewish circles, it is perhaps more advisable for your President to report, first, according to precedent, upon the usual operational functionings of the past year and then proceed to recount the extraordinary happenings of the year in a somewhat chronological order, regardless of the comparative importance of various incidents and events.

There are certain facts and statistical data usually incorporated in an annual report of this character, and fortunately, all of this matter reflects favorably upon the membership as a whole:

Membership Analysis: Whereas the Congregation has a total membership of 834, there are only 790 paying members, accountable for by the fact that there are 27 members in the Armed Services and 17 members of other classifications, in favor of whom dues have been waived. For the period July 1, 1943, through May 30, 1944, 89 new members have been accepted into the Congregation and 37 members have been lost to the Congregation through deaths, resignations and removals. It is refreshing to observe that only 14 members were lost through resignation, for many different reasons.

From the membership classification and dues analysis fol-

lowing this report, it will be noted with considerable interest that there has been little change in the percentage relationship of dues collectible to membership. For the previous year it was observed that 13 per cent of the membership was accountable for 45 per cent of the dues collected, whereas for the current year the ratio is 13.29 to 44.69. The same observation must be made at this time as was recorded heretofore, namely, that the burden of supporting the Congregation is not being fairly distributed. It is very likely that two-thirds of the members are doing all that could reasonably be expected of them by way of dues, but there is little question that at least 250 of our members could increase their dues very substantially, without any sacrifice, financially or otherwise. It is being recommended concurrently with the filing of this report that the Finance Committee undertake an analysis of the membership of the Congregation to solicit a more proportionate voluntary payment of dues by those who are not carrying their part of the load. If this procedure fails to produce the necessary results to insure the convenient meeting of the comparatively modest budget adopted for the ensuing year, a flat assessment to meet the budget will be the only alternative. It is sincerely hoped that this latter procedure, which is fundamentally inequitable in principle, will not necessarily be resorted to.

Donations and Bequests: There have been a number of gifts to the Congregation which are most gratefully acknowledged. Through the goodness and affectionate regard

of the members of the Brotherhood of Temple Beth Israel, there was presented the portrait of Dr. Henry Barnston, which has been appropriately placed in the foyer of the Memorial Hall; the Temple Beth Israel Sisterhood contributed \$300.00 toward the cost of furnishing Rabbi Schachtel's most attractive study; Mr. and Mrs. Isaac S. Brochstein and Mr. and Mrs. Sam Brochstein complimented the Congregation with two beautiful fern boxes, which appropriately adorn the Temple Altar; Mrs. Paul Lang and Miss Merrian Lang contributed a number of prayer books for use in the Temple, and to the memory of Mr. Paul Lang. In addition to the above referred to gifts, the Congregation was favored with \$100.00 from the Estate of Mrs. Ida Rosenwald; income amounting to \$250.00 from the Estate of Harriet Levy; and a contribution of \$1211.45, to apply against certain unusual expenses incurred last year. (By special request the contributors of this latter sum are not being named herein.) It is further noted that the Brotherhood of Temple Beth Israel has made its final payment of \$100.00 against the original pledge of \$500.00 to cover the cost of finishing the Temple Study.

It is not at all inappropriate to remind the membership that much is needed in the Temple which cannot be conveniently provided through the customary budget and to suggest that befitting memorials to dear ones will always be acceptable by the Board of Trustees.

In Memoriam: During the bygone year the families of

certain of our members have suffered bereavements, and we extend to them our sympathy and indulge the hope that they will find consolation for their loss in gratitude for the years they were blessed by association with those who have gone their way.

Since our last recording the following members of our Congregation have been called:

Mr. Alfred Alexander
Lt. Colman R. Asher
Mr. Sol M. Colman
Mrs. Julius M. Edel
Mr. Simon Friedlander
Mr. Louis S. Friedman
Mrs. Edgar Goldberg
Mr. Maurice Greenfield
Mr. Michael Keller

Miss Miriam Klopman
Mr. Leo M. Levy
Mr. Jonas Levy
Mrs. Julia Loeb
Mr. Sam I. Miller
Mrs. Fannie Openheim
Mrs. Ida Rosenwald
Miss Helen Schnitzer
Mrs. Mamie Wiel

May God bless the memory of these good people and reward them in Heaven for their deeds of kindness and charity toward their fellow men while they were on this good earth, as well as for their service to the Lord Himself.

It is fitting and proper to acknowledge the efficient, loyal and faithful service rendered by our Executive Secretary, Mr. Charles M. Wunderman, and the Assistant Secretaries, Mrs. Rose Brilling and Mrs. Doris Baer; and certainly a word of commendation is in order for Mr. Leo Fleishman, caretaker of the Cemetery, and George Fields, caretaker of our buildings and grounds.

At this particular juncture let us bow our heads for a moment of silent prayer as a mark of respect for our beloved Sexton, Michael Keller, who was recently called to the Great Beyond. For in excess of 20 years dear Mr. Keller served our Congregation faithfully, and in addition to the devoted manner in which he discharged his duties, his broad smile and pleasant personality will long be remembered by the members of the Congregation whose affectionate regard he commanded. May God bless the soul of our departed associate, and comfort his dear ones in their bereavement.

It is reported with considerable satisfaction that the members of our Congregation have taken their place admirably in the community and are contributing in a very representative manner, in services and financially, to the various civic, social and charitable agencies and institutions of the city. This discharge of obligation reflects most favorably upon our Congregation, and naturally, it is presumed and expected that those who are qualified for community service of one category or another will answer, from time to time, such calls as are made upon them. As in the past, a creditable accounting will unquestionably be made.

The current year's history has been interwoven inextricably with the finale of the annual meeting of May 19, 1943, when the resignation of Dr. Henry Barnston, Senior Rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel, was accepted. It so came about that on May 10, 1943, Dr. Barnston submitted his resignation in a communication herein set forth:

THE PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL.
Ladies and Gentlemen:

On May 5th I met the Committee appointed by the Board, which Committee I approve, to discuss the subject of my retirement as Rabbi of the Congregation.

In these strenuous and fateful days the time has arrived for a younger, more aggressive and more alert man to take the reins and keep the Congregation functioning as the leading Reform group in the Southwest. I am convinced that my retirement is timely and will be in the interest of the Congregation which I love so dearly, and I approve heartily the provision in our agreement that the retirement should be effective at the Congregation's convenience, on or after September 1, 1943.

I am now approaching my 75th year, and for nearly 44 years have served the Congregation to the very best of my ability, loving it as I do with all my heart and with all my soul. During my incumbency I have had the satisfaction of seeing two new Temples dedicated and a ten-fold increase in our Membership.

I feel that the emolument assured to me during the period of my retirement is quite liberal, and will assure me and my family, with some reasonable sacrifices, our customary conveniences and comforts. And let me assure you that in the future, as in the past, I will always work with might and main for the upbuilding of the Congregation.

I am, with cordial greetings,

Date?

Yours sincerely,
(signed) HENRY BARNSTON.

Inasmuch as the receipt of Dr. Barnston's letter coincided with the date of the scheduled monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Congregation, his resignation was submitted thereat, and was duly accepted, as reflected in the following excerpts from a communication over the signa-

ture of the President of the Congregation directed to Dr. Barnston:

"After due consideration of the matter, a resolution was adopted by the Board of Trustees that your retirement as Rabbi should become effective at the earliest convenience of the Congregation but in no event prior to September 1, 1943.

"The Trustees, in the resolution adopted, instructed the President to apprise you of the action taken by the Board, and further instructed the President to announce your retirement in a formal manner upon the occasion of the annual meeting of the members of the Congregation, called for May 19, 1943, at which time it is anticipated that appropriate resolutions relative to your retirement as Rabbi will be adopted."

Your President further advised Dr. Barnston that with the acceptance of his resignation, the following resolution would become effective:

Date?
"RESOLVED that Rabbi Henry Barnston shall be retired at the convenience of the Congregation on or after September 1, 1943, and that for the period of his retirement he shall receive a lifetime salary of \$6,000.00 per year, payable at the rate of \$500.00 per month; and that during the period of his retirement Rabbi Barnston shall perform such services as may be requested of him by the Board and to which he may be personally agreeable.

"It is also understood that this resolution shall be presented at the regular annual meeting of the Congregation to be held on the evening of May 19, 1943, and shall be subject to the ratification of the membership approving the resolution and contractual agreement incorporated therein."

At the Annual Meeting of the Congregation on May 19, 1943, above referred to, and immediately following the membership's ratification of the Board's action, in connec-

tion with Dr. Barnston's retirement, your President expressed the following observations:

"It is only natural to presume that the announcement of the Rabbi's retirement will be received with mixed emotions by the members of the Congregation. The situation is bound to give rise to a retrospective appraisal of a broad active service that has extended over the greater part of the lives of all present on this occasion, and in the resolutions prepared upon instructions of the Board and to be read during the course of the evening, the sentiments of the Congregation will be simply and humbly expressed. The occasion should not be construed as one of sadness, but rather of joyousness and thanksgiving that the Congregation finds itself willing and financially able to retire its Rabbi of long service upon a most liberal life-time compensation basis insuring every comfort for the Rabbi in his declining years. It is a tribute to the Congregation itself that it was sufficiently forethoughtful and farsighted to insure such a handsome reward for a loyal and faithful servant who, while still spiritually most influential, has suffered a normal expectancy physically and who might find difficulty in meeting the ever-increasing burdens incumbent upon a spiritual leader in a growing community in these most strenuous times. It can be reasonably presumed that even a Rabbi in the prime of life might be taxed to the limit of his capacity in meeting the exigencies of the moment. It is a most pleasing realization that our Rabbi shall be accorded the consideration that he has merited and shall be granted the privilege of basking in the glory of a respected position in his Congregation and his community. He shall, hopefully, enjoy many more years of good health and reside happily among those to whom he has endeared himself."

Thereupon, the following resolution on Dr. Barnston's retirement, and which had been prepared by Mr. Sam W. Levy, pursuant to instructions of the Board, was presented and adopted:

"WHEREAS, Dr. Henry Barnston, for nearly 44 years, has been the religious leader of Congregation Beth Israel, and as its Rabbi has brought to his people an abundance of happiness in their hours of joy, and a deep and abiding sympathy and solace in their hours of sorrow; and

"WHEREAS, during these past many years he has given his Congregation generously of his wisdom, of his understanding and sympathy, and even more generously of himself; and

"WHEREAS, under and by virtue of his spiritual leadership, said Congregation has progressed and prospered; and

"WHEREAS, he is now retiring as Rabbi of said Congregation, and said Congregation desires to proclaim his exemplary record of loyal and faithful service to this Congregation and to this community; NOW THEREFORE

"BE IT RESOLVED by the members of Congregation Beth Israel in its regular annual meeting assembled, that we do hereby acknowledge and proclaim that, for more than 43 consecutive years, Dr. Henry Barnston has faithfully, sincerely and efficiently served the members of this Congregation, and more generally their parents and their children, as a true leader in Israel, and that he has thereby earned and has our heartfelt gratitude, our profound respect, our abiding love and devotion, and our prayers that:

"God may bless him and keep him and grant unto him many more years of usefulness to this community, to his Congregation, and to Israel."

The members of the Congregation were then advised that no successor to Dr. Barnston had as yet been considered and that it would very likely be many months before a person qualified as Dr. Barnston's successor would be engaged.

As a matter of form and procedure, a motion was thereupon made, empowering the Board of Trustees of Congregation Beth Israel to select and negotiate for a Chief Rabbi for Congregation Beth Israel, and to make its report and recommendation at a Special Meeting of the Congregation

to be called for the purpose of receiving and acting thereupon when such report should be available.

As may well be presumed, all officially concerned with affairs of the Congregation were actively mindful of the magnitude of the problem with which they were confronted, and from which evolved many issues demanding calm and thoughtful reflection. The situation required more than the mere employment of a Rabbi; it necessitated locating a religious leader qualified not only culturally and with academic background becoming the importance and dignity of Beth Israel, but also a religionist of the Reform School who subscribed to the principles of the faith as taught by Dr. Barnston for nearly forty-four years, and from which the members of Beth Israel would brook no departure.

Pursuant to many formal meetings and innumerable informal discussions, and in conformity with sentiment expressed by the Trustees, your President appointed a Special Committee, composed of Mr. Geo. S. Cohen, Chairman, Messrs. Ike L. Freed, I. Friedlander, Sam W. Levy and Simon Sakowitz, and charged this Committee with the duty of serving as a fact-finding agency for the Board of Trustees, with the expressed hope that the Committee would procure, for consideration by the Board, the names of certain Rabbis, who, after the studied opinion of the Committee, could be conscientiously recommended as qualified for engagement as Dr. Barnston's successor.

A regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees was

held on July 13, 1943, and there was presented thereat the report of the Special Committee above referred to. Mr. Geo. S. Cohen reported for his Committee, laying before the Board all facts and data that had been collected from all available sources. Mr. Cohen and several other members of his Committee, who were present, answered all questions propounded to them, and satisfied the Board unequivocally that the research on the part of the Special Committee had been quite exhaustive and thorough.

The Board weighed the matter of potential candidates carefully, and ultimately agreed unanimously that Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel, presently serving West End Synagogue, New York City, was eminently qualified for Beth Israel's pulpit. It was thereupon resolved by the Board to select Rabbi Schachtel and to solicit his approval of the proposal that his name be recommended to the membership as Senior Rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel for a term of two years, at a salary of ten thousand dollars per year.

Pursuant to the Board's action, and upon the presumption that Rabbi Schachtel would be interested in Beth Israel's pulpit, motion was passed authorizing the President to call a Special Meeting of the membership of Congregation Beth Israel, subject, of course, to Rabbi Schachtel's acceptance of our call, for the purpose of receiving and acting upon the report and recommendation of the Board in connection with the selection of Rabbi Schachtel as Senior Rabbi, and for the transaction of any and all business incident to said

purpose that might properly come before the meeting herein referred to.

On July 14, 1943, per copy of communication hereinbelow, Rabbi Schachtel was informed of the Board's action, and a favorable answer to the call of this great Congregation was solicited.

RABBI HYMAN JUDAH SCHACHTEL
West End Synagogue
New York City

Dear Rabbi Schachtel:

Permit me to inform you that a resolution was passed at the annual meeting of Congregation Beth Israel, held on May 19, 1943, approving the retirement of Dr. Henry Barnston, such retirement to become effective as of some date on or after Sept. 1, 1943, subject to determination by the Board, and in accordance with the terms of a contract entered into in 1928. At the same meeting of the Congregation on May 19, 1943, another resolution was passed to the effect that the President should appoint a Committee whose purpose should be to consider applicants for the position of, and to make recommendations to the Board in connection with, the filling of the position of Senior or Chief Rabbi for Congregation Beth Israel which position would be vacant pursuant to the retirement of Dr. Henry Barnston.

On May 24, 1943, in compliance with the resolution above referred to, the writer appointed a Special Committee composed of Mr. Geo. S. Cohen, Chairman, Mr. I. Friedlander, Mr. Ike L. Freed, Mr. Simon Sakowitz and Mr. Sam W. Levy, which Committee made its report to the Officers and Board of Trustees at a regular monthly meeting of the Board on Tuesday evening, July 13, 1943.

It is my privilege and pleasure to apprise you of the unanimous recommendation of the members of the Special Committee that you be called

for this most important assignment, and of the Board's unanimous adoption of the Committee report with the further resolution that your favorable and prompt acceptance of the call to the rabbinate of Congregation Beth Israel be earnestly solicited.

For your information, permit me to apprise you of the fact that according to the bylaws of Congregation Beth Israel, in addition to the position of Senior or Chief Rabbi, our Congregation maintains the position of Junior or Assistant Rabbi, in which latter position Chaplain Robt. I. Kahn is now being retained, although he is at present on leave of absence with the armed forces. Simultaneously with the election of a Senior or Chief Rabbi, Dr. Henry Barnston, according to resolution also passed at the meeting of May 19, 1943, above referred to, will be elected Rabbi Emeritus, with the obligation to perform only such duties during his period of retirement, as shall be designated by the Board.

Permit me also to inform you that the Junior or Assistant Rabbi is subject to employment by the Board of Trustees, whereas according to the bylaws of Congregation Beth Israel, the election of the Senior or Chief Rabbi is subject to the action of the membership. Accordingly, the next order of business, pursuant to receipt of your anxiously awaited and, hopefully, favorable response, is for the President of the Congregation to call a Special Meeting of the Congregation for the purpose of permitting the membership to vote upon the recommendation of the Board of Trustees.

Inasmuch as all but one or two members of the Board of Trustees had had the privilege of making your acquaintance and of enjoying your company during your short visit, the reaction at the Board meeting on Tuesday evening was one of happiness and joy at the prospect of being favored with your religious guidance and communal leadership, and for which your qualifications were considered obvious.

"Soliciting your earliest convenient acceptance hereof, consistent, of course, with the full discharge of your obligation to the Congregation which is presently being graced with your leadership, I am

Sincerely yours,

(signed) LEOPOLD L. MEYER, *President.*

Under date of July 23, 1943, formal acceptance from Rabbi Schachtel was happily received, per telegram below:

I ACCEPT THE CALL TO BE THE RABBI OF CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL. MAY GOD BLESS THIS UNION OF RABBI AND CONGREGATION WITH LASTING SPIRITUAL ACHIEVEMENT AS AMERICANS AND FOLLOWERS OF JUDAISM.

HYMAN JUDAH SCHACHTEL.

Immediately upon receipt of Rabbi Schachtel's acceptance of the call of Congregation Beth Israel, the following notice of a Special Meeting to be held on the 4th day of August, 1943, was mailed to the membership at large:

July 23, 1943

TO THE MEMBERS OF HEBREW CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL,
HOUSTON, TEXAS:

Notice is hereby given that a special meeting of the Members of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas, will be held at Abe M. Levy Memorial Community Hall, 1418 Holman Street, Houston, Texas, on the 4th day of August, 1943, at 8 o'clock P. M.

By a resolution adopted at the annual meeting of the Members of the Congregation, held on May 19, 1943, the Board of Trustees was empowered to select a Senior Rabbi for recommendation to the Congregation for approval, and the said special meeting has been called for the purpose of receiving and acting upon the report of the Board of Trustees and its recommendation that Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel of New York City be selected as the Senior Rabbi of the Congregation, and for the transaction of any and all business incident to said purpose, that may properly come before the meeting.

For the information of the members, it may be advised that Rabbi Schachtel is a present Senior Rabbi of West End Congregation of New

York City. He was selected for recommendation to the Congregation by unanimous vote of the Board after an exhaustive and careful survey of the whole field of available rabbis qualified for the pulpit of Congregation Beth Israel. In arriving at its conclusions the Board was not only influenced by the favorable recommendations concerning Rabbi Schachtel received from a number of outstanding rabbis, but also by the very fine impressions gained from the personal contact with Rabbi Schachtel by the trustees and other members of the Congregation upon the occasion of Rabbi Schachtel's recent visit to Houston. The Board feels that if its recommendation is approved, Rabbi Schachtel will serve this Congregation with dignity and distinction.

Your attention is directed to the fact that the bylaws of the Congregation provide that only members in good standing shall have the right to speak and to vote upon any question that shall come before the said meeting.

By order of the President.

SIDNEY L. MAYER, *Secretary*.

After the Special Meeting of the Congregation referred to had been called to order by the President, the following report and recommendation of the Board of Trustees of the Congregation, which had been prepared by the President in advance of the meeting, was duly presented to the members of the Congregation by the President:

Pursuant to the motion made at the annual meeting of the Congregation on May 19, 1943, and which motion was duly seconded and passed unanimously, the Board of Trustees of Congregation Beth Israel was empowered to select and negotiate for a Senior Rabbi for Congregation Beth Israel, and to make its report and recommendation at a special meeting of the Congregation to be called for the purpose of receiving and acting upon the report of the Board.

The work of the Board, with reference to the selection of a Senior Rabbi, began only after the appearance in the public press of announcements of Dr. Barnston's retirement.

At the inception of its deliberations, the Board evaluated its problem, and finally decided to take into account, in connection therewith, the following obvious facts:

(1) All deliberations were hypothesized upon the presumption that Dr. Barnston was anxious to begin the enjoyment of his deserved retirement at the earliest date convenient to the Congregation.

(2) Because of the anticipated early factual retirement of Dr. Barnston, the services of a Senior Rabbi were required.

(3) That the services of the Assistant Rabbi, Robt. I. Kahn, were not available.

(4) That delicate and important Jewish problems would likely arise prior to and during the post-war period that would require a Senior Rabbi of experience and responsibility.

(5) That if such a man was available, his services should be secured as soon as possible.

As a result of the impracticability of a Board of twenty odd persons gathering facts and data for the Board's consideration, the Board appointed a Special Committee responsible to the Board, and charged with the duty of serving as a fact-finding agency for the Board, in connection with the important matter of selecting a Senior Rabbi. The members of this Special Committee were appointed advisedly and because of their particular identity and associations in the community, within the Congregation, and within the Board. The Committee was composed of Mr. Geo. S. Cohen, Chairman, and Messrs. I. Friedlander, Ike L. Freed, Sam W. Levy, and Simon Sakowitz.

Mr. Cohen was made Chairman of the Committee because of his services for several years, beginning with Mr. Friedlander's administration, as Chairman of the Ritual Committee, and further, because of his devoted friendship for Dr. Barnston and his family.

Mr. Friedlander was appointed to the Committee because of his association on the Board as immediate Past President.

Mr. Simon Sakowitz was appointed because of his standing in our Jewish community and as a representative of the Congregation at large.

Mr. Freed was appointed not only because of his forty-four years of affiliation with the Congregation, but because of the influence exerted by him in connection with the selection of Rabbi Kahn as Assistant Rabbi, during his administration as President of the Congregation.

Mr. Sam W. Levy was appointed to the Committee because of his close association with Rabbi Kahn for a number of years as superintendent of the Sunday School, and further because of his own personal intimate friendship with the Assistant Rabbi.

This Congregation is advised that in deference to Rabbi Kahn, the first meeting of the Special Committee was devoted exclusively to a most exhaustive discussion of Rabbi Kahn as a factor to be considered. The Board feels that every angle of the situation, pro and con, was presented and laboriously evaluated. There was serious reflection upon the question of Rabbi Kahn's availability, and a studied attempt to properly appraise his qualifications for the position, relatively. In its deliberations, the individual members of the Board, realizing their responsibility to the Congregation, were motivated solely by the desire to do what they thought best for Congregation Beth Israel, regardless of any personal feelings in the matter.

Despite the fact that throughout the entire discussion a most sympathetic attitude towards Rabbi Kahn prevailed consistently, and regardless of the fact that there was never the slightest intimation that Rabbi Kahn had failed to serve generally satisfactorily as Assistant Rabbi, the Board ultimately concluded that in its best judgment, Rabbi Kahn could not logically be considered favorably for the position of Senior Rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel for the following reasons:

(1) That regardless of any other contingencies, Rabbi Kahn was not available, and could not advisedly be considered as Dr. Barnston's successor, as no one knew when he would be available;

(2) That in spite of any warm feeling and personal regard on the part of the members of the Board for Assistant Rabbi Kahn, Congregation Beth

Israel was entitled to the qualified spiritual leadership under a Senior Rabbi as soon as such might be procurable;

(3) That the best interests of the Congregation should be given priority in the minds of the Board, over and above the interests of any individual Rabbi;

(4) That as a result of lack of opportunity for such rather than because of lack of inherent potential qualifications, Rabbi Kahn had not acquired the experience necessary to the spiritual leadership of a Congregation as important and as large as Beth Israel;

(5) That Rabbi Kahn was too young to cope with the more mature leadership of the churches of other denominations in this community.

The Congregation is definitely apprised of the fact that there was never a suggestion by the Board, or an inference by any member of the Board, to the effect that Rabbi Kahn should not be retained in his position of Assistant Rabbi upon his return, which we hope will be in the near future. As a matter of fact, in a communication over the signature of the President of the Congregation, addressed to Rabbi Kahn under date of July 15, 1943, the President informed Rabbi Kahn as follows:

"I am instructed to apprise you of the Board's attitude to the effect that your own official identity with Congregation Beth Israel, as Junior or Assistant Rabbi, is not to be altered, and that the Board's understanding with you as pertaining to your leave of absence is to be maintained inviolate."

In this latter connection, it is our pleasure to advise you that the agreement referred to not only extended to Rabbi Kahn a leave of absence, but also guaranteed to him during his period of service in the Army the difference between the compensation earned as Chaplain and that which he had earned as Assistant Rabbi. A further quotation from the letter of the President above referred to is noted herein:

"Before the Board at which the Special Committee's report was received, there was also a free discussion, as you must naturally presume, of your qualifications in comparison with those of other likely candidates. I am pleased to convey to you my observation that in the general discussion of your candidacy all references to you were most complimentary. In the final analysis, however, regardless of other important contingencies affecting the situation, it was realistically noted that an emergency existed locally and that the consideration of any other than the most able qualified candidate available for rea-

sonably prompt report to duty would be an injustice to this important Congregation, as mature and able leadership was vitally essential, immediately, to a calm and undisturbed appraisal of current problems; for a definition and analysis of the relationship of those problems to post-war developments; and for the coordination of our local thinking on those issues with that of other Reform leadership, with which our Congregation must unequivocally be actively identified."

Immediately after arriving at its conclusions concerning Rabbi Kahn, a letter was addressed to Rabbi James G. Heller, Chairman of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, soliciting his recommendations, and under date of June 11, 1943, Rabbi Heller advised that he would offer the names of candidates, and further stated:

"I would suggest that you permit us to offer names of candidates for the pulpit and that the committee interview them in order. Our stand in the past has been along these lines; first, that the trial sermon is a very bad arrangement, and that it is much wiser for the committee to investigate the man in his home surroundings; second, that it is much fairer to the men to consider them one at a time rather than to make them compete against each other.

"If your committee agrees with this procedure, I shall be happy to have our committee propose the names of the men now available and best qualified for the place."

Under date of June 16, Rabbi Heller was advised that the procedure suggested was agreeable, and was requested to send the names of men now available. *No reply to this letter was ever received from Rabbi Heller.* However, when it became known generally that a successor to Dr. Barnston would be sought, a number of Rabbis contacted the Board directly, and informed the Board of their availability and desire to be considered for the position. In addition thereto, the Board contacted a number of prominent Rabbis throughout the nation, in connection with Beth Israel's interests, and these inquiries produced a number of favorable nominations.

As the Board progressed with the consideration of its problem, it came to realize that the suggestion of Rabbi Heller as to the preferred procedure in selecting a Rabbi was unquestionably sound. It became rather obvious that it was not consistent to resort to the outmoded method of inviting prospective candidates to participate in an oratorical contest or to engage in a series of competitive lecture appearances. Nowadays, such a procedure is looked upon by leaders in Congregational affairs and by all members

of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, as undignified, inefficient and unenlightening. It requires no stretch of the imagination to appreciate the fact that outstanding pulpiteers, identified with representative congregations, would not want to submit to the embarrassment of competing for a position, *and the risk of being rejected*. Furthermore, it is a matter of common sense that the only persons who would lend themselves to such undignified procedure would be Rabbis who were either out of jobs, or who knew they were unwanted where they were, or who were of such small calibre that their standing as Rabbis could not be diminished by any circumstance. It is further a simple matter to understand that in the discharge of its assignment, the Board could not submit to the Congregation any name without the approval of the prospect for the position, and that any Rabbi gainfully employed could not, without disregard for his own best interests, or without disrespect for his own current affiliation, permit his name to be used or suggested.

In the course of its planning, your Board sought advice from persons in position to favor it with guidance, pursuant to which the Board was arbitrarily advised of the following two significant observations which had to be noted unequivocally if the right man was to be interested in the local pulpit:

(1) That no outstanding or self-respecting Rabbi would remotely consider answering the call of Beth Israel until the position of Chief Rabbi was made vacant and the fact publicized;

(2) That no ethical or self-respecting Rabbi qualified for the important assignment at Beth Israel would consider permitting his name to be employed for recommendation by the Board until he had first resigned his present position.

These two important conditions prevailed in connection with the whole routine by which your Board was governed.

By unanimous action of the Board of Congregation Beth Israel, the Board is recommending for the position of Senior Rabbi for Congregation Beth Israel, Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel, presently the Senior Rabbi of West End Congregation of New York City, and the Board is happy

to report that it has been advised by Rabbi Schachtel that he will accept the call, if endorsed by the members of this Congregation.

The Board has received letters and telegrams from a number of eminent Rabbis, heartily recommending Rabbi Schachtel for Beth Israel's pulpit. The Board feels that the voluntary, spontaneous and unreserved endorsements in favor of Rabbi Schachtel, from illustrious Rabbis familiar with conditions in the South generally, and more particularly with our local problems, are quite significant, and were justifiably accepted as a trustworthy backlog to the Board's own conclusions, arrived at, otherwise, independently.

The letters and telegrams are as follows:

In the original report presented by your President on behalf of The Board of Trustees, the letters and telegrams from prominent Rabbis, recommending Rabbi Schachtel to Congregation Beth Israel, were read to those present at the August 4th meeting of the Congregation. It is felt that the subject matter of the particular communications referred to was more or less confidential to those at that particular meeting, and accordingly, it would not be entirely ethical to publish those letters verbatim in such a report as this.

By way of further explanation, in at least one of the letters referred to, the names of one or more Rabbis—second or third choices of nomination—were mentioned, and if those names were reproduced herein it might be a source of embarrassment to the principals involved.

Date

MR.

I AM CONVINCED THAT RABBI HYMAN J. SCHACHTEL WILL FILL THE PULPIT OF YOUR CONGREGATION WITH GREAT CREDIT TO IT, THE COMMUNITY OF HOUSTON AND THE GENERAL COMMUNITY OF ISRAEL IN

THE UNITED STATES. I HAVE KNOWN HIM AND HIS WORK INTIMATELY FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS AND HAVE THE HIGHEST REGARD FOR HIS QUALITY AS A MINISTER AND AS A MAN.

(Signed).....

.....
Date

MR.

First of all, may I compliment you on your 4th paragraph! It states so succinctly the very serious danger Reform Judaism faces today. Ours may become a "lost cause" unless you and I and others like us determine to fight and fight hard to the last ditch. This coming year will be a crucial one.

Now, as to your request. May I give you the following names—Rabbi Hyman Schachtel of West End Synagogue, N. Y., Rabbi of, Rabbi of There are others—but before I can give you a fuller list, perhaps you had better furnish me a description of the type of man you want, age, ability along specific lines, etc. (in addition to viewpoint). I might guess, but I'd rather deal with certainties. You may call on me for any assistance you desire, because I am deeply concerned about the future of Reform Judaism. My best regards to all—especially Dr. Barnston.

Sincerely,

(Signed).....

.....
Date

MR.

I was happy to hear from you, and I should be very glad to be of service to you in the matter of finding a successor to my dear old friend, Dr. Henry Barnston. I am delighted to learn that you are so earnest in getting as Rabbi of your Congregation one who is in complete sympathy with Liberal Judaism, and who will be forceful enough to carry out ideas to our people and to the larger outside world. It occurred to me almost immediately to give you the name of a young man who I think adequately fills the bill and would be excellent for this position. He is Rabbi Hyman J. Schachtel, Rabbi of the West End Synagogue, in New York City. Rabbi Schachtel is a young man in his thirties, has been in charge of his Congregation for some ten years or more, and has achieved a very distinguished position in the Rabbinate of New York. He is an attractive young man, both in appearance, in manner, and speaks exceedingly well, and has a tremendous amount of energy. He is married and has one small child.

I am not at all sure that he would consider leaving New York for Houston, but I

am presenting his name to you because I believe him to be one of the outstanding young leaders in American Israel.

If I can be of further service to you, please do not hesitate to communicate with me whenever you wish.

With kindest regards and best wishes, I am

Cordially,

(Signed).....

.....
Date

MR.

It will please you to know that my personal meeting with Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel confirmed what I have heard of him in the last decade—a Rabbi and leader of much worth, and of expansive breadth of view. I feel sure, if you have him in mind as a successor to our revered Dr. Barnston, that he will continue the policy of his predecessor, in that Reform Judaism will have a superb advocate and a proponent of progress throughout.

With many regards,

Faithfully

(Signed).....

The Board feels that it has thoroughly canvassed the field of qualified and available Rabbis, and that, with the full understanding of its important responsibility, can and does recommend one name only—Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel. We submit an outline of this Rabbi's background, education, and career:

He was born in London, England, May 24, 1907. He came to the United States with his family in 1917 and lived in Buffalo, New York, until removing to Cincinnati in 1924. He was graduated from the University of Cincinnati in 1928, and from the Hebrew Union College in 1931. He did graduate work at Columbia University.

He is the author of "Moses Mendelssohn," "The Book of Canticles According to the Midrash," "The Eternal People," "A Sunday Foreign Service," "The Sunday School Adapted to the Progressive Method of Education."

He has been a speaker on the "Message of Israel" radio broadcast for the past six years. He is a lecturer for the National Conference of Christians and Jews, representing B'nai B'rith.

He was vice-president of the New York Board of Jewish Ministers in 1942. He is a member of the executive board of the Manhattan Scout Council—a member of the executive board of the Manhattan Civilian Defense Volunteer Organization—a member of the Governor's Committee on New York State Council of Marriage and the Family.

He is the representative of the Central Conference of American Rabbis on the Synagogue Council of America, and was Chairman of the Committee which arranged the recently completed bible calendar for the Synagogue Council of America.

945.
as of 945.
With particular respect to Rabbi Schachtel's experience as a Rabbi, it may be advised that he has been serving the West End Congregation in New York City for the past twelve years. That Congregation is the third or fourth largest Reform Congregation in the city. He affiliated with that Congregation after his ordination at Hebrew Union College, and for all practical purposes, according to information furnished to us by reliable sources, he has had the responsibility for supplying the plans and the program and the religious guidance of the Congregation as its spiritual leader for most of this period. 3 yrs.

Of course, Rabbi Schachtel was not the only person recommended or considered for the local pulpit. As a matter of fact, throughout the entire period of the Board's consideration of the issue, various applications were received, and at least five Rabbis were investigated seriously, some by personal contact, and others through correspondence and long distance phone calls. Several of the Rabbis referred to were contacted in New York during the Rabbinical Conference, at which time Rabbi Schachtel himself was met by a member of the Special Committee. It is regrettable that it is not consistent to mention the names of the persons hereinabove referred to, for in so doing confidences would be revealed and unfavorable reactions suffered by the well-intentioned Rabbis who felt that they would be serving the cause of Judaism to better advantage through our pulpit. Not only, however, in the opinion of the Board, but from evidence otherwise gathered, it was apparent that Rabbi Schachtel was our most favored prospect.

After it became obvious that Rabbi Schachtel was rated first among those Rabbis recommended by certain distinctly eminent religious leaders for the consideration of the Board, a circumstance was taken advantage of to give certain representatives of our Congregation an opportunity to meet Rabbi Schachtel and to sustain or discourage your Board in its appraisal of his qualifications for the position. Permit us to explain:

A year ago a meeting was held in Houston by a number of representa-

tives of our Congregation, acting as private persons and in no wise officially representing Beth Israel, for the purpose of considering the objectives of the American Council for Judaism. It was decided recently that another discussion of certain of the many and varied issues to which the Council was devoting its deliberations would be timely and advisable. The persons interested in the local unit of the Council and also concerned, incidentally, about Beth Israel's pulpit issue, conceived the idea that it would be highly advisable to solicit Rabbi Schachtel, who had already been recommended for our local pulpit, to come to Houston in connection with the Council matter, so that if our local people were interested in him, he might be approached. The persons who planned this situation felt that through their action they would not only be serving the Congregation, by giving the Board of Beth Israel and a representative cross-section of the Beth Israel membership, an opportunity to meet Rabbi Schachtel and to appraise him at first hand and individually, but that they would also be giving the gentleman himself an opportunity to meet some of our people, in whom, hopefully, he might become interested.

After it had become obvious that those who had met Rabbi Schachtel were deeply interested in him, and had expressed the sincere hope that he could be interested in the local pulpit, a proposal was made to Rabbi Schachtel, and he was influenced into considering the challenge which the Rabbinat of Beth Israel, located in this great Southern city, offered to a Rabbi of broad-gauged vision and energy, and endowed with the qualities of leadership. After some days of consideration, and after a number of conferences by phone with his wife, his mother, and a number of his close associates, Rabbi Schachtel agreed to consider our call for his services.

It was suggested by a member of the Board that an arrangement be made through the Brotherhood, which manned the pulpit during Dr. Barnston's absence on vacation, for a special service at Temple Beth Israel at which Rabbi Schachtel would be presented and would make a talk. This proposal was arbitrarily ruled out of order by Rabbi Schachtel, who felt that such an action on his part or on the part of the members of the Board, even at the Brotherhood's invitation, would be grossly disrespectful to Dr. Barnston, who was out of the city. Rabbi Schachtel advised that

only upon Dr. Barnston's personal invitation would he appear in our pulpit. Your Board promptly recognized the highly ethical and thoroughly sound position of Rabbi Schachtel in this connection, and thanked him for his good advice, which protected the Board against a grave injustice to Dr. Barnston, and which might have been committed unwittingly. It was then suggested to Rabbi Schachtel that the Board give a reception in his honor at either Westwood Country Club or at the Abe M. Levy Memorial Community Hall for the entire membership of Congregation Beth Israel. Rabbi Schachtel refused to approve this procedure, which he advised could not remotely be considered with dignity, as it would be thus presumed that he had arbitrarily accepted our call, which would not be ethical until such time as he had notified his own Congregation of his intention to make a new affiliation. The above reactions were those of a gentleman of culture, and should serve as some explanation to those who have been unable to understand why an opportunity to meet and hear Rabbi Schachtel was not possible for the Congregation as a whole.

However, Rabbi Schachtel did agree to meet a few members of our Congregation informally, and this was arranged by several members of the Board who saw fit, at their own expense, to entertain Rabbi Schachtel unofficially, and to extend to him only such simple deference as might be expected by any gentleman of standing visiting another community upon invitation. As a result of these contacts, the Board heard much praise, and many ardently expressed wishes that Beth Israel might be able to secure this Rabbi as its spiritual leader. Among others, the following persons met Rabbi Schachtel socially, and expressed appreciation for the privilege:

Dr. G. Henry Aronsfeld
 Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Butler
 Mrs. C. Coguenhem
 Mr. and Mrs. Geo. S. Cohen
 Mr. Harry I. Cohen
 Dr. Henry Cohen
 Mr. and Mrs. Sydney H. Cohen
 Drs. Louis and Ray K. Daily
 Mr. M. N. Dannenbaum
 Mr. Melvin T. Davidson
 Mr. and Mrs. I. Erlich

Mr. and Mrs. Jos. Finger
 Mr. and Mrs. Louis Franklin
 Mr. I. Friedlander
 Mr. Nathan Goldsmith
 Mr. and Mrs. Jack Goren
 Mr. Henry Greenfield
 Mr. and Mrs. L. L. Harris
 Mr. and Mrs. Hyman Hart
 Mr. and Mrs. Harold Hecht
 Mr. and Mrs. N. J. Klein
 Mr. and Mrs. Julius Levi

Mr. Herbert E. Levy
 Dr. Moise D. Levy
 Mr. Rene S. Levy
 Mr. Sam W. Levy
 Mr. and Mrs. Frank Lipper
 Mr. Sidney L. Mayer
 Mrs. Carrie D. Meyer
 Mr. and Mrs. Lasker M. Meyer
 Mr. and Mrs. Leopold L. Meyer
 Mr. and Mrs. Morris D. Meyer
 Mr. Albert Meyerson
 Mr. and Mrs. Sam I. Miller
 Mrs. W. W. Munzesheimer
 Mr. N. D. Naman
 Mr. and Mrs. Max H. Nathan

Dr. and Mrs. S. Rauch
 Mr. Melvin Rouff
 Mr. Simon Sakowitz
 Mr. and Mrs. Tobias Sakowitz
 Mr. and Mrs. Jake Sam
 Mr. Alvin Scharff
 Mr. Ralph Schnitzer
 Mr. Irvin M. Shlenker
 Mr. Dave Straus
 Mr. Sam Suravitz
 Dr. and Mrs. David Wachsman
 Mr. and Mrs. Meyer Wagner
 Mr. and Mrs. Abe Weingarten
 Mr. Ben Wolfman
 Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Wunderman

As a matter of deference to many members of the Congregation, it may be mentioned most respectfully that in the extension of invitations an attempt was made to present the Rabbi to a cross-section of the Congregation, young and old, and with respect to the families and religious activities and affiliations with which they were associated.

The Board believes that Rabbi Schachtel is outstanding among the comparatively few available prospects for our important pulpit, dignified by forty-three years of distinguished leadership. The Board is convinced that he is ideally equipped by temperament, character, training, education and ideologies, by forbears and background, as well as by actual experience over the past twelve years, to provide spiritual leadership of that character to which Beth Israel has subscribed during the past forty-three years, and to which, hopefully, it will be devoted in the future.

Rabbi Schachtel is thirty-seven years of age, but those who have met him personally are convinced that he is experienced and mature beyond his years, and that through devotion to duty and through experience he has attained the Talmudic Age of Understanding.

The Board and Rabbi Schachtel have discussed all phases of the duties and responsibilities of Senior Rabbi. We believe that he will measure up fully to the requirements and to the opportunities of the position, and that he will not only prove to be a popular and competent pulpiteer, but that he will also be a power for faith and religion. He is an accomplished

musician and as such should be able to advise authoritatively upon the extent and manner in which music should contribute to our services. He will prove to be an inspiration in the lives of our children, and give us a Religious School planned along the same lines as that at West End Synagogue, and which is acknowledged to be the outstanding Religious School in America. As a matter of fact, a treatise, of which Rabbi Schachtel is the author, is the official classroom text on the subject of the Sunday School—used by the Hebrew Union College—for the instruction of student Rabbis. He will, by force of his personality and intellect, insure better synagogue attendance. We know that he is intensely interested in the Brotherhood movement, in the Temple Sisterhood, and in all of the other usual Temple religious agencies and cultural activities. He is an accomplished writer, and has contributed articles to leading newspapers and magazines concerned with ethical and religious subjects. His sermons are liberally quoted from week to week in the New York "Times" and other metropolitan newspapers. Rabbi Schachtel is no fanatic on religion or controversial tenets. To the contrary, he is a dignified pulpiteer, steeped in Jewish philosophy and Talmudic lore, consecrated to the service of God and his fellow man. Rabbi Schachtel does not think that the pulpit should be used either by himself or others as a medium for dissemination of disturbing propaganda or for the expounding of ill-conceived selfish views or objectives, political or ideological, but should be reserved more particularly for the espousal of the doctrines of a pure religion to which all members affiliated with our Reform Congregation may subscribe. With such thinking your Board and Rabbi Schachtel are in accord.

Your Board believes that this Rabbi will guide Beth Israel forward along accustomed lines and in conformity with the teachings and philosophy of a liberal Judaism of the character subscribed to by Dr. Barnston. Beth Israel has a tradition and a heritage extending over many years in the field of Reform Judaism, or as better stated by Isaac M. Wise, in the field of American Judaism. We believe that the Congregation desires and will insist upon the continuation of this tradition, and in our opinion, Rabbi Schachtel is the outstanding man in the United States available to carry on this type of religious leadership. Furthermore, your committee

believes that the Rabbi will take his place, and properly, in all assemblies identified with cultural and civic endeavor, and will be an excellent representative of the Congregation and of its people, not only locally, but also in connection with issues of importance to Jew or Gentile, before the people of Texas and of the United States.

As might be presumed, the question of compensation was an issue that had to be considered, and despite the fact that Rabbi Schachtel earned in excess of \$11,000 last year with West End Congregation, he agreed to accept a salary of \$10,000 from Beth Israel, which amount, in Texas, he was assured, would prove to be the equivalent of a \$12,000 salary in New York State, the difference being accounted for by a lower comparative cost of living and the benefit of the community property law in Texas in the calculation of taxes. In the acceptance of a lower salary than that which he had been receiving, Rabbi Schachtel made it very plain that he was more interested in the challenge offered in this growing community than in the amount he would be paid for his services. It will also be noted, please, that Rabbi Schachtel was advised that he would be recommended by the Board for only a two-year tenure of office.

Rabbi Schachtel, as a matter of common decency, must remain with his Congregation through Yom Kippur, not only because it would be most inconsiderate to leave his loyal and faithful friends in the hands of a strange rabbi during the High Holidays, and which, if it were done, incidentally, would certainly not impress your Board favorably, but also because of the importance of the Rabbi's customary annual Kol Nidre appeal for funds to meet specific financial needs of his Congregation. It may be noted, by the way, that the Kol Nidre appeal by Rabbi Schachtel last year netted a sum of five figures.

Rabbi Schachtel has already quietly begun to survey the field of potential candidates for his pulpit with the West End Congregation, and is of the belief that he will be able to report to Beth Israel more or less promptly following the High Holidays, if he is approved by this Congregation as Dr. Barnston's successor.

The Rabbi was unwilling, however, to obligate himself, even verbally, to report before Jan. 1, 1944, as he was unwilling to make any binding

agreement which might work a hardship upon his beloved congregation as a result of which there might be reflection upon his reputation and integrity, or a pang to his conscience. Your Board heartily endorsed Rabbi Schachtel's viewpoint, but has had some assurance within the last week that a report to duty much earlier than originally inferred might be expected. Rabbi Schachtel's appearance here by Nov. 1 is very possible.

We have presented to you herein the highlights of the issue as we have appraised it, and this short report does not remotely reflect the extent of the effort and introspection devoted by the Board to this all-important subject. It is true that only a comparatively short time has elapsed since the Board was given its assignment to procure a successor to Dr. Barnston, but it is all the more to the Board's credit that it proceeded relentlessly and fervently with its task, and arrived directly at its objective. The recommendation which the Board is making has not been the result of unstudied and hasty decision, but its conclusions have been arrived at only after a thorough canvass of all available persons and material, qualified, in the Board's opinion, for this distinguished reform pulpit.

Permit yourselves to be reminded that Rabbi Schachtel did not apply for the position with Congregation Beth Israel. He was literally "pressured" into the acceptance of an assignment not remotely in the same category as that to which he is currently devoted. He has been, and still is, serving for the interim, a great Congregation, and in the acceptance of the call from Beth Israel he is possibly jeopardizing a position of established national leadership and professional security, intrigued by the challenge offered by our wide open spaces.

The recommendation in favor of Rabbi Schachtel's call to this Congregation is not merely subscribed to by two or three of those persons who are serving this Congregation in this particular instance, but the proposal has been endorsed unanimously by the members of your Board, the majority of whom have been members of this Congregation from fifteen to forty-four years, and which is composed of men and women whose standing and reputations, in and out of this Congregation, are beyond reproach, and whose characters are unassailable. Your chairman risks the opinion that no more ardently imbued Board, devoted to the service of the com-

munity as well as of this Congregation, has ever been identified with Beth Israel. Permit me to read their names:

Sydney H. Cohen
M. N. Dannenbaum
Melvin T. Davidson
Ike L. Freed
Dr. Thos. Freundlich
I. Friedlander
Henry Greenfield
Mrs. Carl J. Herman, Sr.
Mr. Herbert E. Levy
Mrs. M. D. Levy
Mr. Rene S. Levy

Mr. Sam W. Levy
Sidney L. Mayer
Mrs. Lasker M. Meyer
Albert Meyerson
Mrs. W. W. Munzesheimer
Max H. Nathan
Melvin Rouff
Tobias Sakowitz
Lt. Col. Wm. Salman
Irvin M. Shlenker

Your Board submits the conviction that its personnel are representative of every element within our Congregation, and are in every manner and character the product of all that has constituted our conception of Reform Judaism as it has been preached in this Congregation for half a century or longer. This Board has neither been swayed by personal emotions nor influenced by the conflicting ideologies observed and subscribed to by the various elements in this Congregation. It has been impelled by one objective, namely, to insure for the pulpit of this Reform Congregation a religious leadership, unimpassioned except by devotion to God and to the principles and ideals of a Judaism inherited from our forebears, and to which the membership of this Congregation have presumably subscribed morally, as evidenced by the very fact of affiliation. If any person on your Board has been motivated in his endorsement of this recommendation by other than the principles presented in this statement, he is to be charged with gross hypocrisy, dishonesty, duplicity, perfidy, and disloyalty to as sacred a trust as was ever entrusted to any man.

In your reflection upon the contents and significance of this all-important recommendation, and to which your approval is solicited, you are earnestly requested to approach the matter with composure and equanimity. You are humbly requested to submerge your personal differences, real or imaginary, and to curb perhaps ill-aroused, disquieting emotions. Do not, in your deliberations, be misguided by any exaggerated conception

of obligation to any individual, but be concerned primarily with the magnitude of the issues with which you are confronted. Commit yourselves to the sacred discharge of your duty to a higher cause than personal friendship or selfish objective. Do not condone the false charges that have been hurled against individuals whose very souls have been eternally seared, and whose hearts have ached as a result of scurrilous implications involving the important factors and circumstances that led up to the actions of your Board since May of 1943, and as a result of which many members of your Board have had grievous days and sleepless nights.

The members of the Congregation are respectfully advised that they may be as chargeable as any member of the Board for failure to do their duty and to discharge their obligation conscientiously and honorably. The members of this Congregation are reminded that from this day forward they must live with their consciences and that every member who votes this evening on the matter of this recommendation, involving one of the most important issues ever presented within these walls, and upon which may depend the future life of this Congregation and the unity of this Jewish community at large, shall be accountable for his action, favorably or unfavorably, not only to God, but to himself, to his children, and his children's children.

Respectfully submitted,

BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL.

By LEOPOLD L. MEYER,
President.

August 4, 1943.

At the Special Meeting referred to, Rabbi Schachtel was unanimously elected Chief Rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel to succeed Dr. Henry Barnston, and was so advised per copy of telegram of August 5, 1943, herein:

RABBI HYMAN JUDAH SCHACHTEL
West End Synagogue
New York City

IT IS MY PLEASURE TO INFORM YOU THAT AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL HELD LAST EVENING, THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES THAT YOU BE ELECTED SENIOR RABBI OF THE CONGREGATION FOR A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS AT TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS PER YEAR WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED. THE HOPE WAS INDULGED GENERALLY THAT YOU WOULD REPORT TO THIS PULPIT AT AN EARLY DATE.

LEOPOLD L. MEYER, *President*,
Congregation Beth Israel.

It is perhaps unnecessary for your President to enlarge upon the exciting circumstances surrounding the meeting of August 4, 1943, which likely will always be recalled by the members of Congregation Beth Israel as highly eventful, to say the least. Unless there had been mixed emotions at this historic meeting there would have been somewhat of a reflection upon all the persons involved in the drama—for such it was. There was no doubt in the mind of any thinking member of the Congregation that the Board's recommendation concerning a successor to Dr. Barnston would be adopted, but there were naturally those who, for reasons personal to themselves, had exerted an interest in the consideration of Rabbi Kahn as Dr. Barnston's successor; and there were others who, regardless of any circumstances, were reluctant to see the elder Rabbi retire. It would have been a reflection upon Dr.

Barston's two generations of loyal and faithful service to Congregation Beth Israel had there been less of heartache in his relinquishment of his high position; and it would have been no less to be wondered at, if over a period of years, Rabbi Kahn had not won some friends who, regardless of the above reviewed contingencies, would be quite ambitious for his promotion.

There developed, however, between the original date of Dr. Barston's retirement and the date of the Special Meeting called for the election of Rabbi Schachtel, certain facts, which, although accorded in the beginning only passing consideration, ultimately served to convince the Board of Trustees that whereas there were *some* very well-meaning members of the Congregation who were unhappy over the Board's decision to recommend the acceptance of Dr. Barnston's resignation; and although there were *others* equally sincere in their disappointment at the Board's failure to recommend Rabbi Kahn as Senior Rabbi to succeed Dr. Barnston, the most distressful and vociferous expressions of devotion to the two Rabbis were more or less simulated by certain others constituting a very small organized minority, for whom perturbation concerning the plight of the Rabbis was seemingly quite secondary to other interests. At this momentous meeting of August 4, 1943, it became not only apparent but obvious, for the first time in the history of Beth Israel, that there were hopelessly irreconcilable factions within our Congregation, and, shockingly, that a small segment of our member-

ship was more devoted to National Zionism than to Judaism. Whereas the greatest deference is due to those dear friends of Rabbis Barnston and Kahn, whose motives were unimpeachable, the radicalist element of the opposition to the recommendation of the Board, insignificant though it was, sufficed to convince the Board, and fortunately, the majority of the members of the Congregation at large, that there was a tangible element within the membership which was not being motivated by the best interests of Beth Israel as a religious entity, but rather by a confirmed—and justified—belief, that if Rabbi Schachtel were elected, the death knell of National Zionism within Beth Israel would be sounded.

The farther the meeting advanced, the more conclusive became the evidence of the defection which had surreptitiously gnawed its way into the very vitals of the Congregation, and accordingly, the membership finally asserted itself, in a thunderous and ignominious defeat of a designing but hopeless and helpless minority.

The Special Meeting of August 4, 1943, may be recorded as the most exciting and hectic one in the history of Beth Israel, and unhappily, may compare too favorably with the most turbulent meeting ever held by any Congregation anywhere; but over and above that unfortunate fact and circumstance, the renaissance of American Reform Judaism in Congregation Beth Israel will date therefrom, and the brilliant future of Beth Israel will be predicated upon coming events whose shadows were cast that evening. It is conceiv-

able that reverberations of that meeting may be recorded for all time within the circles of all vigorous American Reform Jews throughout the length and breadth of our land.

The entire Jewish community was definitely aroused by the character of the claptrap presented at the Special Meeting of August 4. Despite the fact that the Zionist contingent had been soundly thrashed, figuratively, the lengths to which the obstructionists proceeded in their efforts to defeat the constructive purposes of the Board of Trustees was a revelation to many members of the Congregation, who, prior to the meeting, were somewhat of the opinion that the magnitude of the issue had been exaggerated. After what transpired at the meeting no further argument or evidence was necessary, to the strictly Reform element of the membership, that the Zionist ideology was hopelessly incongruous with the temper of Beth Israel as well as incompatible with the doctrines and precepts of Reform Judaism as fostered within our Temple, for more than two generations, resolutions passed by the Central Conference of American Rabbis notwithstanding.

As a result of the obvious fact that there was partisan-thinking as well as partisan-worship within our Congregation, there developed keen resentment which culminated in outspoken and unreserved demands that the policies, principles, and religious philosophy by which Beth Israel should be governed in the future must be formulated, so to speak, and submitted to the membership for endorsement.

Accordingly, at the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees on August 10, 1943, your President appointed a Committee to be known as the Policy Formulation Committee, whose duty and responsibility it should be to prepare, subject to the action of the Board, principles, policies, rules, regulations and procedures to be observed in connection with the future administration of the Congregation's affairs, according to the various categories into which such matters should logically fall. The following persons were appointed to this all-important Committee, with your President to serve ex-officio:

I. Friedlander, *Chairman*

M. N. Dannenbaum

Herbert E. Levy

Ike L. Freed

Mrs. W. W. Munzesheimer

Dr. Thos. Freundlich

Max H. Nathan

Mrs. Carl J. Herman, Sr.

Tobias Sakowitz

Irvin M. Shlenker

In deference to the leadership with which Congregation Beth Israel has been blessed—and assuredly your President is referring more particularly to his predecessors in office as well as to his own and previous Boards—it must be stated that the question of National Zionism within Congregation Beth Israel did not spring into being as a result of the Special Meeting of August 4, 1943. It merely came to a head as an outcome of the facts, circumstances and conditions attendant upon that meeting. It had long been well known that there were some National Zionists—some rather zealous ones—within our midst; it was also well known by those par-

particular persons as well as by those members of the Congregation at large who had permitted themselves to become interested in the matter, that Beth Israel itself was uncompromisingly and unalterably Reform in manner of worship and definitely non-Zionist ideologically. It was merely a matter of when Beth Israel would take its stand in connection with the Zionist controversy, and August 4 was simply the occasion for the showdown.

At the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees held on Tuesday, September 7, 1943, Mr. I. Friedlander made a formal report for the Policy Formulation Committee of which he was Chairman. He informed the Board that his Committee had held many meetings and conferences since the date of its appointment, August 10, 1943, and was prepared to submit what the Committee characterized as a Restatement of Principles, founded upon the philosophy of Isaac M. Wise, the father of American Reform Judaism, which, it was generally presumed, had served for the spiritual guidance of the Congregation since it was organized. On behalf of his Committee Mr. Friedlander recommended that the proposals which had been drafted comprise what should become known as "Basic Principles of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, Texas."

The majority of the members of the Board had participated in one or more of the informal discussions devoted to the consideration of the various Principles, restated and reformulated, and accordingly were familiar, generally, with

the text of the proposals being recommended by the Policy Formulation Committee. Regardless of that fact, there was a very careful final examination of this important subject matter, and each of the seven proposed Principles was weighed seriously and with appropriate introspection. After due reflection, the Board adopted the Principles, but reserved for the Policy Formulation Committee, and delegated thereto, the authority to make such alterations, in substance, context, and phraseology, as had been recommended and approved by the Board in the course of the general discussions thereon, and which had been duly recorded.

The Board instructed the Executive Secretary to have printed a sufficient number of copies of the Basic Principles to permit of distribution thereof to all members of Congregation Beth Israel.

Mr. Friedlander, further reporting for his Committee, submitted the recommendation that formal applications for membership in Beth Israel should be necessary in the future and that the Basic Principles as adopted be incorporated therein. The Board adopted the recommendation.

Mindful as it was of the fact that there would be some who would be unwilling to subscribe to the Basic Principles, but nonetheless ever desirous of making Beth Israel's House of Worship available to all members of the Jewish Faith who would otherwise conform to Beth Israel's membership requirements, it was recommended by the Board that Associate Memberships be available, and that such memberships, when,

accepted according to the usual routine by the Board of Trustees, should conform to all of the administrative regulations of Beth Israel and should enjoy all the benefits, privileges, and obligations inherent in such membership with certain reservations, namely, that Associate members should not have the right to vote or to hold office.

This issue precipitated quite a lengthy discussion, with the Board ultimately voting unanimously in favor of the Associate Membership proposal, as it was reasonably concluded that no person who was unwilling to subscribe to the fundamental principles upon which *any* organization was conceived should have the power, through the ballot, to incite active opposition thereto, and perhaps plant the seed for the destruction thereof.

The Executive Secretary of the Congregation was instructed to have the two forms of Application Blanks printed immediately, more particularly for the accommodation of those persons who might fall within either membership category who should desire to affiliate with Beth Israel prior to the approaching High Holidays. The "Application for Membership" and the "Application for Associate Membership" were more or less identical in form, with the exception that in the former there were printed the "Basic Principles of Congregation Beth Israel," with the incorporated willingness of the applicant to subscribe thereto; whereas in the latter the "Basic Principles of Congregation Beth Israel" were not recited, but there was incorporated therein the understand-

ing that the Associate Membership did not carry the right to vote or to hold office in the Congregation.

Before the adjournment of the Board meeting of September 7, 1943, which had been devoted almost exclusively to matters pertaining to the Basic Principles, Mrs. W. W. Munzesheimer, reporting for the Ritual Committee, of which she was Vice-Chairman, advised that her Committee Chairman, Mr. Geo. S. Cohen, had practically completed arrangements in connection with procuring the services of Rabbi Saul B. Appelbaum as assistant to Rabbi Barnston during the High Holidays, and that official report thereon might be expected within a few days. As a matter of fact, at a Special Meeting of the Board on the date of September 14, 1943, and especially called therefor, Mr. Geo. S. Cohen's communication of September 9, pertaining to Rabbi Appelbaum's services, was presented to the Board, and the recommendations therein, covering the employment of Rabbi Appelbaum for the period September 15 to November 1, 1943, inclusive, were promptly approved.

At an informal discussion immediately following the Board meeting of September 7, 1943, at which the Basic Principles were adopted, it was more or less decided that, regardless of the inherent authority of the Board, it would be the better part of wisdom to submit the Basic Principles to the Congregation at large, and at some convenient date following the High Holidays. It was contemplated, in the meantime, that there would be prepared for the membership of Beth Israel

a timely campaign of enlightenment on the vital current issues, supplemented by an explanation for the Board's action with a background of events that led thereto.

Under date of October 25, 1943, however, and before plans for such a meeting as proposed had been completed, a petition, copy of which is set forth below, was presented to your President:

TO THE PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL:

We, the undersigned members of Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas, respectfully petition you to call a special meeting of the Congregation, in accordance with the provisions of Sections 9 and 10 of Article II of the Bylaws of the Congregation, for the following purpose:

To determine whether or not the majority of the Beth Israel membership is in accord with the sentiments expressed in the "Basic Principles" embodied in the application for membership.

We object to the continuance of this application form upon the following grounds:

1. It is not in keeping with the true spirit of the accepted doctrines of modern American Reform Judaism as expressed by the two parent bodies of American Reform Judaism, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Congregation Beth Israel is affiliated with these two bodies and should act in accordance with the principles of these two outstanding Reform organizations.

2. It is our conviction that the majority of members of Congregation Beth Israel are in direct opposition to the continuance of this application, because:

- a. It sets up a second class membership.
- b. It is a direct and vicious negation of democratic principles.
- c. The test for membership is un-American.
- d. It is irreligious.

e. It tends to undermine and destroy the prestige and religious influence of Congregation Beth Israel in its own membership and in the community at large.

3. To make certain the true democratic processes, we, the petitioners, demand as a fulfillment of the purposes of this special called meeting, that such vote upon this proposition be carried through with democratic procedure and a closed ballot.

With perfect confidence that you, who conduct the affairs of the Congregation, will abide by the true tenets of Americanism, we respectfully petition you to call this meeting at the earliest time provided by section 10, article 2 of the Bylaws.

Miss Elise Westheimer
Mrs. L. L. Liedecker
Bertha W. Furman
Hannah Westheimer
David Levy
Mrs. David Levy
Mrs. Vera Stella Krost
Mrs. J. L. Bressler
Mrs. Al Stein
Mr. and Mrs. Harold I. Getz
Mrs. L. A. Rosenfield
Ben Noble
M. H. Jacobs
Mrs. M. H. Jacobs
Mrs. J. L. Farb

Harry L. Lantz
Mrs. Harry Lantz
J. L. Farb
Al Stein
Boris Wolff
H. Caplovitz, M. D.
Robt. Presser
Mrs. M. D. Cohen
Mrs. L. B. Getz
Nettie W. Weems
Celia J. Winfield
Mrs. Stanley Blum
Mrs. Max Paine
Max Paine
Harry A. Wolf

Mrs. S. Cooperman
Louis A. Freed
L. Tarnopol
Mr. and Mrs. B. E. Jacobs
S. Minchen
J. L. Bressler, M. D.
Mrs. H. Caplovitz
G. C. Lechenger
M. D. Cohen
Mrs. J. P. Sepper
J. P. Sepper
Mrs. H. J. Cohn
Mrs. Fannie Cook
Dr. A. Axelrod

Immediately upon receipt of the above petition for the call of a Special Meeting of the Congregation, and which, in all respects, was within the rights of the signers thereof, your President called a Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees for November 1, 1943, for the purpose of considering the matter at hand.

In the meantime, under date of October 27, 1943, your

President was presented with another petition, copy of which is also set forth below:

TO THE PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF
HEBREW CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL
Houston, Texas

Gentlemen:

We, the undersigned members of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas, respectfully petition you to call a Special Meeting of the Congregation in accordance with the provisions of Sections 9 and 10 of Article II of the Revised Bylaws of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel, for the following purposes:

1. To adopt the "Basic Principles" of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas (an American Reform Congregation), as approved and adopted by the Board of Trustees of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel at its meeting of September 7, 1943, and as set forth in the printed copy thereof hereto attached.

2. (a) To adopt a resolution with reference to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, a copy of which resolution is hereto attached.

(b) To adopt a resolution with reference to the Hebrew Union College, a copy of which resolution is hereto attached.

(c) To adopt a resolution with reference to the Central Conference of American Rabbis, a copy of which resolution is hereto attached.

3. To approve, ratify and adopt the revised forms of Application for Membership to Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas, as approved by the Board of Trustees, as now being used, and printed copies of which are hereto attached.

To insure an absolutely accurate recording of the will of the membership of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas, on the above

issues, we respectfully request that the vote (or votes) thereon be conducted *viva voce*.

We respectfully request that this meeting be called not earlier than the first day of December, 1943.

Geo. S. Cohen
Leon E. Meyer
A. B. Zindler
Mrs. Max H. Nathan
Alvin F. Sharff
Harry I. Cohen
Mrs. J. S. Breitenbach
Matthew W. Kahn
A. A. Bath
Hyman Hart
M. N. Dannenbaum
Leon Emmich

Jake H. Sam
A. D. Schwarz
Carl J. Herman
I. Friedlander
L. L. Harris
Fred M. Hirsch
D. H. Straus
Sam I. Miller
Ike L. Freed
Ben Wolfman
Rene S. Levy
Tobias Sakowitz

Sam Suravitz
Dr. Thos. Freundlich
I. Mark Westheimer
M. D. Levy
Leon Gordon
Chas. M. Kapner
Mrs. Morris Kuminir
Simon Sakowitz
Sam Taub
Meyer C. Wagner
J. H. Butler
I. S. Brochstein

Inasmuch as this latter petition was also filed in accordance with the rights of the petitioners, it was quite convenient for your President to present both petitions at the same Special Meeting of the Board on November 1, above referred to, and thus insure to all persons and parties involved a fair review of the matters embodied in both petitions.

Prior to the Special Meeting of the Board on November 1, 1943, your President sought counsel on the question of the legality of holding one meeting for the consideration of both petitions and was authoritatively advised that such procedure, in addition to being practical, was entirely in conformity with legal obligation. This information was conveyed to the Board, and after an extended discussion of all angles involving the current situation, it was resolved that both petitions should be respected and should be presented concurrently and at some one special meeting of the Congre-

gation to be called by the President in accordance with the requirements of the bylaws. It was also resolved that all members of the Congregation in good standing should be presented with entrance cards which should entitle them to admittance to the meeting.

In addition to the business hereinabove referred to, the matter of a Resolution, prepared in four parts, submitted by Mr. I. Friedlander on behalf of the Policy Formulation Committee, of which he was Chairman, was considered:

PART "A" of the Resolution was directed to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and solicited a thorough investigation of the personnel, as well as of all departments of the Union, with the avowed purpose of effecting a vigorous promotion of the historic principles of American Reform Judaism and of insuring for laymen a greater representation in the councils of the Union, and on all important standing commissions of the Union concerned with matters of education and public information pertaining to Jews and Judaism. It was recommended that the Union promptly dissociate itself from the American Jewish Conference and its resolutions demanding the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth.

PART "B" of the Resolution was directed to the Hebrew Union College and solicited a thorough investigation of the curriculum, requirements and personnel of the College in order that adjustments might be made therein to insure: the attendance at the College of a greater number of students with an American Reform background; a more vital interest in Reform Judaism on the part of the graduates of the College, which would naturally emanate from a vitally Reform environment; and a consequent establishment of more Reform Congregations if a greater number of strictly Reform Rabbis were periodically graduated for Reform service.

PART "C" of the Resolution was directed to the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and embodied a protest against the departure of the Conference from the historic pattern and essential principles of American

Reform Judaism as enunciated at Philadelphia in 1869, and as stated and restated at Pittsburgh in 1885, at Rochester in 1920, and at Columbus in 1937.

PART "D" of the Resolution embodied an appeal to all congregations subscribing to American Reform Judaism to join with Beth Israel in its ambition to have restored to American Reform Judaism the liberal emphasis which made it a distinctive interpretation of Jewish life and a factor among the religions of the Western World.

The consideration of this highly significant Resolution was decidedly deliberate, and each and every phase of each part of the Resolution was analyzed carefully. After most sober reflection, the members of the Board unanimously came to the conclusion that the sentiments and ideals pervading and obtaining within the Beth Israel Membership were more or less essentially expressed within the Policy Formulation Committee's Resolution, as submitted, with certain minor exceptions. Accordingly, after certain deletions from the original text, and the inclusion therein of constructive proposals originating within the Board, the Resolution of the Policy Formulation Committee was approved and adopted by the Board. It was also resolved by the Board to present the Resolution, for adoption by the Membership, at the Special Meeting of the Congregation, to be held, pursuant to the resolution of the Board, at the Special Meeting thereof on November 1, 1943. It would thus come about that, in addition to the two petitions to be considered at the Special Membership Meeting the important Resolution hereinabove referred to would also be submitted for adoption.

Immediately pursuant to the Board meeting of November 1, and in conformity with the motion passed thereat, authorizing the President to call a Special Meeting of the Congregation, your President ordered the call of the Special Meeting referred to, for November 23, 1943, notice of which was mailed under date of November 2, 1943, per copy thereof presented below:

TO THE MEMBERS OF HEBREW CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL,
Houston, Texas.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING

In accordance with the requirements of Article II, Sections 9 and 10 of the Bylaws of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, Texas, governing the call of special meetings of the Congregation, notice is hereby given that a Special Meeting of the members of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas, will be held on Tuesday, November 23, 1943, at 7:30 o'clock P. M., in the Temple of Beth Israel Congregation, Austin and Holman Streets, Houston, Texas, for the following purposes:

(a) To determine whether or not the majority of the Beth Israel membership is in accord with the sentiments expressed in the "Basic Principles" embodied in the application for membership. (A copy of the "Basic Principles" is hereto attached.)

(b) To adopt the "Basic Principles" of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas (an American Reform Congregation), as approved and adopted by the Board of Trustees of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel at its meeting of September 7, 1943, and as set forth in the printed copy thereof hereto attached.

(c) To approve, ratify and adopt the revised forms of Application for Membership to Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel of Houston, Texas, as approved by the Board of Trustees, as now being used, and printed copies of which are hereto attached.

(d) To adopt a resolution with reference to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Hebrew Union College, and Central Conference of American Rabbis, a copy of which resolution is hereto attached.

By order of the President.

SIDNEY L. MAYER, *Secretary*.

It will be observed that the date of November 23 was a compromise between the two dates suggested for the holding of the meeting as reflected in the text of the two petitions hereinabove referred to.

Not entirely unexpectedly, but nonetheless more vigorously than could have been reasonably anticipated, the partisan lines within the Membership became well drawn and clearly defined, and differences of opinion were expressed quite freely, as well as audibly and volubly. The Membership of the Congregation was literally deluged with a flood of literature during the intervening three weeks, November 2 to November 23, which, to say the least, served to educate the Membership of Beth Israel to a marked degree concerning the principles, precepts, practices and philosophy of American Reform Judaism, and to force into the open the rebellious element within the Congregation, whose vital interest was undeniably Zionism. The fanatical zeal displayed by certain Political Zionists within the Congregation served the best interests of Beth Israel magnificently, as it forced upon an otherwise complacent membership an awakening to the realization that the opponents of the Basic Principles themselves and the critics of the Board of Directors who

were promoting them, were obviously ready and willing, even if not able, to sacrifice all that Beth Israel had ever exemplified or represented, for the sake of an ideology foreign to and in conflict with all that American Reform Judaism was presumed to idealize. It became evident, from the ranting and unscrupulous acts and outbursts of an enraged oppositionist partisan group, that National Zionism, hopeless though the realization of the ambitions of its proponents might be, had become a *religion* to its adherents.

It is worthy of note that in the interim between the date of November 2, on which the notice of the Special Meeting was mailed, and the date of November 23, when the Special Meeting was held, the Officers and Board of Trustees of Congregation Beth Israel were maligned and attacked mercilessly, not only locally (which could at least have been conceivable even if inexcusable, in consideration of the fact that rightfully or otherwise, partisanship had developed within our Congregation) but also nationally, through the columns of the Anglo-Jewish Press more particularly. The character of the misrepresentation and seemingly deliberate distortion of facts, in some instances, and the dumb interpretation of the fundamental concepts within and behind the Basic Principles in other instances, will ever remain a reflection upon those certain irresponsible editors and yellow journalists of the East who unequivocally belied the facts in the case. The false charges against your Officers and the Board to the effect that "Second Class" Memberships had been established; that

Hebrew had been banned from our services; and that Kashruth was forbidden, were designed to arouse an unwarranted enmity toward Congregation Beth Israel on the part of devout Orthodox Jews, many of whom are not National Zionists, but who, steeped in traditionalism, would in any event, naturally decry the latter two inhibitions, incorrectly represented as inherently embodied in Beth Israel's Basic Principles according to authoritative interpretation thereof. This misguided element of Jewry blindly served to swell the ranks of the opposition, whose only weapon was defamation rather than truth or logic.

It may be entirely in order also to mention the vilification of Rabbi Schachtel by reputedly important and presumably representative persons within the high councils of Judaism. The epithets that were hurled against this good man, and the insinuations originating from the poisonous pens and sinister minds of some of the self-appointed ambitious representatives-at-large of the Jews of the United States constituted within themselves a condemnation of the leadership, small of calibre, *neither Orthodox nor Reform*, but more particularly *Zionist*, for whose acts and ignorance all Reform Jews are held accountable before our Christian brethren, and may, unfortunately, ultimately be shamed and discredited.

The character of the opposition to the Basic Principles, both local and national, was of such an order as to convince the membership of Beth Israel that it had a mission with which no force or factor could be permitted to interfere,

namely, to serve individually and collectively as missionaries among its own people and to safeguard at least a segment of the Jewish people of this nation against indictment before the Lord for worshiping a false god, ZIONISM.

Throughout the hectic three weeks between November 2 and November 23 certain non-Zionist lay members of Beth Israel, untutored, and, frankly, with complete self-assurance—presented a series of educational leaflets concerning the Basic Principles to the Membership of Beth Israel, whereas the opposition apparently received guidance and data, ill-contrived and ineffectual as such were, from the powers that be within the Zionist Cabel, Hierarchy—or whatever it may be, inasmuch as the undeviatingly bromidic preachment of the Zionist ideology pervaded all oppositionist literature and leaflets directed out of local campaign headquarters. The dissenters were also favored, coincidentally or otherwise, with appearances in our community of reputedly distinguished personages, whose influence through well advertised public lectures and forums, and “incidentally,” through personal contacts, presumably would put the fear of God into those who should have the temerity to restate the principles of Reform Judaism and who would be so imprudent as to oppose the high priests of National Zionism, the new religion.

The controversy that raged about the Basic Principles, from which even international reactions were experienced, culminated in the crisis precipitated during the course of

the ever-to-be-remembered Special Called Meeting of Congregation Beth Israel of November 23, 1943, held in the Temple itself. Your President humbly requested the courteous consideration of the Membership towards all who might see fit to participate in the debate which would naturally ensue over the vital issues which would be presented during the course of the proceedings. It was also requested that the sanctity of the House of Worship be respected with conduct becoming not only to the environment but also to the more than eight hundred persons who were present at the meeting.

Your President made representations to the effect that every man's rights would be protected by the Chair; that both factions within the Congregation would be allotted exactly the same length of time within which to present arguments, pro and con; that indulgence in personalities on the part of the speakers would not be condoned; and that Robert's Rules of Order would govern the conduct of the meeting. It is your President's privilege and pleasure to record the commendable manner in which all persons attendant at the meeting, either as observers or participants in the debate, conducted themselves. Although the meeting lasted several hours, only a few calls to order by the Chair for minor infractions of rules were necessary. Every angle of every issue before the Membership was presented logically and forcefully, and the patience exhibited by the members of the Congregation reflected not only a willingness to listen and learn, but also a vividly keen comprehension of the significance of

the momentous occasion.

In due order, and with the consent of all who cared to express themselves, the Chair called for a motion, after soliciting acquiescence—which was promptly granted without protest—by both factions within the Membership, to approve the recommendation that the ballot be recorded by a rising vote. Happily, this procedure progressed in a most orderly manner, with representatives of both factions teaming as tellers.

The overwhelming majority for the adoption of the Basic Principles and for the approval of the Resolution which had been anticipated by your President and the Board was reflected by a vote of 632 "for," and 168, "against."

Immediately following the meeting of the Congregation on November 23, and in compliance with the proposal formally adopted by the Board of Trustees, copies of the Basic Principles and of the Resolution were distributed to the Rabbis, Officers and Members of the Boards of Trustees of all Reform Congregations in the United States affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The purpose in this procedure was manifestly to apprise these leaders of Reform Jewish communities of the action taken by Beth Israel in connection with this restatement of the principles of Reform Judaism; to clear up the untrue representations concerning the Basic Principles circulated throughout the country; and through the Resolution, to encourage like-minded persons identified with Jewish Congregational life

in other cities to join with Beth Israel in an expression criticizing the failure of the three great religious organizations, all founded upon a definite Reform platform written by the immortal Isaac M. Wise, namely, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Central Conference of American Rabbis, and the Hebrew Union College, to devote their efforts and resources more effectively to the vigorous promotion of the fundamental concepts and philosophies underlying the American Reform movement. Although no official action was taken to influence other Congregations to adopt Beth Israel's Basic Principles, it would be quite hypocritical not to mention that the individuals comprising Beth Israel's Board of Trustees openly indulged the hope that other Congregations would follow Beth Israel's lead in this respect.

Even an attempt at chronicling the recorded protests against this latter action of the Board would be ridiculous; it would require volumes. Suffice it to say that an outburst of presumed righteous wrath was forthcoming from the three Jewish Institutions to which the Resolution was directed, in the form of official answers to the charges and criticisms embodied in the Resolution. Copies of these official answers over the signatures of Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof, Chairman of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and Mr. Adolph Rosenberg, President, and Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, Director, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, were distributed, we are happy to say, to all to

whom copies of our material had been mailed. We, who as laymen, have initiated the debate, will be pleased to have our argument—prepared by our humble Policy Formulation Committee—compared to what Rabbi Eisendrath, in the April issue of "Liberal Judaism," refers to as Rabbi Freehof's scholarly dissertation. The hope is indulged that our counter-argument, and pardon me, able, if not scholarly exposition on Reform Judaism and Beth Israel's Basic Principles, mailed early in May to Rabbi Freehof, with copies to all Board Members of all Congregations in the Union, will also find at least back page space in "Liberal Judaism," a magazine which is, alas, prejudiced and biased.

Your President may risk the personal conviction that the end of this debate through the mails is far from determinable, despite the expressed hope voiced by the powers that be in Cincinnati, as Beth Israel is resolved to continue unremittingly the pursuit of its objectives. Inasmuch as Beth Israel has been unable to locate a medium, uncontrolled by partisan editorship, to espouse its cause, its campaign must continue to be waged through the mails. It may also be timely for those who have attempted to camouflage the real issues confronting American Reform Jews by editorializing with ill-becoming calumny and vitriolic condemnation, an inspired, unselfish movement on the part of a defiant, determined, dauntless and uncompromising community, to know the extent of Beth Israel's holy resolve, which may be expressed no more forcefully than in those famous and im-

mortal words, so truly American and so eloquent in spirituality, "We have not yet begun to fight."

Following distribution of the copies of the Basic Principles and the Resolution to approximately six thousand persons, outside our community, identified prominently with Reform Congregations, there was a return flow of correspondence received by the Officers of the Congregation, the members of the Board of Trustees and the Rabbi, which assumed staggering proportions. It became obvious that a chord quite in consonance with a very significant Jewish contingent in this country, whose sentiments harmonized with our own, had been struck. Oh, of course, there were received a few communications leveling the accustomed scurrilous and vituperative attacks upon Beth Israel and its distinguished Membership, but it is most pleasant to inform you that the correspondence received was predominantly from co-religionists of the American Reform category, who expressed great admiration for the position we had assumed, and who, in certain instances, literally prayed that we would continue to fight those forces which had "sown the seed of destruction in the spiritual garden of Reform Judaism." Incidentally, communications are still being received from all quarters, and if there is any portion of the correspondence referred to from which your Board has found particularly great joy and satisfaction, it is that received from men in the armed forces, both in this country and in foreign service. The resentment expressed by some of the men overseas against the trends in

the Judaism which they left behind in the United States, and the protests against the character of religious services available to them, more particularly in the army, constituted sufficient basis to justify a battle to the last ditch for the redemption and preservation of our American Reform mode of worship, as embodied in the Basic Principles.

Never a dull moment during the bygone year!! Dr. Julian S. Morgenstern, President of Hebrew Union College, who was planning a visit to Temple Har Sinai in New Orleans, La., requested that he be invited to Houston for a conference with the Board of Trustees, and suggested therefor the date of January 25, 1944. As may well be presumed, the request was happily complied with, and the Board felt honored with the privilege of meeting with this distinguished gentleman, with whom, incidentally, a number of persons on the Board were already acquainted. It is perhaps unnecessary to enlarge upon the purpose of Dr. Morgenstern's visit, which, in a few words, was to answer, unofficially but nonetheless constructively, if possible, the charges against the College embodied in Part B of the Resolution of November 23, 1943.

Although it cannot be honestly and conscientiously reported that Dr. Morgenstern succeeded in altering the position that had been asserted by Beth Israel, it must, however, be recorded that this cultured gentleman's visit and his interesting discussion centering about the College and its problems was most enlightening; and, regardless of the differences in viewpoint existing, Dr. Morgenstern won for himself many

new friends and admirers while in our midst. We sincerely trust that Dr. Morgenstern may again compliment us with his presence, upon an occasion that will permit of his appearance in our Temple and in the presence of a fair representation of our Membership.

Immediately following Dr. Morgenstern's visit, your President received the following telegram from Rabbi James G. Heller of Cincinnati, Ohio, a former President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis:

I AM TO BE IN HOUSTON ON FEBRUARY 14 FROM MORNING UNTIL EVENING. THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHAPLAINCIES OF THE UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS AND THE CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS HAVE ASKED ME TO CONFER WITH YOU ON IMPORTANT MATTERS RELATIVE TO THE POSITION OF RABBI ROBERT I. KAHN. I LEAVE IT TO YOUR OWN JUDGMENT WHETHER IT WOULD BE WISE TO DO THIS ONLY WITH THE OFFICERS OF THE CONGREGATION OR WITH ALL THE TRUSTEES. WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO DO IT AT SOME TIME IN THE AFTERNOON? I SHOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE A REPLY BY WIRE CONCERNING THIS.

The following telegraphic reply was directed to Rabbi Heller, over the signature of your President, under date of January 27, 1944:

IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR MY BOARD TO MEET WITH YOU FEBRUARY 14. HOWEVER, THE OFFICERS WILL BE PLEASED TO MEET WITH YOU AT FOUR TUESDAY AFTERNOON IN YOUR ROOM OR MY OFFICE ACCORDING TO YOUR CONVENIENCE SUBJECT TO YOUR FURTHER ADVICE OR

CONFIRMATION. I WILL BE PERSONALLY VERY HAPPY TO RENEW OUR ASSOCIATION FORMED AT TULANE NEARLY THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

In a telegram of February 3 received from Rabbi Heller, the appointment for February 14 was confirmed.

It so came about that on the date set for the conference with Rabbi Heller, the only officer of the Congregation in the city and available to accompany your President to the conference with Rabbi Heller, was Vice President Max H. Nathan. Rabbi Heller's brother, Mr. Isaac Heller, an attorney, also sat in at the meeting, unofficially, and at his own suggestion, but most certainly with the approval of your President and Vice-President.

Your President informs you unreservedly that the conference with Rabbi Heller was far from harmonious. You are also informed that this is putting it mildly!! It was impossible to believe that the attitude adopted by Rabbi Heller was becoming the occasion. It was obvious at the outset that a common ground for a calm discussion of an issue, which in no respect impressed your President as the affair of any others than the Membership of Beth Israel, could not be found. It may further be reported that almost immediately after the exchange of only passing felicitations, your President was perfectly satisfied that the irritant to Rabbi Heller was the Basic Principles and not the case of Rabbi Kahn.

At the end of this rather disappointing conference, which lasted two hours, Rabbi Heller was informed by your Presi-

dent that he was unwilling to risk reporting to his Board of Trustees on the matter discussed during the afternoon. Frankly, the issues in the discussion were so beclouded and confused that they would never have been even remotely definable without the assistance of the Rabbi's lawyer-brother, who, apologetically, did from time to time remind his good brother about the subject he was supposed to be discussing. In consideration of the foregoing it was suggested to Rabbi Heller by your President that he convey his thoughts on the matter at hand, in writing, and for presentation before the Board of Trustees of Beth Israel. Rabbi Heller's communication of February 25, 1944, addressed to your President, the reply thereto of March 3, 1944, by your President, and Rabbi Heller's communication of March 7, 1944, all presented hereinbelow, speak for themselves.

THE ISAAC M. WISE TEMPLE

K. K. B'nai Yesburun

Cincinnati 29, Ohio

James G. Heller

Samuel Wohl

February 25, 1944.

MR. LEOPOLD L. MEYER,
3308 South MacGregor Way,
Houston, Texas.

Dear Mr. Meyer:

This is the first opportunity I have had since my trip to Houston to write to you, in pursuance of the conversation that we had. Our understanding, as I recall, was that I was to send you this letter so that you

could take the matter up with the Board of the Congregation in an official manner.

The Joint Committee on Chaplains feels that the position of Chaplain Robert Kahn, who went into the service from your Congregation, has become a difficult and equivocal one. The Committee realizes that technically you are acting correctly toward him. They understand that you intend to take him back as Assistant at the end of the War. But they feel that in this matter, and in relation to a man who has gone to serve his country, and who by all reports we receive, is rendering a splendid service, technical adherence to the rules ought not be enough.

Our Committee feels that, whereas Chaplain Kahn, when he left the Congregation was Assistant to a much older man, he is now in the situation of having to return to the pulpit as the Assistant to a man relatively his own age. Secondly, when he left the Congregation, no action had been taken by the Congregation which might be contrary to his own convictions. He is now compelled to return to your pulpit, with the clear understanding that he will be tacitly committed thereby to the advocacy of a point of view and a method of procedure that are or may be in direct disagreement with his own point of view.

I submit these matters to you and to Mr. Nathan in the hope that your Congregation will see fit to do something to meet this situation. All that our Committee can do is to try to protect the interests of Chaplains and to bring situations similar to this to the attention of the Congregation involved.

I shall await word from you as to this matter, and I shall appreciate it if you could send it to me as promptly as possible.

With friendliest greetings, I am

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) JAMES G. HELLER.

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL
Houston, Texas

March 3, 1944.

RABBI JAMES G. HELLER, *Chairman*,
Joint Committee on Chaplains,
c/o The Isaac M. Wise Temple,
Reading Road and North Crescent Avenue,
Cincinnati 29, Ohio.

Dear Rabbi Heller:

Although your communication was not received on or before February 21st, in accordance with the writer's request and expectation, to insure its presentation at the Board meeting called for that date, it so came about that the business planned for disposition at the referred to meeting was more voluminous than anticipated and the unfinished business of the meeting was accordingly scheduled for resumption on Monday evening, February 28th. Inasmuch as the receipt of your letter coincided with the latter date it was quite convenient to present it for discussion at the postponed session.

The Board considered the subject matter of your communication very carefully and most respectfully, but nonetheless came to the same conclusion that the writer had arrived at and as conveyed to you during the course of the personal conference of February 14th between your good self, Mr. Nathan and himself, namely, that there was no possibility of defending the Congregation's position in the sight of your Committee which had already apparently established its own convictions. In any event, the Board ultimately agreed that if it had the power to over-ride the 346 to 91 vote of the *Congregation* in the adoption of the Board's recommendation that Rabbi Schachtel be chosen as Dr. Barnston's successor; and, further, that if it were to resolve to answer your communication of February 25th favorably—that is, in compliance with the obvious

wishes of the Joint Committee on Chaplains—it would be obliged to adopt two arbitrary actions:

- (1) Discharge Rabbi Schachtel;
- (2) Disavow the Basic Principles of Congregation Beth Israel.

The Board has instructed the writer to inform you as Chairman of the Joint Committee on Chaplains that it would not give a favorable action on either of the above referred to issues the courtesy of a moment's reflection. The writer informed the Board of his attempt to influence you into making a recommendation in the premises and that you suggested that perhaps the election of Rabbi Kahn as Co-Rabbi might be the solution to what you considered a dilemma. The Board instructed the writer to advise your Committee that such a procedure could not be considered, if for no other reason than it would be an infringement upon the contractual arrangement with Rabbi Schachtel.

In the course of the general discussion in connection with your letter that ensued, the Board was obviously unsympathetic with the attitude of the Committee of which you are Chairman. At the outset the Board requested of the writer evidence of the authority with which your Committee was presumably invested and which would justify in some respect any basis for your demanding an explanation of our Board for its actions. If you have evidence of your Committee's authority available, your favoring the writer with such for presentation before his Board will be sincerely appreciated. The Board also felt that regardless of its delegated authority, your Committee was being motivated by a rule o' thumb procedure which in the case of Beth Israel simply failed to function as your Committee could not possibly have proceeded as it did if it had been informed reliably of the many complications with which Beth Israel had been confronted when the successor to Rabbi Barnston was chosen. On one point, however, the Board insists that it be not misunderstood, namely, *that regardless of any contingency there was not the slightest obligation*

on the Congregation's part even to consider the Assistant Rabbi for the position of Chief Rabbi. The relationship between the two positions is in no respect collateral.

Regardless of any influence by which Beth Israel might have been motivated in its deliberations and despite the absence of our obligation so to do, Beth Israel did consider Rabbi Kahn for the position of Chief Rabbi and exercised its incontestable authority not to choose him. In connection with this latter circumstance you are most respectfully referred to the copy of the communication of July 15th, 1943, addressed to Rabbi Kahn over the writer's signature, copy of which is attached and copy of which was also surrendered to you at the time of your visit on February 14th.

The Board does not feel now and has never felt that Rabbi Kahn was stigmatized by the Congregation's action in failing to elect him Chief Rabbi, as inferred by the Joint Committee on Chaplains. The Board feels that in loyalty to Rabbi Kahn as well as in the observance of its technical verbal understanding it is complying with every moral obligation in permitting the position of Assistant Rabbi to remain open and available for Rabbi Kahn upon his return.

Incidentally, it was developed at the Board meeting of February 28th that upon the occasion of Rabbi Kahn's visit to Houston at Sh'vuos (incidentally upon leave granted at the writer's solicitation per correspondence attached) he contacted at least five members of the Board personally—and their names are available—relative to the vacancy created as a result of Dr. Barnston's retirement and inquired as to the possibility of his being elected thereto. In each instance Rabbi Kahn was advised not to press his candidacy. When the Board as a whole was polled on Monday evening, February 28th, relative to its reaction to Rabbi Kahn's candidacy at this moment—and after months of reflection—all members of the Board, with the exception of two members who were non-committal, admitted that they would have given Rabbi Kahn the same advice, had they been contacted, as was forthcoming from the five members—*especially close friends*

of Rabbi Kahn—above referred to. There was obviously a general conviction that this man, regardless of his many favorable attributes, was not qualified for the position of Chief Rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel.

There is another inference in your communication of February 25th to the effect that after Rabbi Kahn had departed, Congregation Beth Israel adopted certain actions which might be contrary to Rabbi Kahn's convictions. It is presumed of course that you are making reference to the Basic Principles. We are unwilling to discuss this issue with you until we are advised officially by Rabbi Kahn that he takes exception thereto. Most certainly our position can be appreciated in this latter connection, for if our Board should express itself, it would be theorizing and its deductions in the premises would necessarily be hypothesized upon a proposition assumed rather than factual.

In all of the foregoing the writer has attempted seriously to convey literally the spirit of the Board's temper and the reasoning underlying the Board's deliberations. The writer discovered no manifestation of animus, and whereas there was a constant question as to the validity of your Committee's authority there was the consistent willingness to believe that authoritative or not, your Committee's intentions were entitled to the courtesy of the benefit of the doubt.

If there is read into this communication even the slightest lack of deference towards either your good self or your associates it must be attributed either to the writer's lack of capacity for expressing his Board's sentiments adequately and accurately or to the difficult situation in which he finds himself in attempting to present on his Board's behalf a position which, at the outset, in the minds of the members of the Joint Committee on Chaplains, was apparently untenable.

Cordially and sincerely,

(Signed) LEOPOLD L. MEYER, *President,*
Congregation Beth Israel.

CENTRAL CONFERENCE
OF
AMERICAN RABBIS

Cincinnati, Ohio, March 7, 1944.

MR. LEOPOLD L. MEYER, *President,*
Congregation Beth Israel,
Holman and LaBranch Streets,
Houston, Texas.

Dear Mr. Meyer:

I want to acknowledge receipt of your letter of March 3rd, which reached me this morning. I shall not reply to it in detail, but shall submit it to the entire Committee on Chaplaincy. Inasmuch as I was acting for them in my conversations with you in Houston, and in the letter which I wrote you on their behalf, it is only proper that they should make the decision as to what reply they wish to send to your letter, and, equally, what action they wish to take.

As soon as they have met, I shall inform you of their action.

With friendly greetings, I am

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) JAMES G. HELLER.

It is quite conceivable that the failure to hear from the Joint Committee on Chaplains, as inferred in Rabbi Heller's communication of March 7, is attributable to the fact that the personnel thereof was more aware of what was going on, so to speak, than the Board of Trustees of Beth Israel, and thus concluded that it might more wisely forget the issue. This conclusion could well be ill-founded, but does seem to be supported, to some extent, by the fact that a communication from our Assistant Rabbi, Chaplain Robert I. Kahn, dated *March 1, 1944*, was received by your President on

March 27, 1944, in an envelope postmarked "Dallas, Texas, March 26, 1944." The communication referred to, and which conveyed Chaplain Kahn's resignation, as well as your President's acknowledgment thereof, are presented below:

OFFICE OF THE CHAPLAIN
HEADQUARTERS SIXTH MEDICAL BATTALION
APO 6, c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, Cal.

March 1, 1944.

OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS OF CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL,
Holman and LaBranch,
Houston, Texas.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with regret that I submit my resignation as Associate Rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel.

This is not a hasty nor impulsive act. I have given it my careful consideration ever since hearing, in December, that the Congregation determined to make agreement with its "Basic Principles" a qualification for voting membership.

Nor has it been an easy decision to make. My entire rabbinical career has thus far been as a spiritual leader of the Congregation. My more than seven years of service have been extremely happy and satisfying ones. Most of my dearest friends are among its members, and I count many others in the Jewish and general community of Houston. To Houston I brought my wife, and there our son was born. It has been, in the fullest sense of the term, my home. It is not easy to cut myself loose, and more especially so because my service in the Army prevents my putting down stakes elsewhere. But the same self-respect and respect for principles which led me to don the uniform of my country now compel me to dissociate myself from the spiritual leadership of Congregation Beth Israel.

It is not the content of the "Basic Principles" which so much troubles me. It is a rather poorly written hodge-podge of theology, anti-defamation, anti-Zionism, and anti-Orthodoxy.

It proclaims that we are not an inferior race but of the same racial stock as Hitler and Goebbels, and this at a time when men of goodwill are striving to eliminate the whole concept of "racialism" from the thinking of mankind.

It implies that other Jews and other congregations are not quite patriotic.

In an effort to demonstrate to the non-Jewish public that we do not keep the religious customs of those "other Jews," it has stirred up a most unfortunate and needless religious controversy which could have been foreseen by anyone who had the welfare of Jewry at heart.

It categorically states, in its original form (the form upon which the congregation did vote), that prayer not understood is a soulless form, whereas all of us know people whose prayers in Hebrew they cannot translate are more soulful and sincere than the English prayers of many.

But these observations do not surprise me, for I have heard them expressed again and again by some few members of the congregation. What does surprise me, what does trouble me, what does still shock me today as it shocked me three months ago, is that such principles (or, for that matter, any set of principles except the belief in one God) should become the basis for voting membership in the congregation. If such a step had been taken by any other congregation, I would have spoken out against it. Such a step having been taken by the congregation of which I am Associate Rabbi, I, because I am a Reform Rabbi and an American, must protest by resignation.

I believe in Reform Judaism. I have never lived any other kind of Judaism. I attended the religious school of a Reform Temple of which my parents were members. I was confirmed and inspired to the Rabbinate by a Reform Rabbi. I spent eight years preparing myself for my life-work in the Hebrew Union College, founded by Isaac M. Wise. I know well the history of our people and the origins, growth, and development of Reform Judaism. I cannot recall an instance in Jewish history, early or late, in which a creed or set of "Basic Principles" has ever been the *sine qua non* for voting membership in a Jewish religious community. Such a requirement is alien to the spirit of democracy, so magnificently preached and practiced by our people long before the Declaration of Independence or

even the Magna Charta. Beth Israel's recently adopted policy has introduced into Jewish life a practice contrary to everything I have been taught by my Reform Jewish teachers. As a Reform Rabbi I can no longer acquiesce by silence to such action by the congregation I serve. Those who do not agree with the "Basic Principles," if they wish to worship in Beth Israel, can do so only as non-voting or second class members. I am a first class citizen of the United States. I am a first class officer in the U. S. Army. But, by implication, I have been placed in a second class category in the congregation I have served for almost eight years. For, were I to seek membership in Beth Israel today, I would not be able to become a voting member. To be placed in this position is abhorrent to me.

I am an American, and I believe in the American, the democratic way. I must record my objection to any measure in any phase of American life which would "freeze" the relationship between a majority and a minority so as to place in a permanent minority position any group of people. It does not seem to me to be in consonance with the American way for a majority to say, so to speak, to a minority: "We are a majority. And we are going to continue to be a majority. We shall not allow you, the minority, to increase your numbers, since we shall not allow others who hold with you to become voting members of this organization." This is what the majority in Beth Israel has done. As an American, I condemn such an act, and take the only course left open to me: resignation.

Though I must thus differ with you, I extend to you my personal greetings in memory of many happy years of cooperation and friendship.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) ROBERT I. KAHN.

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL

Houston, Texas

March 28, 1944.

RABBI ROBERT I. KAHN,
Hq. 6th Med. Bn.,
APO 6, c/o Postmaster,
San Francisco, California.

Dear Rabbi Kahn:

Your communication of March 1st, 1944, addressed to the Officers and Board of Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, Texas, and mailed to the writer as President of the Congregation, from Dallas, Texas, on March 26th, was received on Monday, March 27th, and was submitted to the Officers and Board of the Congregation at their regular monthly meeting, which incidentally fell upon the date of the receipt of your communication, above referred to.

I have been instructed by the Board to acknowledge the letter above referred to, in which you submit your resignation as Associate Rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel and to advise that the Board accepted your resignation with regret.

With very best wishes for your health and welfare—in which I feel assured that all the members of the Board join with me—and indulging the hope that upon your return you will become associated with some congregation with which you will be very happy, I remain

Very sincerely,

LEOPOLD L. MEYER, *President,*
Congregation Beth Israel.

The matter of Rabbi Kahn's resignation need not be enlarged upon, as all of the facts and circumstances incidental thereto are well understood and appreciated by the members of the Congregation. It must be admitted that the receipt of the resignation was no surprise, as it was intimated by none other than Rabbi Heller himself, upon the occasion of his visit hereinabove referred to, that Rabbi Kahn "might" not return to Beth Israel. Inasmuch as Rabbi Kahn has expressed himself to the effect that his own philosophy is irreconcilable with that to which Beth Israel has committed itself, and as embodied in the Basic Principles—in all of which he most certainly had the right to exercise his prerogative—he may be happier in some other environment and as Rabbi of some other Congregation likewise indisposed towards Beth Israel's manner of thinking. In any event, we feel that Rabbi Kahn's period of service in Houston served him to excellent advantage and benefited our community, and regardless of where he may ultimately make his home, upon him, his family and his household, we invoke God's blessings.

It must not be presumed that the current year was highlighted solely by the controversial matter to which so much time and thought were necessarily devoted. To the contrary!! By far the most noteworthy single event of the year was the Ceremony of November 12, 1943, commemorating both the retirement of Rabbi Henry Barnston and the induction of Hyman Judah Schachtel as Chief Rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel.

The program for the occasion, reproduced within the pages of this booklet, may present quite attractively the character of the event, but the significance and solemnity of the ceremony will ever be a source of joyous reflection for those who were privileged to be present upon this historic evening. As may well be presumed, the celebration, unique in many respects, attracted nation-wide interest and attention. The community importance of the occasion was vividly attested to by the reams of publicity appearing in the columns of all local newspapers and periodicals.

It is perhaps appropriate to mention that with his retirement Rabbi Barnston was honored with the distinction of "Emeritus" and as a token becoming the occasion was presented with the title to his home, against which a substantial mortgage had existed, in addition to an honorarium in the form of a check, all made possible through contributions happily made by members of the Congregation.

If in addition to procuring the services of Rabbi Schachtel, the members of the Board of Trustees of Beth Israel had done nothing more during the past year than to develop and promote the Basic Principles and to contend with contingencies attendant thereupon, it would have been enough to justify their appraisal as a most conscientious and indefatigable coterie of Congregational workers. However, there were other plans to be completed and more work to be done. At a meeting of the Board of Trustees, held on November 29, 1943, it was resolved as follows:

"That the President, Mr. Leopold L. Meyer, be, and he is hereby authorized to institute and conduct, on behalf of the Congregation, a drive for gifts, which gifts will constitute a fund to be expended, as hereinafter provided, for the acquisition of and/or the erection of, and/or construction of, and/or addition to, and/or re-arrangement of, and/or alteration of, physical properties to be used for the general welfare of Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, Texas, and the promotion of its purposes as an American Reform Congregation, including without limitation, a Temple, Community Building, Religious School Building, Cemetery and Mausoleum, and the title to the physical properties created and/or acquired by the expenditure of said funds shall be vested in said Congregation Beth Israel, a Texas corporation, its successors and assigns;

"That the goal of said campaign shall be One Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$150,000.00) provided that said Congregation will accept more or less than said amount;

"That the said President be, and he is hereby authorized to appoint a Committee from the members of said Congregation to conduct said fund-raising campaign, and, in addition, a Committee to advise as to the proper and timely expenditures of said funds; provided, however, that the ultimate decision as to the time, amounts and specific purposes for and at which, said funds are to be expended (within the limitations of the first paragraph of this motion) is to remain with the Board of Trustees of said Congregation, as the same may be legally constituted, at the time of the ultimate decision;

"That the said President be, and he is hereby authorized to take such other actions as may be reasonably necessary and proper for the carrying out of the purposes of this motion as hereinabove set out."

Your President promptly appointed the "Special Temple Fund Committee," with Mr. Simon Sakowitz as Chairman, and a Committee personnel generally representing a cross-section of the Membership. It is most gratifying to report that thus far commitments in cash and bona fide pledges

amount to \$41,270.00, with reasonable assurance that the campaign goal is possible of attainment before the end of the current calendar year.

There is little question that the future of Beth Israel will be even more brilliant than its magnificent past, and that the proportions of the Congregation in numbers will literally exceed the physical accommodations offered by our Temple, even after taking into consideration the proposed alterations, additions and betterments. It may ultimately come about that those to whom the responsibility for the completion of plans and the disbursement of the Special Temple Fund is delegated will recommend the sale of our present House of Worship and the construction of a new Temple of sufficient proportions to meet the needs of a growing community and of what is destined to become the greatest Reform Congregation in the South, as measured both by numbers as well as by attainments. The membership of the Congregation, of course, would necessarily be consulted in such an event. All of the members of our Congregation are urged to reflect upon this latterly referred to proposition, and when convenient and appropriate, express their reactions thereto to members of the Committee representing the Congregation in connection with this most laudable, even if ambitious, program; and, incidentally, permit your President to remind you that in reference to the proposed new Temple, he is merely giving expression to his own hope, rather than to any plan either suggested or proposed officially by your Board of Trustees.

In retrospect, the year has been very constructive and, for some reason difficult to explain, impresses your President as representing a consolidation, so to speak, of all the wealth of spiritual guidance, religious philosophy and lay inspiration invested in the upbuilding of this religious community over the past three generations.

It must not be presumed that the great accomplishments which we refer to so pridefully have come about through the efforts of one man or of even a handful of men; the record that has been made is attributable to the coordinated efforts of the personnel of your Officers and Board of Directors who have been encouraged, assisted and supported unflinching by the Congregation at large as and when called upon. Most assuredly there are some who must be given especial mention for outstanding contributions to the present administration's accomplishments.

As a matter of simple fairness, I must make mention of the untiring efforts of Mr. I. Friedlander, whose guidance, research and inspiration have been accountable for the brilliant attainments of the Policy Formulation Committee, of which he has been Chairman. His sincerity of purpose and devotion to the cause embodied in the Basic Principles have commanded your President's profound respect, and it affords him much pleasure to accord Mr. Friedlander expression of gratitude and appreciation on behalf of himself, the Trustees, and of the Congregation as a whole.

To Mr. Geo. S. Cohen, Chairman of the Ritual Commit-

tee, must be extended our gratitude for an outstanding job well done. In addition to serving as Chairman of the very important Special Committee, composed of himself, Messrs. Ike L. Freed, I. Friedlander, Sam W. Levy and Simon Sakowitz, which must be thanked for recommending Rabbi Schachtel as Dr. Barnston's successor, Mr. Cohen, as Chairman of the Ritual Committee, was delegated full responsibility for the ceremony of November 12, 1943, commemorating the retirement of Dr. Barnston and the induction of Rabbi Schachtel. Only the President and his associates on the Board of Trustees are in position to appraise the magnitude of the former assignment which required a survey of the whole field of the Reform Rabbinate, entailing intensive study, protracted correspondence, and much expense which Mr. Cohen bore personally.

In connection with the induction ceremony above referred to, in addition to acknowledging the services rendered by the Ritual Committee, especial cognizance must be taken of the magnificent work done by Mr. J. H. Butler, Chairman of our Public Relations Committee. Unostentatiously and modestly, but most efficiently and expertly, Mr. Butler coordinated publicity of a character seldom observed in our community, and although the occasion was a significant one, it is doubtful that the brilliant coverage provided therefor could have been procurable under a less able management and less influential chairmanship.

It is regrettable that it is not consistent to enlarge upon

the calibre of service rendered to the administration by each member of the Congregation; this report would be literally unending in such an event. Common courtesy, however, demands that special acknowledgment be made of the guidance and advice consistently forthcoming from a certain few persons who have served Beth Israel particularly significantly and faithfully.

Mr. Ike L. Freed has favored your President with much good advice, founded upon his experience of forty-five years of membership in Beth Israel, many of which were devoted to service in the office of President, and on the Board of Trustees.

The evidence of the contribution in service to the Congregation of Mr. Rene S. Levy and Mr. Albert Meyerson is reflected in the new offices in the Memorial Community Hall; as has been his custom for many years, Mr. Tobias Sakowitz has given freely of his time and thought to problems in connection with the affairs of the cemetery and mausoleum; as Secretary of the Congregation and Chairman of the Membership Committee, Mr. Sidney L. Mayer has acquitted himself admirably; Mr. Simon Sakowitz, Chairman of the Special Temple Fund Committee, assisted by his able Vice-Chairman, Mr. Irvin M. Shlenker, has made a remarkable step forward towards the attainment of the goal of \$150,000.00; as Chairman of the Religious School Committee, and as Superintendent of the School itself, Mr. M. N. Dannenbaum and Mr. Jerome Meyer, respectively, have

discharged a challenging assignment most constructively; as Editor of the Temple News, official bulletin of the Congregation, Mrs. Anne Nathan Cohen has filled a unique position through the regular presentation of highly educational articles, enlightening editorial comment, current religious news and other data of popular interest.

To the Board as a whole, noble men and women without whose counsel and guidance your President could have never conducted the affairs of the Congregation during the bygone year, humble gratitude is expressed. It is remarkable how unselfishly this Board has functioned and how consistently final deliberations were recorded unanimously. The hope is indulged that the membership appreciates thoroughly the many sacrifices made on their behalf by Officers of the Congregation and Members of the Board, whose names, not including those already hereinabove referred to, I record below as an expression of my own personal high esteem and sincere regard:

Mr. Max H. Nathan, our untiring Vice-President, who would be a worthy addition to the membership of any Jewish community; Mr. Henry Greenfield, our diligent Treasurer; Mr. Sydney H. Cohen, Mr. Melvin T. Davidson, Dr. Thos. Freundlich, Mrs. Carl J. Herman, Sr., Mr. Herbert E. Levy, Mrs. M. D. Levy, Mr. Sam W. Levy, Mrs. Lasker M. Meyer, Mrs. W. W. Munzesheimer, and Mr. Melvin Rouff. As a matter of deference, I mention the name of our Second Vice-President, Lt. Col. Wm. Salman, who, although not

active with the Board during the current year, has been serving his Congregation, as well as his country, to excellent advantage in the armed forces overseas.

Your President has been actively mindful of the extent of the responsibility attaching to his office and concomitant with his own and the authority of the Board of Trustees of Congregation Beth Israel. There is no question that he may speak authoritatively for the Trustees, as well as for himself, in asserting unreservedly that in every resolution that has been passed, that in every action that has been taken, and that in every recommendation proposed for adoption by the Congregation, your Officers and Trustees have been impelled by the best interests of Beth Israel and by motives which they deemed unassailable. The year has been marked by diligent effort and personal sacrifice of such character on the part of the Officers and personnel of the Board as to command the admiration even of those who have been unfriendly to the current administration.

And last but not least, your President thanks God for the blessing with which our Congregation has been endowed in the person of Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel. Although this good man has been in our midst but a few months, he has already justified his being chosen as the religious leader for Beth Israel, the South's pre-eminently American Reform Congregation. Whereas it is true that Rabbi Schachtel was attracted to Beth Israel by the progressive tendencies of our Congregation, exemplified by recorded actions in which his

own philosophy of faith was so radiantly reflected, it will be through Rabbi Schachtel's leadership, guidance and inspiration that the real objective of Beth Israel—to recover and redeem the practice and observance of Reform Judaism, as conceived by Isaac M. Wise—will be realized.

It would be hypocritical to deny the fact that your President experienced many sleepless nights and unhappy days during the past year as a result of the complex problems with which he was confronted unceasingly, and had it not been for the firm conviction in his heart that he was serving his God and his fellow man, as well as his Congregation, faithfully, to the best of his knowledge and belief, in his official conduct of the Congregation's affairs, he would have been physically unable to bear the burden of his office. A man would necessarily be made of steel not to have suffered embarrassment at the lack of charity in the hearts of his co-religionists; not to have grieved at the unwarranted unkindness deliberately exhibited by those who were unsympathetic with our exercise of our constitutional right to declare the autonomy of our own Congregation; not to have experienced heartache at the inherent baseness in the actions of a certain few intolerant bigots who unconscionably flayed our Rabbis, our Officers and our Trustees with an almost loathesome series of incriminatory assaults. Even if some of the actions of the laymen, more particularly referred to in the foregoing, could be condoned, with their shortcomings chargeable to over-zealousness or fervor for their lost but

nonetheless righteous cause, as they may appraise it, no defense is conceivable for the eminent intellectuals and religious leaders—occupying the most important positions in Jewry, both in the pulpit and in our religious and lay institutions and organizations—who have exceeded all bounds of propriety and who have resorted to every manner of means at their disposal—the press and the pulpit—to heap contumely upon Beth Israel, apparently the last bulwark of untainted, and, shall I say, unbullied American Reform Judaism.

The good name of Beth Israel remains unsullied, despite the malicious attacks upon this courageous American Reform Congregation. When the ill-conceived ambition of the National Zionists shall have been finally discountenanced by the international powers that be; when the unfounded claim to Palestine shall have been disallowed; when those who are accountable for the greatest injustice ever done by Jews to other Jews shall suffer the reproach and opprobrium of the universalist segment of Judaism, not only in this country but also in Palestine itself; then will Beth Israel loom as a beacon light to those who have become lost in dilemma and confused by the obscurantist and hysterical yapping and yawling of the champions of a false ideology, which has insidiously grown all out of proportion in presumed significance at the expense of Judaism, Orthodox as well as Reform, with which

the fanaticism inherent within National Zionism has enshrouded itself.

Beth Israel shall not await the day of reckoning! Through a very determined contingent of its Membership, organized for the purpose of spreading its principles and promoting the precepts, doctrines and principles of American Reform Judaism, it shall immediately undertake to enlighten every Reform Congregation in the United States concerning the fact that the faith of our fathers—our Judaism itself—is being subordinated by the Political Zionists in control of our supposedly Reform institutions, to a Church-and-State philosophy and ideology absolutely incompatible with American Reform Judaism, as founded upon the teachings of Isaac M. Wise, and which we, through organized effort, hope to redeem and maintain for ourselves and for future generations.

Respectfully submitted,



President.

May 30, 1944.

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES



MAX H. NATHAN
First Vice President



LEOPOLD L. MEYER
President



LT. COL. WM. SALMAN
Second Vice President



SIDNEY L. MAYER
Secretary



HENRY GREENFIELD
Treasurer

TRUSTEES



SYDNEY H. COHEN



M. N. DANNENBAUM



MELVIN T. DAVIDSON



IKE L. FREED



DR. THOS. FREUNDLICH



I. FRIEDLANDER



MRS. CARL J. HERMAN, SR.



HERBERT E. LEVY



MRS. M. D. LEVY

TRUSTEES



RENE S. LEVY



SAM W. LEVY



MRS. LASKER M. MEYER



ALBERT MEYERSON



MRS. W. W. MUNZESHEIMER



MELVIN ROUFF



TOBIAS SAKOWITZ



IRVIN M. SHLENKER



THUMBNAIL SKETCHES

Cohen, Sydney H.

Southwestern Life Insurance Company
President, Brotherhood of Congregation
Beth Israel

Dannenbaum, M. N.

M. N. Dannenbaum Company
B.S. in Mech. Engineering, University of
Texas
Past President, District Grand Lodge No. 7,
B'nai B'rith
Past President, Houston Engineers Club
Chairman, Troop No. 400, Boy Scouts of
America
Member, Executive Committee, Jewish
Community Center
Membership Committee, Houston Cham-
ber of Commerce
Vice-President 1943, Jewish Community
Council
District 7 Commissioner, Anti-Defamation
League of B'nai B'rith
Member, Harrisburg Rotary Club

Davidson, Melvin T.

Sash and Door Company
Patron, National Recreation Association

Freed, Ike L.

President, Ike L. Freed, Wholesale Men's
Furnishings Goods

Past President, Congregation Beth Israel,
1932-37

Treasurer, City of Houston Recreation
Department since 1932

Member of Planning Committee, City of
Houston

Past President, Southwestern Men's Apparel
Club

Past President, Texas Retail Traveling
Men's Assn.

Co-Chairman, Houston Round Table, Na-
tional Conferenc of Christians and Jews,
1940-41

Allocation Committee, Houston Commu-
nity Chest, 1936

Board of Trustees, Westwood Country Club

Freundlich, Dr. Thos.

M. D., University of Texas.

Friedlander, Israel

President and General Manager, Gibraltar
Savings & Bldg. Assn.

Director, City National Bank

Trustee and Secretary, Pauline Sterne Wolff
Memorial Home

Vice-President, Jewish Welfare Bureau

Board Member, National Finance Council
of National Jewish Welfare Board

Member, Executive Committee of American
Jewish Committee, N. Y.

Trustee and Immediate Past President, Con-
gregation Beth Israel

Chairman of the Board, Federal Home Loan
Bank, Little Rock, Ark., 1932-40

President, U. S. Savings & Loan League,
Chicago, 1934-35

Chairman, Federal Savings & Loan Advis-
ory Council, Washington, D. C., 1934-42

Director, Houston Community Chest and
Council, 1942-43

L.L. B., Houston Law School

Member, Houston, Texas, and American
Bar Associations

Former President, Texas Savings & Loan
League and Southwestern States Group
Conference of the U. S. Savings & Loan
League

Greenfield, Henry

Member of firm, Cochran's Insurance
Agency

Past President, Herzl Lodge, B'nai B'rith

Past President, Houston Insurance Exchange

Past Director, Rotary Club

Member, Rotary Club

Herman, Mrs. Carl J., Sr.

Vice-President, Council of Jewish Women

Chairman, Educational Committee, Coun-
cil of Jewish Women

Board Member, Sisterhood of Congregation
Beth Israel

Levy, Herbert E.

Manager-Owner, Hirsch Cooperage & Steel
Package Company

Secretary-Treasurer, Silver Arrow Sand-
wich Shops

Levy, Mrs. M. D.

Board Member, Visiting Nurses' Association
Board Member, Council of Jewish Women
Board Member, Sisterhood of Congregation
Beth Israel

Levy, Rene S.

Secretary, Magnolia Paper Company

President, Pauline Sterne Wolff Memorial
Home

Co-Trustee, Arthur B. Cohn Estate

Board Member, Jewish Welfare Bureau

Board Member, Jewish Community Council

Levy, Sam W.

Attorney, B. A., L.L. B., University of
Michigan

Budget Committee, Houston Community
Chest

President, Jewish Welfare Bureau

Auxiliary Fire Department, West Univer-
sity Place

Chairman, Charter Revision Committee,
West University Place

Orator, Arabia Temple Shrine

Executive Committee, National Conference
of Christians and Jews

Public Relations Committee, Jewish Com-
munity Council

Mayer, Sidney L.

International Shoe Company
Equitable Life Assurance Company
Steering Committee, Jewish Community Council
Member, Rotary Club

Meyer, Mrs. Lasker M.

President, Sisterhood of Congregation Beth Israel
Chairman, Staff Assistance, Red Cross
Vice-President, Lanier P.-T.A.

Meyer, Leopold L.

B. A., Tulane University, 1912
Vice-President, Foley Bros. Dry Goods Co.
President, Congregation Beth Israel, 1942-43, 1943-44
President, Retail Merchants Assn.
Past President, National Retail Credit Assn. 1927-28
Board Member, Houston Community Chest and Council
Advisory Council, Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas
Chairman, Retail and Commercial Division, Fifth War Loan Drive
Executive Committee, Houston Fat Stock Show
Treasurer, Bureau of Mental Hygiene, 1929-44

Director, Better Business Bureau
Member, Executive Committee, Harris County War Finance Committee
Citizens Committee
New Cruiser Houston Committee
Executive Committee, Council of Social Agencies
Finance Advisory Committee, Houston Park Board
Advisory Committee, Jewish Welfare Bureau
Navy League of the United States
Board of Directors, National Retail Credit Ass'n

Meyerson, Albert

Contractor
B. S., Civil Engineering, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo.
Vice-President, Herzl Lodge, B'nai B'rith
Director, Local United Seaman's Service
Board Member, Jewish Welfare Bureau
Member of Association General Contractors

Munzesheimer, Mrs. W. W.

Board Member, National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods
Advisory Committee, State Sisterhood
Board Member, Council of Jewish Women
Advisory Committee, Jewish Welfare Bureau

Nathan, Max H.

President, Nathan's Inc.
Membership Committee, Chamber of Commerce
President, Jewish Community Council, 1937
Secretary-Treasurer, Jewish Community Council 1940-44
Vice-President, Jewish Community Center, 1939-44

Rouff, Melvin

Senior Vice President, Houston National Bank
Member, Board of Trustees, Pauline Sterne Wolff Memorial Home
Vice-President, Parks and Recreation Ass'n, City of Houston
Past President, Texas Bankers Ass'n
Past Treasurer, Texas Bankers Ass'n
Past President, National Bank Division, American Bankers Ass'n
Past Local Sponsor, National Recreation Ass'n
Past Member of Board of Houston Council of Social Agencies
Past President, Jewish Welfare Bureau

Sakowitz, Tobias

President, Sakowitz Bros.
Member, Selective Service Board

Member, Chamber of Commerce Planning Commission
Board Member, Chamber of Commerce Industrial Opportunities Committee
Board Member, Old Folks Home, Memphis, Tenn.
Board of Directors, Jewish Consumptives Relief Society, Denver, Colo.

Salman, Lt. Col. Wm.

Owner, Canadian Gulf Line, Ltd.
Owner, Intercoastal Contracting Co.
Lt. Col. Army Service Forces
Vice-President, Congregation Beth Israel

Shlenker, Irvin M.

Secretary-Treasurer, GulfTex Drug Co., Inc.
President, Westwood Country Club
Trustee, Houston Optimist Club
Treasurer, United Jewish Campaign of Houston
Member, Executive Committee, Jewish Community Center & Council
Board Member, Southwestern Region of Jewish Federation & Welfare Funds
President, Texas Wholesale Wine Ass'n
Former member, War Production Board, wine section of the Beverage and Tobacco branch
Chairman War Bond Committee for Liquor Industry of Harris County and Houston Trade Area

LIST OF COMMITTEES

FINANCE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE

Chairman: MAX H. NATHAN

Vice Chairman: HENRY GREENFIELD

IKE L. FREED

TOBIAS SAKOWITZ

I. FRIEDLANDER

RITUAL AND MUSIC COMMITTEE

Chairman: GEO. S. COHEN

Vice Chairman: MRS. W. W. MUNZESHEIMER

DR. HENRY BARNSTON

M. N. DANNENBAUM

MELVIN T. DAVIDSON

SAM W. LEVY

MRS. SAM I. MILLER

RABBI HYMAN JUDAH SCHACHTEL

EDUCATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Chairman: M. N. DANNENBAUM

Vice Chairman: SAM W. LEVY

MISS SADIE AARON

DR. HENRY BARNSTON

MRS. HARRY I. COHEN

MELVIN T. DAVIDSON

MRS. SIGMAR K. HOFELLER

MRS. ED J. LEVY

WM. M. NATHAN

RABBI HYMAN JUDAH SCHACHTEL

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Chairman: RENE S. LEVY

Vice Chairman: ALBERT MEYERSON

I. S. BROCHSTEIN

GEO. S. COHEN

MORRIS C. DAVIDSON

JOS. FINGER

ACTIVITIES AND USES OF BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Chairman: HERBERT E. LEVY

Vice Chairman: MRS. I. FRIEDLANDER

JULES S. BREITENBACH

MRS. A. D. SCHWARZ

MRS. JULIUS M. LEVI

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Chairman: TOBIAS SAKOWITZ

Vice Chairman: IKE L. FREED

MORRIS D. MEYER

MOSES M. SCHWARTZ



LADIES' AUXILIARY CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Chairman: MRS. J. H. BUTLER

Vice Chairman: MRS. LOUIS SILVER

MRS. JOS. FINGER

MRS. RALPH SCHNITZER

MRS. MARCUS N. MEYER

TEMPLE NEWS COMMITTEE

Chairman: ANNE NATHAN COHEN

Vice Chairman: MRS. MOSES M. SCHWARTZ

MRS. BENJAMIN BLOOM

MRS. HYMAN HART

MAURICE EPSTEIN

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Chairman: SIDNEY L. MAYER

Vice Chairman: I. MARK WESTHEIMER

MRS. WALTER GODLOVE

* LEO M. LEVY

MRS. M. N. DANNENBAUM

MELVIN T. DAVIDSON

LASKER M. MEYER

COMMUNAL ACTIVITIES AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Chairman: J. H. BUTLER

Vice Chairman: ALVIN SCHARFF

MRS. HENRY GREENFIELD

MRS. HOWARD HEYMAN

MRS. MORRIS D. MEYER

MRS. MAX H. NATHAN

USHER COMMITTEE

Chairman: SIMON SAKOWITZ

Vice Chairman: SYDNEY H. COHEN

I. ERLICH

ELI MARKS

LEON E. MEYER

H. WALTER PYE

SAM SURAVITZ

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL REGISTRATION COMMITTEE

Chairman: SIDNEY L. MAYER

Vice Chairman: MRS. PERL C. STRAUSS

MRS. ABE FINK

MRS. IRVING GROSS

MRS. MATTHEW KAHN

MRS. ALBERT A. KAUFMAN

MRS. MOSES M. SCHWARTZ

MRS. A. M. SOUZA

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Chairman: DR. THOS. FREUNDLICH

Vice Chairman: MRS. D. H. STRAUS

MRS. LEON GORDON

MRS. EDWARD LIPPER

LOUIS ROSENBERG

RALPH SCHNITZER

RABBINICAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Chairman: WALTER GODLOVE

Vice Chairman: MRS. M. D. LEVY

MRS. HAROLD HECHT

MRS. S. G. RAPHAEL

MRS. SAM I. MILLER

SPECIAL BYLAWS REVISION COMMITTEE

Chairman: MORRIS D. MEYER

SAM W. LEVY

WM. M. NATHAN

POLICY FORMULATION COMMITTEE

Chairman: I. FRIEDLANDER

M. N. DANNENBAUM

IKE L. FREED

DR. THOS. FREUNDLICH

MRS. CARL J. HERMAN, SR.

HERBERT E. LEVY

MRS. W. W. MUNZESHEIMER

MAX H. NATHAN

TOBIAS SAKOWITZ

IRVIN M. SHLENKER

SPECIAL TEMPLE FUND COMMITTEE

Chairman: SIMON SAKOWITZ

Vice Chairman: CARL J. HERMAN, SR.

A. A. BATH

W. A. BLOOM

J. H. BUTLER

GEO. S. COHEN

MORRIS C. DAVIDSON

JOE S. FISHMAN

IKE L. FREED

LEON GORDON

M. M. GORDON

L. L. HARRIS

C. J. JACOBSON

JULIUS M. LEVI

* Deceased.

DR. M. D. LEVY

RENE S. LEVY

* SAM I. MILLER

MAX H. NATHAN

MELVIN ROUFF

TOBIAS SAKOWITZ

DR. MAX SCHOLL

A. D. SCHWARZ

IRVIN M. SHLENKER

D. H. STRAUS

SAM TAUB

BEN WOLFMAN

TREASURER'S REPORT

CONGREGATION

April 30, 1944

Assets

Cash	\$ 2,147.44	
Bonds	11,314.00	
Dues Receivable	2,268.80	
Notes Receivable	57.00	
Accounts Receivable	101.50	
Real Estate	\$378,142.37	
Depreciation	123,752.17	254,390.20
Total Assets		\$270,278.94

Liabilities

Col. of Int. Rev. W. Tax	103.00
Notes Payable	17,500.00
Memorial Funds	1,554.50
Accounts Payable	13.00

Operations

Anticipated Income	\$ 45,035.47
Other Income	2,545.12
Total Income	\$ 47,580.59
Expense	43,593.09
Unexpended Income	\$ 3,987.50
Reserve for Contingencies	4,000.00
Income & Expense	14.17
Worth	243,106.77
Total Liabilities	\$270,278.94

CEMETERY

April 30, 1944

Assets

Cash	\$ 6,400.58	
Mausoleum	98,300.00	
Vases	133.95	
Lots and Plots	4,120.00	
Dues Receivable	2,198.00	
Accounts Receivable	5,844.06	
Perpetual Care Bonds	\$ 20,975.00	
Perpetual Care A/c Rec.	6,244.09	27,219.09
		\$144,215.68

Liabilities

Prepaid Dues		106.00
Reserve for Perpetual Care	23,719.09	
Notes Payable Wolff Mem. Home	9,000.00	
Due to Perpetual Care Fund	6,244.09	
Col. of Int. Rev. W. Tax	2.60	
Anticipated Income	1,735.25	
Other Income	760.50	
	<hr/>	
Total Income	\$ 2,495.75	
Expense	1,431.06	
	<hr/>	
Unexpended Income	\$ 1,064.69	
Worth	104,079.21	105,143.90
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Liabilities		

FINANCE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE REPORT

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,

Congregation Beth Israel,

Houston, Texas.

Gentlemen:

We, the Finance and Budget Committee, herewith make our report and recommend for adoption, a Budget for the Congregation for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1944, and ending June 30, 1945, as follows:

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE

Miscellaneous Operating Expense.....	\$ 5,215.00
Conventions and Travel.....	250.00
Insurance	1,700.00
Salaries	27,600.00

AFFILIATION

Union of American Hebrew Congregations..	2,400.00
--	----------

DEBT RETIREMENT

Temple Lien	
Interest	700.00
Principal	2,500.00

RESERVE

To subsidize cemetery care and upkeep and retire Perpetual Care accruals of former years	1,500.00
--	----------

EMERGENCIES	1,500.00
-------------------	----------

COMMITTEE CONTROLLED EXPENDITURES

Communal Activities	400.00
Educational and Religious School.....	4,500.00
Repairs and Maintenance	1,500.00
Ritual and Music.....	3,000.00
Temple News	750.00
Temple Juniors' Activities	100.00
	<hr/>
	\$53,615.00

Respectfully submitted,

Marvin Nathan
Chairman

TEMPLE NEWS COMMITTEE REPORT

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
Congregation Beth Israel,
Houston, Texas.

Gentlemen:

The Temple News has been published from October through May in monthly editions.

With the increased appropriation allotted to the Temple News for the year 1943-44, it has been possible to improve substantially upon the character of the bulletin that had been published in previous years. The use of additional pages has permitted the employment of more appropriate type, of improved art work, and of the inclusion of photographs. These have contributed very much to the physical appearance of our publication.

The Temple News has a very broad objective. Naturally, its primary purpose is to keep the members of Congregation Beth Israel informed on all matters in which they would normally be interested and which pertain to happenings within the Congregation and its auxiliary organizations, societies and committees.

Besides presenting a digest of news of Congregation activities, the Temple News has endeavored to bring to the Congregation's attention something of the history and meaning of Reform Judaism. "A Short History of Reform Judaism," an original work from carefully selected source material, was presented in four installments. A wide range of subjects and issues have appeared as and when occasion demanded. An article by Rabbi Schachtel has appeared in every issue of the News, and each of these articles covered some highly educational subject.



ANNE NATHAN COHEN

A few of the numerous letters received by the Congregation commending our action in adopting the Basic Principles have highlighted the News since February. Of course, there have appeared other miscellaneous features of general interest to the Congregation, as season, occasion or other circumstance suggested publication or comment.

The Temple News Committee naturally hopes to broaden its sphere of activity during the ensuing year. It is hoped to enlighten our readers concerning the larger aspect of Judaism and its influence in the community as well as in the nation at large . . . and to reprint educational articles through which may be brought about a better understanding not only between Jew and Jew, but between the Jew and his Christian neighbor.

It is very likely that space will be available for the presentation of literary contributions on religious subjects from the members of Beth Israel, who have ideas or plans for presentation to the members of our Congregation. Such are solicited.

If our members have not been reading the Temple News regularly, we urge that such be done; it contains much of interest, and much food for thought.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Nathan Cohen

Chairman.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
Congregation Beth Israel,
Houston, Texas.

Gentlemen:

Many new members have joined Congregation Beth Israel since last year. We are most happy to have these new members, to extend to them the hand of welcome. We urge them to attend our services and functions, to join our allied organizations, to take an active part in the affairs of our Congregation and our Religious School, to make full use of all the privileges accorded members of Congregation Beth Israel.

Although there are still many unaffiliated Jews in our city, we are gratified at the large numbers that have joined us in the past few years. In these busy times our Committee has not been able to make personal calls on all those referred to us, but we have tried to spread the information that ours is a friendly Congregation, and that our membership is open to all Reform Jews who wish to join.

Many of our young men and women have entered the armed services of our country; the war effort has caused a lot of moving about from one city to another; consequently there have been more changes in our membership than would normally be the case. In the current year there have been 89 new enrollments; 37 members were lost by death, removal and resignation—leaving our net total 834 members at this time.

We extend sincere thanks to the members of our Committee, and to those other friends and members who have been instrumental in bringing new members into Congregation Beth Israel.

Here is the list of new members since the last annual meeting:

New Members July 1943-May 1944

Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Aronson
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Allen
Mrs. Kate Asher
Mr. and Mrs. Morris Atlas
Mr. and Mrs. Sam Axelrod

Mr. and Mrs. Irving Backrach
Mr. and Mrs. G. J. Bennett
Mrs. Ray K. Bergman
Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Blair
Mr. and Mrs. David M. Block

Mr. and Mrs. Max Block
Mr. and Mrs. Max Borger
Mrs. Rose Brilling
Mrs. Miriam Browning
Mr. Gustav L. Buck
Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Buck
Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Basheim
Mr. and Mrs. Abe Cohen
Mr. and Mrs. Kurt Coper
Mr. and Mrs. Albert Cooper
Mr. and Mrs. Al Crystal
Mrs. H. J. Dannenbaum
Mr. and Mrs. N. J. Dannenbaum
Mr. and Mrs. A. I. Ellis
Mr. and Mrs. Gus Epstein
Mr. and Mrs. Jack Flowers
Mrs. Adeline Friedlander
Mrs. L. S. Friedman
Mr. and Mrs. Max Frosch
Mr. and Mrs. Sam Frucht
Mr. and Mrs. Milton Friedman
Mr. and Mrs. Abe Gollob
Miss Pauline Gordon
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Granoff
Mr. and Mrs. DeWitt H. Grossman
Mr. Sam Herskowitz
Mr. and Mrs. Richard H. Holstein
Mr. and Mrs. C. D. Jacobson
Dr. and Mrs. Sally Jacobson
Mr. Adrien Kahn
Mr. and Mrs. Sam Kahn
Mr. and Mrs. L. Kestenberg
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Klimist
Mr. and Mrs. S. L. Kline
Mr. and Mrs. Allan H. Kottwitz

Mr. and Mrs. Tobe C. Krandel
Miss Gertrude Kreisman
Mr. and Mrs. Edward S. Lambert
Mr. and Mrs. Leon Levi
Mr. and Mrs. Nathan L. Levy
Mr. and Mrs. Robert G. Levy
Dr. and Mrs. Nathan D. Lewis
Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Lipper
Mr. and Mrs. Seymour Lieberman
Mr. and Mrs. Walter L. Maas
Mr. and Mrs. M. Margulies
Mr. and Mrs. Otto Morgenthau
Mr. and Mrs. Ferd Munz
Mr. and Mrs. Leo C. Naman
Mr. and Mrs. N. D. Naman
Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Naman
Mr. and Mrs. J. Noodelman
Mr. and Mrs. Manfred Peine
Mr. Nathan Pifko
Mr. and Mrs. Sam Proler
Mrs. Lillian C. Rethy
Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Rosenthal
Mr. and Mrs. Abe Rosenzweig
Mr. and Mrs. Clarence S. Salmon
Mr. and Mrs. Sig Segall
Mr. and Mrs. Irving M. Shaffer
Mr. Sidney Shaffer
Mr. and Mrs. Meyer Shapiro
Mr. and Mrs. C. Silberstein
Mrs. Clara Singer
Mr. and Mrs. M. M. Slotnick
Mr. and Mrs. Abe Slusky
Mr. and Mrs. A. Smith
Mr. and Mrs. H. K. Smith
Mr. Meyer Solomon

Miss Bettye Stalarow
Miss Hadey Tiras
Mr. and Mrs. Alex A. Walter
Mr. and Mrs. David Weintraub
Mr. and Mrs. E. Weissberger

Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Wiesenthal
Mr. and Mrs. Bernard C. Winner
Miss Jewel Wuntch
Mr. and Mrs. Harold Yellin

Congregation Beth Israel welcomes them into our House of God.

Respectfully submitted,

Adiney L. Mayer

Chairman

MEMBERSHIP ANALYSIS

No. Members	%	Classification	Amount Paid	%
10	1.26	\$750-400	\$5400.00	11.72
25	3.16	300-200	6285.00	13.85
38	4.82	150-125	5522.50	12.02
32	4.05	100	3185.00	7.10
51	6.45	75	3845.00	8.35
49	6.20	60	2945.00	6.40
99	12.52	48	4809.00	10.44
216	27.34	42-36	8058.70	17.52
243	30.78	24-18	5487.50	11.90
27	3.42	12 and less	339.00	.70
790	100.00		45,876.70	100.00

27 Members in Service—dues waived

17 Non-paying Members

834 Total Membership

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL REGISTRATION COMMITTEE REPORT

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
Congregation Beth Israel
Houston, Texas

Gentlemen:

Although the work of this Committee is chiefly the enrollment and adjustment of our Religious School children, we are keenly interested in all phases of religious education of our Jewish youth.

We have 352 children enrolled in the Religious School this year, 29 of whom are children whose parents are not members of the Congregation. It has been a good year, and we are proud of our children.

We are wholeheartedly in accord with the Back-to-Sunday-School movement being carried out by all churches. Of all the religions, it is most important that Jewish children know of their glorious history in order that they may better appreciate the full meaning of their religion. Under Rabbi Schachtel's leadership plans are being made for further improvement in the calibre and scope of our curriculum. Surely no child of Religious School age in the family of any of our members should be permitted to fail to register for the full session next year. The values of the education available and associations made within our Religious School make attendance a "must" for all.

We wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the members of our Committee, and to the many parents who have helped in this work.

Respectfully submitted,

Adiney L. Mayer

Chairman



RELIGIOUS SCHOOL FACULTY, 1943-1944

<i>Superintendent</i>	Mr. Jerome Meyer	<i>Grade Six A</i>	Mr. Emmett A. Frank	<i>Hebrew</i>	Mrs. H. Silverberg
<i>Kindergarten</i>	Mrs. Miriam Browning	<i>Grade Six B</i>	Mrs. Harry J. Kline	<i>Choir and Music Director</i>	Mrs. Rebecca F. Miller
	Mrs. Earl Kaiser	<i>Grade Seven A</i>	Mrs. Wm. Stern	<i>Library</i>	Miss Jeanette Dannenbaum
<i>Grade One</i>	Mrs. Sigmar K. Hofeller	<i>Grade Seven B</i>	Mr. Jerome Rosenbloom	<i>Arts and Crafts</i>	Miss Harriet Toler
<i>Grade Two</i>	Mrs. Louis Franklin	<i>Grade Eight A</i>	Mrs. Rose Brillling	<i>Substitute Teachers:</i>	
<i>Grade Three A</i>	Mrs. Perl C. Strauss	<i>Grade Eight B</i>	Mrs. Idale Kahn	Miss Jeanette Sepper	Mrs. Irvin H. Boarnet
<i>Grade Three B</i>	Mrs. Morris H. Kaplan	<i>Grade Nine A</i>	Mr. Jack S. Goren	<i>Member of W. A. V. E. S.:</i>	
<i>Grade Four</i>	Mrs. Harold Yellin	<i>Grade Nine B</i>	Mrs. Alfred Goldman	Miss Judith Sepper	(Fourth Grade Teacher)
<i>Grade Five A</i>	Mrs. Chas. Blumenthal	<i>Grade Ten A</i>	Mrs. Harry L. Fred		
<i>Grade Five B.</i>	Mrs. Hyman Hart	<i>Grade Ten B</i>	Mr. Irvin H. Boarnet		

➡➡➡➡➡ BASIC PRINCIPLES ◀◀◀◀◀

OF CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL, HOUSTON, TEXAS - AN AMERICAN REFORM CONGREGATION

ADOPTED NOVEMBER 23, 1943

PRINCIPLE No. 1—We believe in the mission of Israel which is to witness to the Unity of God throughout the world and to pray and work for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. Our watchword is "Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is One." We accept it as our sacred duty to worship and to serve Him through prayer, righteous conduct and the study of our Holy Scriptures and glorious history.

PRINCIPLE No. 2—We are Jews by virtue of our acceptance of Judaism. We consider ourselves no longer a nation. We are a religious community, and neither pray for nor anticipate a return to Palestine nor a restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state. We stand unequivocally for the separation of Church and State. Our religion is Judaism. Our nation is the United States of America. Our nationality is American. Our flag is the "Stars and Stripes." Our race is Caucasian. With regard to the Jewish settlement in Palestine we consider it our sacred privilege to promote the spiritual, cultural and social welfare of our co-religionists there.

PRINCIPLE No. 3—We believe in the coming of a Messianic Age and not in a personal Messiah. We recognize that it is our hallowed duty to speed the coming of the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, which is the Messianic ideal for which the righteous of all people work and pray.

PRINCIPLE No. 4—We accept as binding only the moral laws of Mosaic legislation and prophetic teaching. While respecting the convictions of our Orthodox and Conservative brethren concerning the rabbinical and Mosaic laws which

regulate diet, priestly purity, dress, and similar laws, we, however, as an American Reform Congregation, reject the religious obligatory nature of the same, as having originated in ages and under influences of ideas and conditions which today are entirely unsuited, unnecessary and foreign to the beliefs and observances of progressive Judaism in modern America. We shall maintain and use in connection with our religious services only such ritual and ceremonies as may be approved by the Congregation from time to time and which may symbolize, in effective and beautiful form, the principles of our faith, and, which are adapted to the progressive and liberal spirit of our times.

PRINCIPLE No. 5—We recognize the complete religious equality of woman with man.

PRINCIPLE No. 6—The treasures of Divine revelation were given in the Hebrew language and in such language are preserved the immortal remains of a literature that influences all civilized nations. As the fulfillment of a sacred duty therefore, the cultivation of the Hebrew language must always be urgently desired by us. However, the Hebrew language has become unintelligible to the vast majority of our co-religionists; therefore, while a measurable content of Hebrew is essential and desirable in our rituals and services, it must be used wisely as is advisable under existing circumstances.

PRINCIPLE No. 7—The basis of brotherhood among the Jews throughout the world is Religion. Hence, it is our duty to help our co-religionists whenever and wherever the need may arise, even, as we must help all mankind that may be in need, in accordance with the principles of our faith.

POLICY FORMULATION COMMITTEE REPORT

May 30, 1944.

MR. LEOPOLD L. MEYER, *President*,
Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, Texas.

Dear Mr. Meyer:

For many months we discussed the advantages that might accrue to the Congregation through the formation of a Policy Committee that could continuously study the needs of the Congregation, present and future, and be prepared to give advice and recommendations to the Trustees upon matters of importance in the local and national religious field. Events which happened in the congregation, during the period from May 19, 1943 (last annual meeting) and August 4, 1943 (date of special meeting to elect senior rabbi) caused you and the Board of Trustees to act promptly upon this matter. Under the authorization of the Board's resolution, passed August 9th, you appointed a Policy Formulation Committee with the undersigned as chairman. The duties of the committee were outlined as follows:

"... to prepare for adoption by the Board, policies, rules, regulations and procedures, to be observed in connection with the administration of the Congregation's affairs, according to the various categories into which such matters logically fall."

Your committee has had a very busy year. Its studies have been comprehensive. Its discussions and deliberations have been free and frank. Its conclusions were unanimously arrived at, and the recommendations unanimously adopted by the board of Trustees, and ratified by the Congregation. The pattern of its important work, which we modestly assert bids fair to becoming an important historic chapter in American Judaism, was dictated by the action of others rather than by the committee. We were confronted with conditions within our own Congregation and within the community that required correction and action. These conditions forced their attention upon us as a result of the attempts to have the



I. FRIEDLANDER

Congregation reject the unanimous recommendation by the Trustees of a senior rabbi, as successor to Dr. Henry Barnston. This abortive attempt to bring about disunity within the congregation was supported, innocently by some members of the congregation, but there was no mistaking the objective of some of the leaders. Forces and influences outside of the congregation membership, some local and some national, sought to control the future of Beth Israel Congregation. The end sought was not American Reform Judaism, to which our efforts have been and are dedicated, but to "nationalism." This unhappy incident was based upon the assumption of certain individuals that there had already been admitted into the membership of this Reform Congregation, a sufficient number of neo-reform or conservative members, to enable this group to swerve the destiny of Beth Israel toward a rapprochement with traditional or conservative Judaism and, of course, in the interest of political Zionism, then and now, an issue in American

Jewish life. How better could this be accomplished than to replace Dr. Henry Barnston, an uncompromising advocate of Israel's universalistic mission and ever an opponent of political Zionism, with a "reform" rabbi favoring a Jewish Commonwealth?

The work of the committee falls naturally into two divisions, one the local situation within Beth Israel with which we shall deal first, and then the national situation. They are interlocked and overlapping. But we had to face our own situation first, and at once. It was the great emancipator who said that "a nation cannot endure half-slave and half-free." It is equally axiomatic that a congregation cannot endure and attain for its membership the highest spiritual aspirations, "half-traditional and half-reform." We had many members of the congregation who came into it with no definite concept of Reform Judaism. Some came for the religious

education of their children but retained their main religious affiliations with either an Orthodox or Conservative congregation. Others came for family reasons of some nature; but there was no gainsaying the fact that we did have within the congregation a substantial number of members who had divided loyalties in Jewish religious interpretations. Our own policies had been responsible for this condition, because a few years ago, Beth Israel discontinued accepting on a "tuition" basis, all children of non-members for religious school instruction, and "required" membership, that freely conferred voting privileges upon both the husband and wife, parents of such children. In this manner, we, ourselves, forced membership upon many conservative Jews. We were now confronted with the dilemma of meeting the situation. Our congregation, being the only Reform Congregation in the city, has felt a sense of community responsibility to fill the requirements of all who desired to use our religious facilities. If the previous "membership" policy be continued unchanged, it offered the probability of further disunity and a final complete change from the Reform character of our religious institution. This had happened in other rapidly growing cities like Houston.

Our study indicated that the bylaws offered no solution to the problem. Strange as it may now seem, Beth Israel bylaws do not confine membership to Jews. The charter or the bylaws do not even dedicate the efforts of the congregation towards the promotion of Judaism. We are organized solely "for public worship." At any annual meeting, and without prior notice, a minority number of the members of the Congregation, attending such meeting, could change the ritual, the form of worship or even dispose of the physical properties of the congregation. There is nothing in the bylaws to safeguard or to prevent such a possibility. In all congregations, the influx of new members takes place just before the New Year Holy Day. There was not sufficient time between August 13th (the date of our appointment) and September 30th (New Year's day) to propose a change in bylaws to meet the revealed situation, assuming that bylaw changes might be the best remedy. Applications for membership were on file with the secretary. Primarily, there was an educational task ahead, the task of informing present members and future applicants

regarding the fundamentals of American Reform Judaism. This was not now an easy task because of the confusion even among the Rabbis themselves, arising from the accent lately upon the political rather than upon the religious nature of the Jewish people. We were unwilling to allow the situation to remain in status quo, or to recommend to the Trustees, further acceptance of a large number of new members, upon any other basis than a knowledge of the underlying principles of American Reform Judaism, as understood by a majority of the members of Beth Israel, and an adherence thereto.

The recommendation by our committee that we restate our Basic Principles and make them a part of the application for membership naturally and logically followed. There is nothing new in the principles. We did not "write" them but merely restated what has been the accepted cardinal and underlying basic principles of American Reform Judaism. We simplified, reworded and regrouped the classic statements of the Philadelphia (1869) and the Pittsburg (1885) statement of principles. Dr. Isaac M. Wise presided at Pittsburg and Dr. Kaufmann Kohler says that Dr. Wise "hailed the Pittsburg platform as a 'Jewish-American declaration of independence'" ("American Judaism," Kaufmann Kohler, page 205, "Hebrew Union College and other Addresses").

We are not responsible for the misrepresentations and distortions regarding our actions and the effect of the basic principles. We prepared literature fully explaining them and stated the source of the material. As an exhibit to this report we attach such material to be placed in the permanent archives of this congregation. It might be well to state again in this report that nothing which we have recommended and nothing which the trustees or the congregation have done affects any present member of the congregation, those who were members on November 23rd, 1943. If they disagree they have full voice and voting power to speak and act as a "loyal opposition." All misrepresentations to the contrary, we do not bar Kosher-observing Jews from voting membership, nor even nationalists or political Zionists, unless their views arise from a *religious* conviction signifying an adherence to the traditional or orthodox interpretation of Judaism. We have established no creed for membership. We have created

no so-called "second-class" members. We have kept the sanctuary open to all. We have reserved voting membership in the future to applicants who know the principles of Reform, and knowing, want to join this Reform Congregation to uphold and extend them. Other Reform Congregations have met the situation in other ways. We may some day find a better way, possibly through an amendment to the bylaws. The Basic Principles as now accepted are not the last word. They have been the recipient of high praise from rabbis and laymen whose opinions we respect. When and if further study or developments suggest or require changes, certainly trustees and officers will so recommend to the congregation. In the meanwhile, misrepresentation, abuse, vilification, vituperation from within or without can only do harm to those individuals, organizations and periodicals which so indulge. These principles were written for our own local congregation. We did not circulate them until we felt impelled to do so in order to try to meet untruth and misrepresentation with truth, and then we confined the circulation to the selected representatives of American Reform congregations.

And, so we turn in this report to the national scene. The officers and trustees of the congregation have been unwilling to merely act as a "finance" committee but have taken a keen interest in the religious life of the congregation and in the religious trends of American Reform Judaism as a whole. We have been concerned with the lack of progress of the movement in America, where democratic ideals and institutions should make the United States a fertile field for reform development. We have been concerned with the deviation, dereliction and retrogression which our leaders "first endured and then embraced." We fail to understand many things; one, why there are only 50,000 Jewish families affiliated with Reform Congregations, out of 1,000,000 families in the United States, and we do not accept the blase excuse of our leaders that the conservative congregations are "Reform Congregations" and that in the future there will be a "merger"—some rabbis and laymen saying, as per exhibits attached, the merger will be upon the basis of surrender of radical reform while others say it will be upon a reform basis. We note that the present tendency of our national leadership is to attempt to "seek our

brethren" by abandoning the principles of Reform. We note the abandonment of the inscription on the banner of American Judaism—"reform" and the substitution of the word "liberal," which characterizes other segments of Jewry as being illiberal. Dr. Kaufmann Kohler states that the word "liberal" is vague "and implies laxity" and states that the whole modern movement rests upon the principles of "reform and progress" which the word "liberal" fails "to accentuate." We note with more than passing interest the speech delivered by Rabbi R. Benedict Glazer before the 1940 CCAR. Here is a short significant excerpt:

"... the number of Jewish families connected with Reform congregations today is perceptibly less than 61,609 families who were affiliated with them in the peak year of 1930. . . . In the metropolitan area of New York at the present time . . . there are only 6,516 families affiliated with Reform temples. . . . For a long time it has been noted that the Reform rabbinate is *almost exclusively* composed of the offspring of eastern European immigrants . . . it was inevitable that these circumstances should modify or change some of the old practices and ideologies of Reform Judaism. As a result, the anti-Zionist bias of the CCAR has largely disappeared . . . there is evidence of a return to many of the rites and ceremonies of Judaism which had been abandoned . . . the rabbis of some reform congregations in the East have been so influenced by the Orthodox backgrounds of the people in their synagogues and neighborhood that they have returned to the old practice of investing themselves with the skull cap and *talith* . . . at religious services. It is evident that ultimately many external differences among the three major Jewish religious groups of the United States will disappear. This tendency will generate *repercussions* in the near future, particularly in the north-eastern part of the U. S., where the merger of Reform and Conservative congregations, has been seriously considered in some communities . . ." (Year Book, CCAR, Vol. I.)

We read with mounting interest the article on "Reform and Orthodoxy Akin" by Rabbi Bernard Heller in "Liberal Judaism" (January, 1944) when he recounts:

"... the notion of *supposed* conflict between the two (Reform and Orthodoxy) stems mainly from organizational distinction and theological differences that have little or no basic significance . . . peruse the papers *lately* delivered at the annual sessions of the CCAR. Pleas for greater respect for tradition and an *advocacy* of the use of *more* Hebrew and Jewish ceremonials are recurrent notes at *every* convention. A demand was even made for the formulation and adoption of a code of *prescribed disciplines* for devotees of Liberal Judaism—a code which would be a sort of modernized Shulchan Aruch" (Solomon B. Freehof, "A Code of Ceremonial and Ritual Practices," C.C.A.R. Year Book, Vol. LI, pp. 289-298).

and we have to turn to the speech of Dr. Kaufmann Kohler on "Ameri-

can Judaism" for consolation. He certainly did not expect disciples of his to be the *champions* of deviation and surrender and retrogression. This masterly address delivered in 1911 to the delegates to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations should be read by the officers and trustees of the UAHC, the CCAR, and the Hebrew Union College of which he was then the president. A short excerpt reads:

"... love for truth... bade our reform pioneers to liberate Judaism from the prison-house of the Shulchan Aruch legalism in order to render it a source of life again for those who come after us... there is no room for Ghetto Judaism in America... reform became the savior of Judaism in America... Isaac M. Wise was the master-builder of American Judaism. Americanization of the Jew was his watchword and guiding motive... Dr. Wise said 'there is but one progressive American Israel and one Judaism constituting *neither a race nor a nation but a religious denomination*.' Will this Judaism of ours assume a different aspect amidst the constant influx of new elements of Jewry, bringing along different views and traditions, which tend to lead *backwards* instead of forward, which instead of Americanizing the Jew, threatens to Orientalize him? I, for one, have too much confidence in our blessed land and its institutions to fear for the future... the American Jew and American Judaism will not be Russianized, Hebraized or Orientalized by visionary idealists... all the greater is the task of the UAHC and the Hebrew Union College as guardian and banner-bearer of progressive Judaism..." (pp. 198-211 Kaufmann Kohler, HUC and other addresses.)

Congregation Beth Israel is a member of the UAHC. It makes substantial annual contributions to the Union's support, a considerable portion of which goes to maintain the Hebrew Union College. It looks to the Central Conference of American Rabbis for its leadership. It has an important and vital interest in what these organizations say and do. It has the *right* and the *duty* to challenge and protest policies, trends and acts when, in its judgment, these acts, trends and policies compromise or surrender fundamental and necessary concepts of the interpretation of the faith which we strive to uphold and to teach and extend. And, therefore, we recommended to the trustees, a certain resolution, copies of which were sent to all members, and which the congregation approved. A copy is attached. This resolution challenged acts and policies of the UAHC, the CCAR and the HUC. We have received replies from the president of the CCAR and the UAHC—evasive, inconclusive and unsatisfactory. Like the little boy emerging from the pantry with his face smeared with jam, denial of the

acts charged was useless. An excuse is the only alternative. An answer has been prepared by this committee to the "reply" of Rabbi Freehof, who stated that "it is debatable" whether the CCAR has abandoned essential principles and then closes his letter with a plea "to close the debate." A reply will be prepared to the UAHC letter, which was signed by the executive officers of the agencies which we had charged with the deviations and dereliction. They constituted themselves the judge and the jury to pass upon their own innocence or guilt. The final verdict, however, will be rendered by the lay leaders of American Reform Judaism. We have received much commendation and approval and it is not saying too much to assert that we have been forced into a position of leadership in the effort to save Reform Judaism in America. No written reply has been received from the Hebrew Union College, but Dr. Julian Morgenstern visited Houston on January 25, 1944, to meet with the Trustees. The meeting was harmonious and we gave assurances that we had no plans for withdrawal from the UAHC; that we were asserting our right to disagree with policies within the organization of which we were active, contributing and supporting members.

It is interesting to note in connection with the HUC that one of our complaints was the failure to "provide a more thorough course designed to provide an understanding of the history and ideology of Reform Judaism itself;" and that the November, 1943 college "Bulletin" announces "an orientation course in Judaism devoted primarily to a discussion of the contemporary ideals and problems from the standpoint of Reform;" that in the collegiate department Dr. Cohen "is now offering a new course in the History of Reform Judaism." It is significant to note that the HUC, opened in 1875, as a training school for Reform rabbis has finally gotten around in 1943—68 years later—to placing in its curriculum an adequate teaching course in the Reform interpretation of Judaism! We are encouraged.

Time and space prevent our report's going into the protests regarding text-books, the Jewish Army and "compatibility" resolutions; and the attempt to harness American Reform Judaism to the American Jewish Conference's political Zionist program. We suggest that the bibliograph-

ical exhibits of letters, speeches, resolutions, etc., chronologically arranged, be kept permanently as a part of the records of the congregation.

We cannot refrain, however, from stressing one point with regard to the unhappy episode connected with the recent efforts of the political Zionists under the leadership of "reform" rabbis to place all of American Jewry behind the move to get an expression from Congress as to a future Jewish Commonwealth. The effort failed. It did not do political Zionism any good but it did do the American Jew incalculable harm. In the midst of a war not yet won, it is an unpleasant spectacle to see Americans of Jewish faith demanding the passage of national legislation which is opposed by the Secretary of War, the Secretary of State, and the Chief of Staff of the armies of the United States, and whose protests are later upheld by the president of the United States, particularly when the opposition is based on "military" grounds. The one point which we wish to stress is that the leaders of the American Jewish Conference who sponsored this resolution did not speak for Beth Israel Congregation, notwithstanding the fact that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, of which we are members, has remained a member of the Conference, over our protest. Despite the fence-straddling action of the UAHC executive committee, which a southern religious periodical criticizes severely under a title of "In Union—There Is Misrepresentation" the fact is that "Adolph Rosenberg, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, has accepted co-option as a member of the Interim Committee of the American Jewish Conference" (Conference Record, March, 1944). A "neutral" position, indeed!

We appreciate the confidence of the Trustees and the Congregation itself. There is a keen sense of satisfaction in the efforts of this committee when we recall that there are more than two hundred husbands, fathers, sons and brothers from this congregation, now in the armed services of the United States, who expect the character and ideologies of this congregation to remain as they were when they departed from Houston.

Beth Israel to them was an American Reform Congregation. They are at the far corners of the earth fighting under the stars and stripes. They know no divided loyalties. If there is to be any change in the essential character of their congregation they are entitled to have a part in determining such change. If we continue to receive the support of the congregation, and we confidently expect that we will have such support, it is our firm resolve that there will be no change during their absence in the ideologies, emphasis, or forms of Reform Judaism in this congregation as they understood and accepted it; and that they will return to an American Reform Congregation, dedicated to the teachings of the universalistic, prophetic interpretation of Judaism, as outlined by Einhorn, Hirsch, Geiger, Holdheim, Isaac M. Wise and Kaufmann Kohler.

Isaac M. Wise stated that "the Pittsburgh platform of principles was the Jewish-American Declaration of Independence." Following that parallel, the triumph of these principles embodied in the "Basic Principles" of Beth Israel at the November 23rd, 1943, meeting of the congregation, may well be called the "Battle of Gettysburg." As that battle in 1863 saved the Union, it is our hope that our action in regard to the principles and the resolutions in 1943 may also save two other "unions"—the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College. We have undoubtedly awakened the Americans of Jewish faith, who believe in American Reform Judaism, to the trends, policies and acts that, in our judgment, threaten the influence, the prestige, nay, the very life itself of American Reform Judaism.

Respectfully submitted,



Chairman.

RITUAL AND MUSIC COMMITTEE REPORT

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
Congregation Beth Israel,
Houston, Texas.

Gentlemen:

The Committee on Ritual and Music has always served in an advisory capacity. We wish to report that, for the year 1943-1944, the Committee was delegated authority and took responsibility for all of the details in connection with the joint ceremony honoring Rabbi Barnston and Rabbi Schachtel on the evening of November 12th, 1943. We have heretofore tendered to the Congregation, for its archives, a copy of the printed program for that evening, signed by all of those who participated.

This Committee was empowered to, and did, secure Rabbi Saul B. Appelbaum, who served the Congregation as assistant to Rabbi Barnston for the period September 15th, 1943, to November 1st, 1943.

Last year, your Committee on Ritual and Music made certain recommendations which the Board saw fit to accept and, on a trial basis, services were held on various days and at various hours during this year. Sunday Forum Religious services were conducted on Sunday mornings for the period January-March, 1944.

This Committee now recommends that the Forum services be held on Wednesday evenings at 8:15, during the coming Congregational year and for the period November-April. This recommendation is made in the hope that more members of the Congregation will be able to avail themselves of a Temple program which, in addition to providing brief mid-week prayers, will provide a culturally interesting and informative symposium.



GEO. S. COHEN

At the suggestion of Rabbi Schachtel, Friday evening services include the lighting of Sabbath candles by a member of the Temple Sisterhood and the Kiddush ceremony, blessing the cup of wine, by the Rabbi.

The Committee has attempted to honor fathers of men in the armed services, by inviting them to sit on the pulpit when their sons could be present to receive the Rabbinical blessing, which has become a part of our present services.

The Temple Brotherhood took charge of services during the year when Rabbis were on leave. The Brotherhood provided lay readers and lecturers from among its members and members of the Congregation, who volunteered their services, and we feel that this organization and all who participated are entitled to the grateful thanks of the Congregation.

Members of the Youth Choir contributed their services on Friday nights during the last Summer and provided a Choir on Sunday mornings from October 17th, 1943, through January 2nd, 1944. This organization is also entitled to the commendation and thanks of the Congregation.

The budget of the Committee on Ritual and Music was exceeded this year. This was due, however, to the increased number of services conducted and the special occasions provided for during the year.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Geo. S. Cohen". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Chairman.



CONGREGATIONAL SEDER—1944

Seder held at Abe M. Levy Memorial Community Hall on April 7, 1944. The hall was filled to capacity. Rabbi Schachtel presided, and Officers and Members of the Board participated in the reading of the Services and Ritual.



INDUCTION SERVICES

The Ceremony of November 12, 1943, commemorating the retirement of Dr. Henry Barnston as Emeritus and the induction of Hyman Judah Schachtel as Chief Rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel was unique in the annals of our own community as well as in the history of the Jewish community of the south.

For forty-four years the elder Rabbi had occupied the same pulpit and those who could recall his coming to Houston and to Beth Israel were few indeed. Then, too, his impressive withdrawal from active duty, amidst the acclaim not only of his own congregants but also that of the leaders of the local clergy of all denominations, was an uncommon event that will be remembered throughout the lives of all who shared in the festivities of the occasion.

It was most assuredly a source of self-satisfaction to Dr. Barnston to observe the sincerity and emotion with which the tributes to his accomplishments and attainments in the community were expressed by his colleagues, Reverend Harry G. Knowles, Pastor, First Christian Church, Reverend Paul W. Quillian, Pastor, First Methodist Church; Bishop Clinton S. Quin of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas; and Reverend Charles L. King, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, as well as by the lay participants in the Ceremony. In such an atmosphere Dr. Barnston was ushered into his retirement and a life of ease and comfort made possible by the unanimity of grateful co-religionists, and to the accompaniment of the blessings of a host of friends from all walks of life.

Rabbi Schachtel must have experienced great personal pride in the realization of the fact that from all available potential occupants of our pulpit, he was honored by the call from our distinguished Congregation; and then, too, in the call Rabbi Schachtel had been advised unequivocally by a most discriminating Committee representing the Board of Trustees

of Beth Israel that of all persons considered as successor to Dr. Barnston, he was considered first and foremost as the religionist with the background, culture, ideals and experience necessary to carry on successfully the traditions of our Congregation.

In consideration of the fact that Beth Israel is the largest Congregation in the South and is destined to become one of the ranking Congregations of the nation, measured by any standards, and most certainly in respect to number of members and in relation to its character of American Reform leadership, Rabbi Schachtel could well beam with pride upon the occasion of his induction.

The depth of feeling and affection expressed in the innumerable messages of good wishes and congratulations to Rabbi Schachtel, and as read by the Chairman of Ceremonies, gave evidence of the magnificent record made by Rabbi Schachtel at West End Synagogue, New York City. The chronicle of his achievements thus conveyed to the Congregation served not only to reassure the new incumbent that he had come into our midst with the blessing of those whom he had served for twelve years, but also to substantiate the magnificent recommendation that had accompanied the presentation of his good name to the Membership of the Congregation by the Board of Trustees.

The first notable impression made by Rabbi Schachtel upon the occasion of his induction has been sustained and during the very few months it has been our privilege to claim the new Rabbi as our own, he has not only imbued us with his own ebullient spirit of progressive reform, but has inspired and encouraged us in our pursuit of the principles and policies, conceived of by us as inherent in American Reform Judaism, and as adopted by our Board of Trustees prior to his acceptance of our call.



Congregation Beth Israel
1000 W. 10th St., Kansas City, Mo.

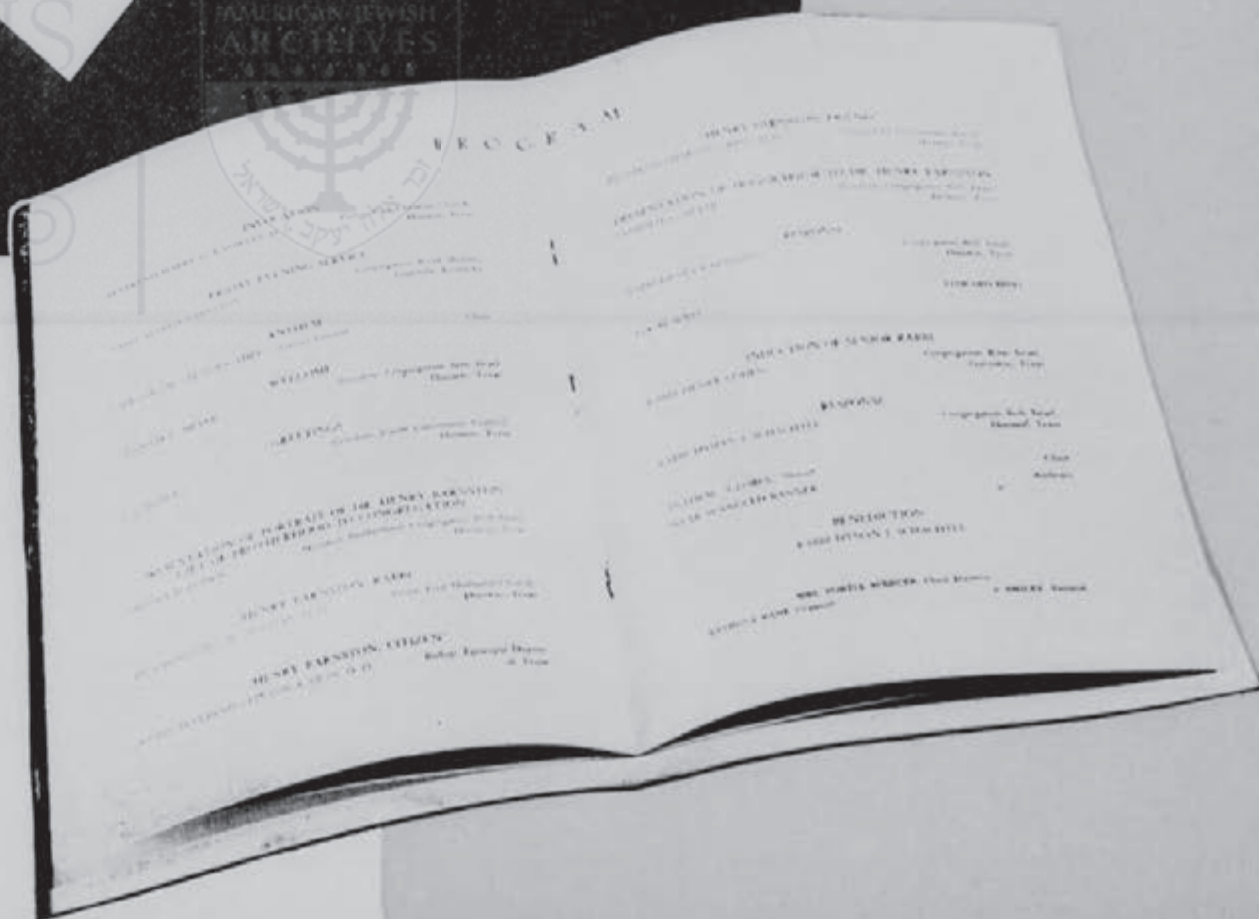
Rabbi Henry Barnston
and
Rabbi Hyman J. Schachtel

PAUL QUILLIAN
SECRETARY



Left to right, front row, Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel, Rabbi Henry Cohen, Dr. Henry Barnston, Rabbi Alfred Barnston; second row, left to right, Dr. Charles L. King, Dr. Harry Knowles, Dr. Paul Quillian, Leopold L. Meyer, and Bishop Clinton S. Quin.

BETH ISRAEL HONORS RABBI HENRY BARNSTON AND RABBI HYMAN JUDAH SCHACHTEL



COMMUNAL ACTIVITIES AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
Congregation Beth Israel,
Houston, Texas.

Gentlemen:

Your Committee is pleased to report that the year 1943-44 has been an interesting one.

Every conceivable effort has been made to provide proper coverage on all events of interest, regardless of comparative importance, but the publicity in connection with the ceremonies attendant upon the Retirement of Dr. Barnston and the Induction of Rabbi Schachtel highlighted your Committee's activity during the year.

The newspaper coverage on this brilliant affair was excellent. In all, in excess of ten thousand lines were devoted to this important function, in the Houston papers. All local news releases were accompanied by pictures of the principals involved, and stories concerning this event were released to wire services, as well as to the outstanding Jewish publications throughout the United States.

The Communal Activities and Public Relations Committee is pleased with this opportunity to acknowledge the wonderful cooperation accorded by the three local daily newspapers, and to extend its grateful thanks to them.

Respectfully submitted,



Chairman.



J. H. BUTLER

SPECIAL TEMPLE FUND COMMITTEE REPORT

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
Congregation Beth Israel,
Houston, Texas.

Gentlemen:

It is the Special Temple Fund Committee's pleasure to advise that thus far in the drive for a \$150,000.00 "Work Pile" fund we have met with a ready appreciation of the need and wisdom of raising such a fund.

The fund has now reached the total sum of \$41,270.00, subscribed by only 77 donors thus far contacted.

Viewed from the standpoint of the length of time that the matter has been under discussion and the Committee in existence, it might seem that the results thus far obtained are disappointing. When, however, it is considered that the Committee was not fully organized and that the drive was not under way until the middle of December, the busiest season of the year for solicitors and solicited alike; and that your Committee in the interim encountered competition in the form of a seventeen billion dollar Government Loan, a Red Cross Drive, and a United Jewish Campaign, the result is gratifying.

Your Committee is at work mapping out a campaign solicitation that it hopes will make it possible for it to report, at an early date, the successful conclusion of the drive.

We said at the outset of the campaign, "It can be done! It should be done!" We now add, "It will be done!"

Respectfully submitted,



Chairman.



SIMON SAKOWITZ

MAINTENANCE OF BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE REPORT

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
Congregation Beth Israel,
Houston, Texas.

Gentlemen:

I am submitting herein my report of the year's expenditures for the Maintenance of Building and Grounds during the year 1943-44.

A budget of \$3,500.00 was set up for the purposes of this Committee, which budget has been exceeded by \$739.91. The excess expenditures referred to came about as a result of the rearrangement of the Congregation's Executive Offices and of the Rabbi's study, both located in the Abe M. Levy Memorial Community Hall, in addition to other miscellaneous minor repairs.

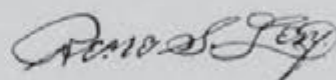
The total amount expended was \$5,165.91. From this amount must be deducted two items: (1) Storm-insurance recovery of \$676.00; and (2) \$250.00 interest received from the bequest of Miss Harriet Levy. By deducting the two above amounts, the net disbursements are reduced to \$4,239.91.

At first glance, it would appear that these expenditures were excessive, but when the nature of the improvements which were made in the Abe M. Levy Memorial Community Hall, and the effectiveness thereof, are taken into consideration, your Committee is of the opinion that the money was invested rather than spent.

Your Committee is requesting that an amount of not less than \$1,500.00 be included in the 1944-45 Budget, in order that the Building and Grounds may be maintained, as usual, in a highly satisfactory condition.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the members of my Committee for their cooperation, and to make special mention of the splendid efforts and labors put forth by Mr. Albert Meyerson.

Respectfully submitted,



Chairman.

ACTIVITIES AND USES OF BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE REPORT

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
Congregation Beth Israel,
Houston, Texas.

Gentlemen:

The Committee on Activities and Uses of Buildings and Grounds takes pleasure in advising you that Abe M. Levy Memorial Community Hall was used 246 times for major events, detailed as follows:

217 Meetings	1 Brotherhood Dance
3 Receptions	1 Purim Party
13 Luncheons	1 Children's Seder
1 Tea	1 Congregational Seder
6 Book Reviews	1 Confirmants' Dance
1 Chanukah Party	

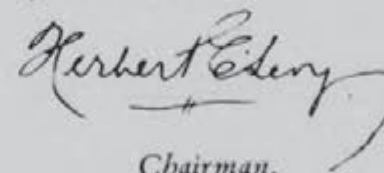
The Hall was used on the High Holidays to accommodate a large overflow of worshipers, with a special Rabbi and Choir. It was also used for several occasions of other than a religious nature, namely, a Mother's Day Program, a Special Meeting, and a Wedding.

By comparison with normal years, the foregoing reflects no remarkable record for usage; but everything considered, the service record is rather impressive.

Last year, lack of adequate help made it necessary to restrict the use of our facilities to one night each week, and we have had to continue to operate in this manner. We find when this rule is relaxed, it is always at the expense of badly needed attention to the Buildings and Grounds which cannot be currently provided. It is, therefore, your Committee's conviction that the best interests of the Congregation will be served by a continuance of the "one night a week" rule.

Your Committee deems it a privilege and a pleasure to serve the Congregation.

Respectfully submitted,



Chairman.

EDUCATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORT

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
Congregation Beth Israel,
Houston, Texas.

Gentlemen:

The past year's operations of the Religious School has been fraught with difficulties attendant upon the wartime situation and a number of changes, including that of Rabbi, Sunday School Superintendent and a number of members of the Staff. The enlargement of the Temple offices also made necessary some altered arrangement in the housing of the school classes.



Confirmation Class of 1944

Under the circumstances, it is generally felt that creditable work has been accomplished and we are particularly obligated to Rabbi Schachtel and to Mr. Jerome Meyer, who assumed the duties this year as Superintendent of the Sabbath School. To them and the members of our Committee, as well as to the Faculty, who have labored diligently for the upbuilding of our School, we express our sincere appreciation.

Since January 1, 1944, our School has operated on a new schedule, giving us weekly sessions which total two and one-half hours, and while there are certain phases of this yet to be improved upon, it is our conviction that the additional time available for instruction will ultimately result in an improvement of our already high standard.

An unwarranted amount of confusion has attended special advancement of certain students into the Confirmation Class, with permission to skip the Pre-Confirmation Class due to the fact that a student might otherwise be confirmed from the Sabbath School and graduated from public High School in the same term or possibly involving the prospect of a student going away to college. Such special advancements will be discontinued in the future.

The recent organization of a Parent-Teachers Association has been effected. This organization will serve as an advisory body to cooperate with the Religious School Committee and the Staff. Our experience indicates that it is not possible for us to increase the standing of the school, to improve its decorum or to achieve the ends which we seek unless we have a higher degree of cooperation and assistance from the parents of our Sabbath School children.

It is our purpose during the summer to build up a curriculum, using



Sunday School Seder 1944

improved texts where available, and to augment our Staff for the coming year. Members of our Congregation having the capacity to teach in our Sabbath School must permit us to avail ourselves of their services. We feel it is not reasonable to let every other form of civic activity interfere with one's capacity for service to our Sabbath school children.

The prime purpose of our Religious School is to impart the proper spiritual, cultural and religious concepts to the children of our members,

and our members should certainly accord the school every cooperation, which can best be done by their own precept and example.

Respectfully submitted,

M. H. Dammann

Chairman.

CEMETERY COMMITTEE REPORT

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
Congregation Beth Israel,
Houston, Texas.

Gentlemen:

It is our pleasure to submit to you our Annual Report on the state of our Cemetery and Mausoleum.

Since our last Annual Report, sales of Crypts in the Mausoleum amounted to \$4,500.00; the sale of one lot and four graves in the Cemetery amounted to \$1,800.00; making the total sales for Crypts and Lots, \$6,300.00. For the same period we sold Perpetual Care Contracts for two Lots in the Cemetery in the sum of \$500.00 each, making the grand total of cash receipts from sales, \$7,300.00.

The Perpetual Care Fund has now reached the total of \$22,500.00, while our obligation on the Mausoleum has been reduced to \$9,000.00.

We are faced with the problem of rapid exhaustion of space in the Mausoleum as well as in the Cemetery.

In the Cemetery, we have left only one full lot, one half-lot, and about twenty single graves in various locations.

In the Mausoleum, the situation is practically the same. Our inventory shows that in the Chapel we have only five Crypts for family use and eight single Crypts; in the Corridors, twenty-eight double Crypts, nine single Crypts, and five private rooms, three of which are in the Chapel, and one in each of the two Corridors.

It is our recommendation to the members of our Congregation who have not yet made provision for their final resting place, that they give the matter early and earnest consideration, so that they may make a choice of space while there is still a fairly wide range of locations available.

It is our further recommendation to the Board that it start planning immediately for an additional unit to our Mausoleum, as originally contemplated when the Mausoleum was built. This unit should be added as soon as the war is over and we are able to do so out of funds that are now being raised, or which may be available from contributions or loans at a later date, for improvements to our Temple properties generally.

We submit and recommend for adoption the following Budget for the new fiscal year:

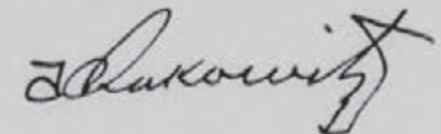
Wages	\$3,250.00
Maintenance Expense	800.00
Reduction of Obligation	1,500.00
Interest on Obligation	270.00
	<hr/>
	\$5,820.00

You should know that Cemetery dues assessed for upkeep purposes amount to only \$1,900.00 a year. Income from past dues is between \$400.00 and \$500.00 a year, thus giving us a total income from dues of about \$2,400.00 a year.

Salaries and maintenance expenses at the present time amount to \$4,000.00 a year. Clearly, income is running short of expenditures between \$1,500.00 and \$1,600.00 a year. It is for this reason that we must urge the Board of the Congregation to provide in the 1944-45 Budget of the Congregation for the sum of \$1,500.00 to subsidize upkeep of the Cemetery for the ensuing year. Until such time as the income from our Perpetual Care Fund will be sufficient to cover maintenance of the Cemetery, this will be necessary.

We have been able to keep our employment situation fairly well in hand, and our Cemetery and Mausoleum are kept up in excellent condition, for which a great deal of credit must go to the ladies on the Committee, especially Mrs. J. H. Butler and Mrs. Louis Silver. We wish to take this occasion to thank them, as well as Mr. Ike L. Freed, the Vice-Chairman, for their splendid aid in the management of our Cemetery during the past year.

Respectfully submitted,



Chairman.

BETH ISRAEL MAUSOLEUM

Erected in 1939

It is Jewish in inspiration, execution and administration, and dedicated to the discharge of one of the most ancient and sacred obligations of our people.

The architecture is in accordance with the best Jewish tradition.

It is handsomely finished in marble in pleasingly blended hues. Stained glass windows light the large airy corridors. The high suspended ceiling has been given unusual treatment; the lighting arrangement is most unique. The construction is of reinforced concrete, granite and marble. Impressive as to exterior—and with every modern interior feature that makes for convenience, comfort and cheerfulness for visiting friends and relatives of the departed—this magnificent sanctuary is deeply expressive of the hallowed purpose for which it is designed.

In due time the Mausoleum, according to the original plans, will be enlarged by the addition of two spacious wings which will not only meet the practical needs of the Congregation but will contribute notably to the magnificence of this already imposing resting place.



Section of chapel showing private family rooms



Section of corridor showing single, companion and double crypts



Entrance and exterior view of Mausoleum

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
Congregation Beth Israel,
Houston, Texas.

Gentlemen:

The exhaustive message of the President and reports of the Treasurer and Chairmen of the Various Committees are so complete as a picture of a highly successful year that it would seem that there is little or no comment required of me. Yet, just what made success possible in this most unusual year does not readily appear in type.

The most significant contributing factor in this story I believe to be the extraordinary abilities, courage, boundless energy, love of the religion and its sanctuary, and devout devotion to the discharge of responsibility to these ideals and institutions, on the part of Mr. Leopold L. Meyer, the President, and the Officers and Trustees of the Congregation.

In the 10 months from July to April of our current year, the Officers and Board met in 16 separate meetings, 10 of which were regular meetings and 6 of which were special meetings. The average percentage of Board members in attendance at Board meetings during the year was exceedingly high, and 100 per cent attendance was not at all an uncommon occurrence.

In attempting to estimate the labors of the Officers and Trustees it should be taken into account that one of them is Chairman of each of the 13 standing committees, and that from 1 to 4 of them are on each of the 13 standing committees.

Another noteworthy factor to be taken into account in appraising the year's accomplishments is the earnestness and zeal with which the 84 members of the Congregation, other than Board members, accepted and discharged their committee assignments.

Tribute should be paid to the high intelligence and character generally of the ladies and gentlemen forming the membership body as a whole. To the Executive Secretary, charged with the duty of collecting dues and meeting the Congregation's financial obligations as they mature, dues paying habits of members is naturally an important consideration as



C. M. WUNDERMAN
Executive Secretary

an index in appraising the value of a member. In this regard we have in this past ten months an exceptionally fine record, achieved by the simple and dignified method of the issuance of monthly statements. The following figures tell the story most effectively:

On July 5, 1943, the beginning of the present fiscal year	
Dues receivable amounted to	\$46,553.70
Up to and including April 30, 1944	
Dues from new members	\$3,844.00
Voluntary increase in dues	791.60 4,635.60
Total	\$51,189.30
Loss of revenue (adjustments in assessments)	\$ 3,225.83
Net dues receivable	47,963.47
Collections to April 1	45,694.67
Balance Outstanding	2,268.80

It may be expected that with remittances for May and June, this balance will be further reduced to set an all time minimum for dues carried over.

Sincere appreciation must be expressed for the services of the loyal, able and efficient office staff of the Congregation, Mrs. Rose Brilling, Mrs. A. S. Baer and Mrs. Irving Gross. The care of buildings and grounds, as for more than thirty years, was in charge of capable and faithful George Fields and his assistants.

I wish to emphasize that I greatly appreciated the cooperation accorded me this past year by the Rabbis, the President, Mr. Leopold L. Meyer, his secretary, Mrs. Alice Hatcher Baraz, and by Mr. Robert Barrett of the Rein Company for his patience and invaluable aid rendered in connection with the lay-out and the arrangement of the annual.

Respectfully submitted,

Executive Secretary.



Office of Rabbi Schachtel



Office of the Executive Secretary



*Office of Assistant Secretary of
Congregation and Secretary to
Rabbi Schachtel*



ABE M. LEVY



HARRIET LEVY



HASKEL LEVY

If Congregation Beth Israel has attained the unusual, its place in the sun must be attributed to the character of service—labor of love—diligently rendered by our co-religionists, Board members as well as rank and file, throughout Beth Israel's impressive history.

We are glad for this opportunity to express a word of gratitude for the constructive services rendered in years gone by, on behalf of the Congregation, by such good men as Sam Lewis, Emil Lipper, Jules Hirsch, Felix Halff, Louis M. Rich, Henry Fox, Solomon Rosenfield, Hyman Prince, Judge Henry J. Dannenbaum, Isadore Hirsch, Sol. M. Colman, Leon and Jonas Levy, M. N. Davidson, Ben Asher, Charles D. Wolf, and Sol Schoenmann. Innumerable others could well be named.

It is, however, somewhat disappointing to note how few persons within our Congregation have been moved over the years to discharge more than the simple obligation of membership, *financially*. This fact is not to be

accounted for by negative influences such as apathy towards Congregational affairs, uncharitableness, and so on; it is perhaps chargeable more accurately to the failure of persons qualified for the assignment, to arouse within those favored with an abundance of material wealth, an appreciation of the proportions of the happiness that would ensue for them from investing a share of their means in those local institutions, dedicated to the enlightenment and improvement of their co-religionists.

The one outstanding example of devotion to Beth Israel spiritually as well as materially is embodied in the Levy Family.

It is very probable that over the past twenty years the thought has been recurrent in the mind of some one or another of the older members of the Congregation that a formal memorialization of the benefactions of the Levys would be in order. Despite the fact that such did not come to pass, there has never been any question as to the degree of the appreciation in the

hearts of our co-religionists for the innumerable contributions made by the Levys to the community at large—in public service as well as by the financial support of worthy civic, cultural, welfare and charitable institutions—and as a result of which much good has redounded upon the Jews of Houston as a whole. Furthermore, there is no doubt that all who have worshipped in Temple Beth Israel and have enjoyed its facilities, have been at least subconsciously mindful of the fact that the ground upon which that Temple stands was the gift of Messrs. Abe and Haskel and Miss Harriet Levy; and that "Miss Harriet" and "Mr. Haskel" supplied the funds for the construction of the Abe M. Levy Memorial Community Hall, and that Miss Harriet, the last surviving member of her family, as her final gracious act, left \$10,000.00 for the maintenance of the Community Hall.

The Community House, as this structure is affectionately referred to, serving more particularly for the accommodation of the Religious School, although dedicated in the name of one of the beloved brothers, was conceived of and contemplated more generally as a Memorial to all the departed members of the family whose names are inscribed upon the dedication plaque: Morris H. Levy, Adelen J. Levy, Isaac S. Levy, Abe M. Levy, Leo Levy, Joseph Levy, Fanny L. Goldman, Hyman Levy.

In deference to the two members of the Levy Family whom we thank for the Community House especially, it must be observed that the gift was visualized more particularly as an answer to a definite need of the Congregation than as a monument to their dear ones and to themselves. The gift itself must be appraised in relation to the practical purposes it has served, namely, to make available for our children a pleasant environment for the study of the tenets of their faith and a center for social and cultural contacts for our youngsters and teen-agers. It may be reasonably concluded that without the Abe M. Levy Memorial Community Hall, Congregation Beth Israel might not have attained its present proportions in numbers or in influence, and accordingly we vouchsafe as a remembrance to those whose benevolences we have enjoyed, the preservation of those ideals to which their services and bequests were consecrated.

At this particular time there is under way a campaign for funds required for the enlargement and improvement of the Congregation's properties as deemed necessary for the accommodation of the religious and cultural advancement of our ever-growing membership. This circumstance has inspired this tribute to Beth Israel's pre-eminent benefactors of blessed memory, with the hope that it will awaken within the hearts of those members of the Congregation financially able to do so, the desire to emulate the example of the Levys and to share with them, in the future, the sincere thanks and affectionate regard not only of those of their own congregation but of the children yet to come who will be benefited by their magnanimity.

May God bless the memory of the Levy Family for the nobility of their deeds, and "whose yesterdays look backward with a smile."

ABE M. LEVY MEMORIAL COMMUNITY HALL



SALUTE . . .



Not only in our thoughts but upon our hearts are engraved the names of those loyal and patriotic Americans—the sons, brothers, husbands and sweethearts of members of Beth Israel—who, bravely and courageously are serving in the armed forces of our beloved Country. These men, who have honored the Golden Book with their good names, shall everlastingly merit our thanks and gratitude for their unselfish devotion to duty, and their deeds of valor shall be recorded for emulation by future generations and as an abundant source of pride and glory to our Congregation. For those who have made the supreme sacrifice—Asher, Bloom and Straus—we bow our heads for a moment of silent prayer, and upon them and their dear ones invoke the favor of God's choicest blessings.



In Memoriam



LT. COLMAN R. ASHER

Lt. Asher was killed in action on September 6, 1943, in the European war theatre. His brave accomplishments were recognized at recent ceremonies at Ellington Field, Texas, where awards of the Air Medal and two Oak Leaf clusters were accepted on his behalf by his wife.



LT. W. A. BLOOM, JR.

Lt. Bloom was shot down over Occupied France on November 12, 1942. The supreme sacrifice of this gallant soldier has been acknowledged by the posthumous presentation of the Order of the Purple Heart to his Mother.



ENSIGN DAVID H. STRAUS, JR.

Ensign Straus was killed in action on May 8, 1942, while serving aboard the U. S. S. Lexington. In memory of his unselfish devotion to duty, the U. S. S. Straus was launched at Houston, Texas, on Dec. 31, 1943.



ABLON, CARL S., CAPT.
ARONSON, ARNOLD B., LT.
★ ASHER, COLMAN R., LT.
BACKRACK, HAROLD, CDT.
BARNSTON, JACK D., LT.
BECKER, GALVIN MAYO, CDT.
BENDIX, LESTER D., PVT.
BERLOWITZ, J. O., JR., LT.
BLANKFIELD, HARRY A., PVT.
BLANKFIELD, JACK, LT.
BLOCK, SHELTON, S. 2/c
BLONSTEIN, DAVID, LT.
BLONSTEIN, LEON, S. 2/c
BLOOM, MANUEL G., LT.
★ BLOOM, WM. A., JR., LT.
BLUM, STANLEY, JR., PVT.
BLUMENTHAL, NORMAN A., PVT.
BRESSLER, HOWARD G., ENSIGN
BRIER, HENRY A., LT.
BROOKS, DAVID GEO., S. 1/c

BUTLER, MYRON JACK, ENSIGN
CAPLOVITZ, COLEMAN D., N.T.
CLARKE, ROBERT, C.P.O. 1/c
COGEN, WM. N., LT.
COHEN, CHESTER, MAJ.
COHEN, HYMAN, A/P S.
COHEN, MELVIN D., MAJ.
COHEN, LOUIS, SGT.
COHEN, MILTON H., PVT.
COHEN, RAYMOND, CAPT.
COHN, HAROLD, PVT.
CORMAN, JOSEPH, LT.
DESENBERG, HENRY, LT.
DOUGLAS, BERT, LT.
EPSTEIN, BEN, LT.
EPSTEIN, GUS, PVT.
EPSTEIN, ROBERT A., LT.
FINGER, LEONARD Z., LT.
FINKELSTEIN, BENNETT, PVT.
FINKELSTEIN, JOE T., PVT.

FISHMAN, RAYMOND S., LT.
FRACHTMAN, HIRSH, LT. COL.
FRANK, SIMON, CORP.
FRANKLIN, ROBERT, PVT.
FRED, HARRY, PVT.
FREEMAN, JOSEPH M., ENSIGN
FREUNDLICH, CHARLES G., CAPT.
FREUNDLICH, THOS., JR., PFC.
FRIEDMAN, LLOYD K., PVT.
FROSCH, A. L., Y. 3/c
FRUCHT, SIG., PVT.
GABERT, L. M., CAPT.
GARDNER, IRVIN B., CAPT.
GATES, JOHN J., LT. COL.
GETZ, MURREY, PVT.
GETZ, PHILLIP, PVT.
GOLDING, BERNARD M., PVT.
GOLDMAN, HARRIS, PVT.
GOLDSTEIN, ABE E., CDT.

★ Deceased



GORDON, HARRY B., MAJ.
GREENFIELD, DAVID, PVT.
HERMAN, CARL J., JR., S.K. 1/c
HESS, CARL M., LT.
HIRSHFIELD, BERT A., PVT.
HIRSHFIELD, HOWARD A., PVT.
HOFFMAN, HENRY S., LT. J.G.
HOLSTEIN, RICHARD H., LT.
HOWELL, HERBERT R., PVT.
JACOB, MATTHEW, CDT.
JACOBS, LOUIS K., LT.
JONES, DAVID A., PVT.
JOSEPH, ALBERT J., PVT.
JURAN, DAN, M/S
KAHN, ROBERT I., CAPT.
KAPLAN, CHARLES I., A/S
KAPNER, CHARLES M., JR., A/S
KAUFMAN, ALBERT A., LT. COL.
KAY, BERNARD, PVT.
KESSLER, PAUL A., SGT.
KLEIN, EDWARD J., LT.
KLEIN, PERRY, CAPT.
KLEINMAN, M., SGT.

KORNFELD, MOSES M., PVT.
KOTTWITZ, REGINALD, PFC.
KRAKOWER, ARTHUR I., S. 2/c
KRAKOWER, JOSEPH, CDT.
LACK, A. I., CAPT.
LADIN, FRANK, PVT.
LADIN, MAX, LT.
LADIN, SIDNEY, CDT.
LANDA, L. M., JR., CORP.
LECHENGER, LOUIS, ENSIGN
LEON, ADOLPH, CDT.
LESKY, HENRY A., PVT.
LEVINE, LEO A., LT.
LEVIT, MILTON, M/S
LEVY, BEN M., SGT.
LEVY, DAVID J., CAPT.
LEVY, HERBERT E., JR., LT. (Missing)
LEVY, IRWIN, PVT.
LEVY, JULIAN H., PVT.
LEVY, MICHEL E., CAPT.
LEVY, MYER S., S. 2/c
LEWIS, OBIE, LT.
LIEDEKER, LOUIS L., MAJ.

LOEB, DWIGHT B., CDT.
LOESER, JOE, JR., C.G.
LOESER, JULIUS, A. O. M. 1/c
LOESER, W. J., A. M. M. 3/c
MARKS, MAYNARD F., PVT.
MAYER, MAURICE, JR., CDT.
MEYER, ALAN HASKEL, LT.
MEYER, ARTHUR M., CAPT.
MEYER, FELIX A., LT.
MEYER, LASKER M., JR., A/S
MEYERSON, DAVID, MAJ.
MILLER, LOUIS A., SGT.
MILLER, SAMUEL, CAPT.
MINCHEN, MEYER A., CDT.
MORRIS, JACK, PVT.
MOSK, FRED, PVT.
NACHLAS, OTTO, LT.
NATHAN, CHARLES D., PVT.
NOBLE, BEN, JR., P.F.C.
NUSSBAUM, P. S., CORP.
OPPENHEIMER, EDWARD, LT.
PERLMAN, WM., CAPT.
PFEFFER, HARRY, PVT.



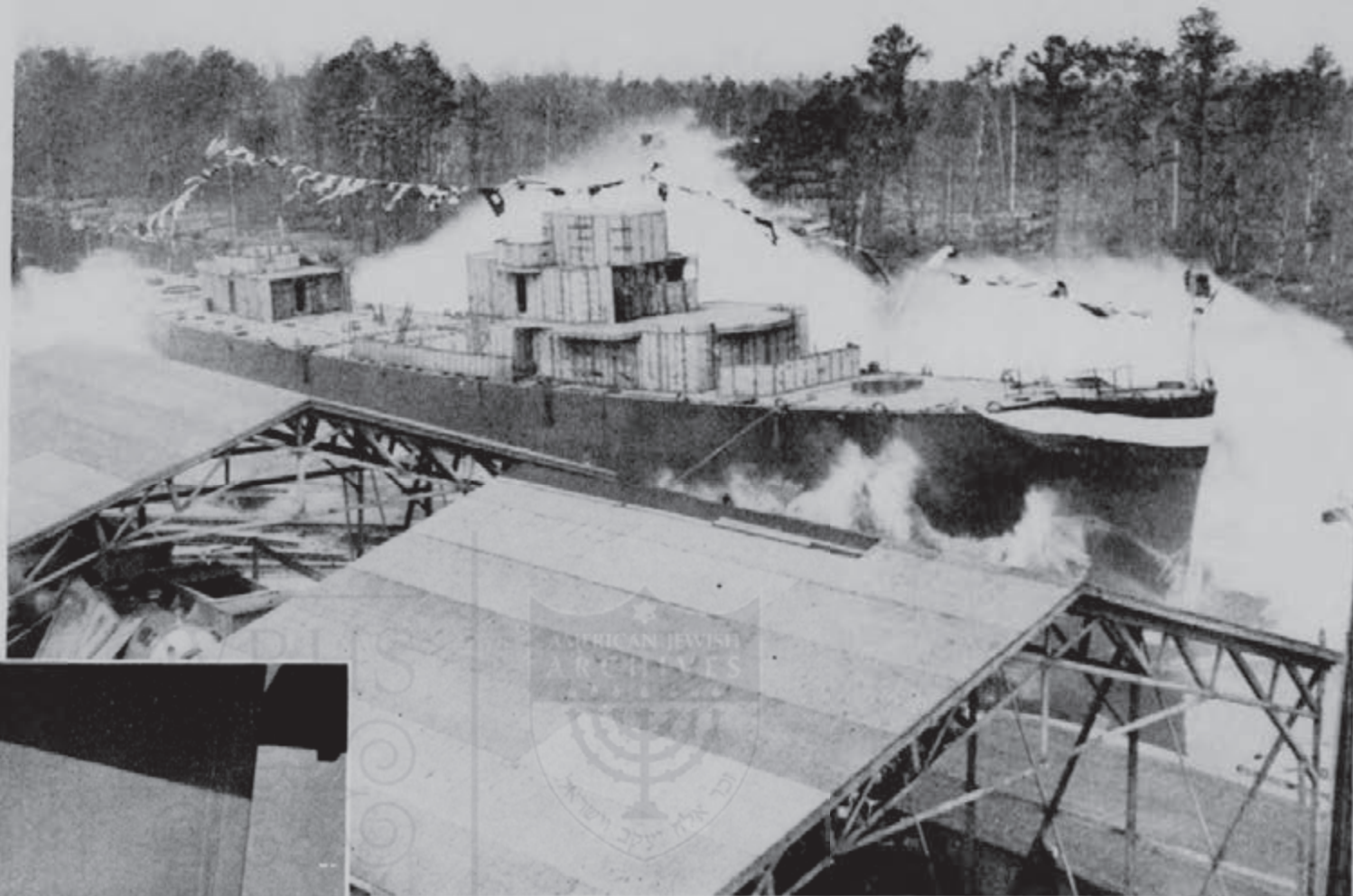
PFEFFER, JOSEPH B., PVT.
PHILLIPS, ELLIOT, LT.
RICKER, ERWIN, PVT.
ROBINSON, SIDNEY A., LT.
ROMME, J. A., PVT.
ROSENTHAL, MORRIS, PVT.
ROSOFF, LEONARD, CAPT.
ROTHSCHILD, GEORGE, PVT.
ROTHSCHILD, ROBERT, PVT.
SAKOWITZ, A. H., LT.
SAKOWITZ, BERNARD, LT.
SALMAN, WILLIAM, LT. COL.
SAMUELS, ALVIN, CORP.
SAMUELS, JOSEPH, LT.
SAMUELS, LOUIS, PVT.
SANDERS, BERNARD, LT.
SAPER, EDGAR, P.F.C.
SCHEPS, CHARLES, U.S.N.R.
SCHEPS, MILTON S., CDT.
SCHLAMME, OTTO, PVT.
SCHWARTZ, JEROME, SGT.
SCHWARZ, ARTHUR D., JR., MARINE

SELBER, JOSEPH, LT.
SEPPER, JUDITH, W.A.V.E.S.
SELIGMAN, JULIUS, JR., LT.
SHERROD, G. B., SGT.
SILVERBERG, MORRIS, PVT.
SIMON, JEROME G., LT.
SIMON, LOUIS I., LT.
SIMON, MOISE, ENSIGN
SINGER, JOHN A., CAPT.
SINGER, EDWARD, SGT.
SMITH, JACK K., LT.
SOLOMON, NATHAN, PVT.
SONDOCK, MELVIN, LT.
STEIN, SOL B., SGT.
STERN, MORRIS J., CAPT.
STONE, GERALD B., U.S.M.C.R.
STRAUS, DAVID H., ENSIGN
STRAUS, ROBERT, LT.
TARNOPOL, JEROME A., S. 2/c
TARTOKOV, MILTON, SEAM.
TARTOKOV, SOLOMON, SEAM.
TAUB, HENRY, ENSIGN

TAUB, JOHN, LT.
WAGNER, S. K., PVT.
WAGNER, MEYER C., CAPT.
WALD, SIDNEY J., SGT.
WALKER, FRANK, PVT.
WEIL, SOL B., LT.
WEINSTEIN, HYMAN JOSEPH, S. 2/c
WEISENBERG, ALVIN, CORP.
WEINTRAUB, WM., PVT.
WIESENTHAL, ALBERT, PVT.
WINNER, B. G., LT.
WESTHEIMER, ADOLPH JOSEPH, LT.
WESTHEIMER, DAVID K., LT. (Prisoner)
WESTHEIMER, I. B., JR., LT.
WESTHEIMER, SAMUEL F., SGT.
WOLF, JOSEPH, SGT.
WOLFF, ALEX, JR., LT. J. G.
WOLFMAN, LEE, CDT.
ZINDLER, ABE, JR., PVT.
ZINDLER, STERLING, PVT.
ZINDLER, WARREN, CDT.

Deceased

Mrs. David H. Straus christens the destroyer escort vessel named in honor of her late son, Ensign David H. Straus, Jr.



The U. S. S. Straus bears the name of a gallant Houstonian who died in action aboard the aircraft carrier Lexington in the battle of the Coral Sea. The Straus was launched at Brown Shipbuilding Co. yards on Dec. 31, 1943.

A TRIBUTE TO OUR MEMBERS IN WAR ACTIVITIES

Outstanding is the record of the City of Houston in all branches of home front cooperation with the successful conduct of the War. We are particularly proud of the contribution to Houston's magnificent record made by large numbers of our membership. We could not possibly name all those who, when called upon to serve, were not found wanting. Distinguished service have our members rendered to the Harris County Emergency Blood Bank; the American Red Cross; Knitting, Sewing and Production of Surgical Dressings; First Aid; Fire Fighters; Motor Corps; Auxiliary Police; Air Raid Warning System; Information Center; District Wardens; and Decontamination Squad. In addition, our members have loyally purchased War Bonds and Stamps; helped in each drive to sell them; gave of their time and effort to serve the USO, the Rationing Board and other similar volunteer endeavors.

We salute all those who have done, and are still doing, their part as patriotic citizens in a time of our country's great need. No praise that we can bring to them can equal the satisfaction in the hearts of our people who so cheerfully live up to the obligations of citizenship in a Democracy.

Temple Beth Israel is the oldest Jewish House of Worship in the state of Texas. Our beloved Temple has lived through all the great state and national crises of the past 88 years. Never has it failed to measure up to the challenge of each crisis, and in the present critical time of war, we

have maintained our high standard of unselfish and untiring effort in behalf of every cause which the American people at home have been called upon to further. That the officials of our state and national government are grateful for this whole-hearted service is attested to generously by the congratulatory letters that have come to the Temple from the officials who are entrusted with the conduct of the war program at home. It is, no doubt, unnecessary for the large numbers of our membership who are helping so significantly to be thanked; yet we cannot look back over the achievements of the past year without thanking God for those in our midst who are writing this newest chapter of patriotic service in the Golden Book of Beth Israel's glorious history. To support religion is to strengthen Democracy. To strengthen and defend Democracy is to contribute to the survival and advance of religion.

To the men and women and children who always said "Yes" when they might have said "No" to the call of home front war service, to all those who came forward instead of hesitating and doing nothing, to those in Congregation Beth Israel who are thus helping to speed the coming of victory, we offer this tribute.

Hymangudah Schachtel

AMERICAN RED CROSS

HARRIS COUNTY CHAPTER



MRS. LEO J. NAMAN
*Chairman Records Production
Department*

MRS. MIKE WEINSTEIN
*Bookkeeper—Production Dept.
Special Volunteer Red Cross Drive*

MRS. LASKER M. MEYER
*Chairman of the Day for
Staff Assistants*

MRS. JOE ARONSON
*Chairman of the Day
in Production*



MRS. LEOPOLD L. MEYER
*Member of Executive Board
Chairman—Knitting Repairs*



MRS. EDWARD LIPPER
*Chairman—Sisterhood
Red Cross Committee*



MRS. A. D. SCHWARZ
Superintendent of Knitting

MRS. L. M. LANDA
Supervisor—Surgical Dressings

HARRIET BATH
Lt., Motor Corps

MRS. SIDNEY L. MAYER
Registered Nurses Office

Staff Assistants
MRS. HENRY D. GREENBERG
MRS. MORRIS D. MEYER



Snapshot by Rabbi Schachtel at Cohen House, Rice Institute, upon the occasion of the Rabbi's first visit to Houston. Left to right: I. Friedlander, Leopold L. Meyer, Geo. S. Cohen, Sam W. Levy.

Mrs. I. Erlich and her three daughters, Joan, Judy and Phyllis. The Chanukah lamp was made in England and is the handiwork of the grandfather of one of the members of this Congregation.



Section of Library in Abe M. Levy Memorial Community Hall showing Sunday School children availing themselves of its benefits.



Barbara and Bernard, or "Bardy," wife and son of Rabbi Schachtel who have already won the love and affection of the congregation.

MESSAGE FROM THE BROTHERHOOD

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
Congregation Beth Israel,
Houston, Texas.

Gentlemen:

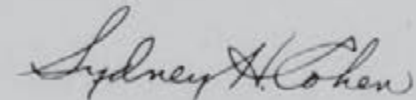
On this anniversary it is my privilege and pleasure to extend greetings to the Officers and Board of Trustees on behalf of the Temple Brotherhood.

Since the writer has served on the Board of Trustees as the representative from the Brotherhood he has had an excellent opportunity to observe the great amount of work that falls to the Trustees and to appraise the Board's magnificent attainments. Although the Brotherhood has done its best to discharge its responsibilities as it has evaluated such, it is obvious that the surface has only been scratched and that more important work must be cut out for the Brotherhood in the future. It is very likely that the whole pattern for the Brotherhood's activities must be changed and coordinated more particularly with the over-all job to be done by and for our Congregation, and as delineated in the all-inclusive program as laid down by the Congregation's Board of Trustees.

The Brotherhood very respectfully solicits the advice and guidance of the members of the Board, which is very necessary if the best possible results from the Brotherhood organization are to be obtained.

The writer is very grateful for the opportunity that has been afforded him to serve with the Trustees during Beth Israel's year of greatest accomplishment, and pledges his support of the incoming administration, by whose efforts it is hoped the position of the South's finest Reform Congregation will be further strengthened.

Respectfully submitted,



President.

MESSAGE FROM THE SISTERHOOD

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
Congregation Beth Israel,
Houston, Texas.

Gentlemen:

The Sisterhood is happy to have this opportunity to extend to our Rab-
bis, the Officers and Board of Trustees, as well as the entire membership,
its thanks and congratulations for another year's work of much importance
and impressive accomplishments.

As the Board representative of the Sisterhood, I have seen the weighty
and complicated problems of the Congregation which confronted the
Board critically examined, soundly discussed and disposed of with deliber-
ation and dispatch. Again, we offer our hearty congratulations!

All things considered, the past year has been a good one. We of the
Sisterhood have honestly endeavored to shirk no responsibility; and the
discharge of our usual community services, in all instances actively en-
couraged, has been carefully observed. However, there are many ways in
which the services of the Sisterhood could be broadened and supplemented,
and it is suggested to the new Officers and Board of the Sisterhood that a
survey be made with the hope of assuming additional responsibilities which
may alleviate the terrific burden borne by the Trustees of the Congrega-
tion. Those Trustees themselves, it is hoped, will also give this matter
reflection and favor the Sisterhood with the courtesy of its suggestions and
recommendations.

The Sisterhood is proud to be part and parcel of Congregation Beth
Israel, and begs God's blessing upon each and every member.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Lillian M. Meyer.

President.

May the historic year which has just come to an end—perhaps the most significant twelvemonth in the history of our Congregation—mark the beginning of an era of unprecedented accomplishment. May those who shall conduct the affairs of Beth Israel ever measure up to the proportions of their assignment; be ever mindful of their great responsibility to those who have entrusted them with authority; and be steadfast in their devotion to the cause of American Reform Judaism. May the members of Beth Israel at large be serious in the discharge of their full duty toward their fellow men, regardless of race, creed or denomination; be especially considerate of and charitable toward their persecuted co-religionists, wherever they may dwell; and, above all, be loyal, law-abiding and patriotic Americans.

[undated]

Basic Principles *of*

Congregation
Beth Israel
Houston, Texas

(An American Reform
Congregation)



1. We believe in the mission of Israel which is to witness to the Unity of God throughout the world and to pray and work for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. Our watchword is "Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is One." We accept it as our sacred duty to worship and to serve Him through prayer, righteous conduct and the study of our Holy Scriptures and glorious history.
2. We are Jews by virtue of our acceptance of Judaism. We consider ourselves no longer a nation but we are a religious community and, therefore, we expect neither a return to Palestine nor a restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish State. We stand unequivocally for the separation of Church and State. We are neither a nation, a nationality nor a race. Our religion is Judaism. Our nation is the United States of America. Our nationality is American. Our flag is the "Stars and Stripes." Our race is Caucasian.
3. We believe in the coming of a Messianic Age and not in a personal Messiah. We recognize that it is our hallowed duty to speed the coming of the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, which is the Messianic ideal for which the righteous of all people work and pray.
4. We accept as binding only the moral laws of Mosaic legislation and Prophetic teaching. We reject the rabbinical and Mosaic laws which regulate diet, priestly purity, dress, and similar laws which originated in ages and under influences of ideas and conditions which today are entirely unsuited, unnecessary and foreign to the beliefs and observances of progressive Judaism in modern America. We shall maintain and use in connection with our religious services only such ritual and ceremonies as may be approved by the Ritual Committee of the Congregation from time to time and which may symbolize, in effective and beautiful form, the principles of our Faith, and, which are adapted to the progressive and liberal spirit of our times.
5. We recognize the complete religious equality of woman with man.
6. The treasures of Divine revelation were given in the Hebrew language and in such language are preserved the immortal remains of a literature that influences all civilized nations. As the fulfillment of a sacred duty, therefore, the cultivation of the Hebrew language must always be urgently desired by us. However, the Hebrew language has become unintelligible to the vast majority of our co-religionists; therefore, it must make way, as is advisable under existing circumstances, to intelligible language in prayer, which, if not understood, is a soulless form.
7. The basis of unity among the Jews throughout the world is Religion. Hence, it is our duty to help our co-religionists whenever and wherever the need may arise, even, as we must help all mankind that may be in need, in accordance with the principles of our faith.

A HAND BOOK OF
TRUE FACTS
CONCERNING THE
"BASIC PRINCIPLES"
OF
CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL
HOUSTON, TEXAS
(Organized 1856)

An American Reform Congregation



A CATECHISM WHICH ANSWERS

- May Zionists become members?
- Are the Principles a Creed?
- Are 'associate' members 'second-class' members?
- Does Beth Israel bar observers of 'kashruth'?
- Is there a "Jewish" Race?
- Are political "Zionism" and Reform Judaism, religiously, compatible?
- Do the basic principles conform to Jewish theology?



Prepared by "Policy Formulation Committee"
of the Congregation.

INTRODUCTION

The "Basic Principles" of Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, Texas, were approved and adopted at a special meeting of the members, held on November 23rd 1943. The vote for adoption was 632 for and 168 against. Congregation Beth Israel is the largest Reform Congregation in the south. It was organized in 1856. For weeks prior to the date of the special meeting the opponents of the principles and the advocates thereof contacted by mail the full membership of the Congregation clarifying the issues involved. The membership which voted on November 23rd was, therefore, fully informed. The meeting was the largest attended in the history of this old Congregation. The vote clearly manifested a desire on the part of an overwhelming majority of the members that Beth Israel should remain true to the basic principles of American Reform Judaism. It was likewise a warning and a rebuke to certain leaders in the Reform movement in American Jewry saying, as laymen, in effect that "we are unwilling for the sake of political expediency to exchange the religious kernel of Reform Judaism, (based on the teachings of the prophets as to our universal mission), for a 'will of the wisp' hope of the 'security' of nationalism."

This hand-book is a revised re-print of a booklet used in the educational campaign by those advocating the adoption of the basic principles. It was thought important that the members be fully informed as to the sources of and as to the true facts concerning the principles. Much misrepresentation and distortion of the principles, the sources from which derived, and their interpretation were employed to defeat the unanimous favorable recommendation of the Board of Trustees to the Congregation. Much of this distortion came from outside of Houston. Some came from Reform sources but much more from Orthodox and Conservative rabbis and lay adherents to traditional Judaism. The Jewish press (Zionistically inclined and controlled) was particularly partisan and unfair and continued its distortions and misrepresentations long after the adoption of the principles; and after attention had been repeatedly called to such misrepresentations.

It is gratifying to report that where the true facts have been made available, the many expressions of commendation received have far exceeded the criticisms; and it is especially encouraging to receive enthusiastic letters of approval and praise from privates and officers of Jewish faith in the armed forces of the U. S. throughout the world, who were encouraged and stimulated to find an American Reform Jewish Congregation fighting on the home front to preserve the status quo of the principles of Reform Judaism for them, while they are fighting the enemy. Some of these letters have appeared in Beth Israel's "Temple Bulletin."

The preparation of these principles and the driving force for their adoption was the work of the *laymen* of Congregation Beth Israel. No outside individual or group influenced the action. The "Policy Formulation Committee" of the Congregation accepts full responsibility. While the religious philosophy expressed coincides with the preachments of Dr. Henry Barnston, Rabbi-emeritus of the Congregation (retired in 1943 after forty-three years of distinguished service in the pulpit of Beth Israel) and with the religious views of Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel, recently elected senior Rabbi, neither was consulted as to the *wisdom* of our proposed action, nor as to the content of the platform of principles until after the work of the committee had been completed; and then their criticism was asked in relation to the historical accuracy of the principles of American Reform Judaism. In like manner we submitted these principles, and for the same purposes, to other Reform Rabbis throughout the country.

Interest in these basic principles has become so widespread throughout the United States, in fact throughout the whole world, and requests for information and literature are so numerous, that it was felt best to re-print the booklet in a readable manner in order that the true facts might be placed in the hands of those interested.

It must be borne in mind at the outset that this *re-statement of "basic principles"* is an exposition of the principles of Congregation Beth Israel *as a group*—a religious group—it has nothing to do with any person's individual taste for dress, diet, or politics. It has to do with the *views of a religious body upon religious matters*. Reform Judaism is an interpretation of Judaism and since there are other groups adhering to Judaism, there of necessity must be at times contrasting statements used to show wherein the principles and interpretation of Reform Judaism differs from those of Orthodoxy or Conservatism or Reconstructionism.

All types of Judaism are available to the citizens of Houston in the range from the strictest Orthodox to the Reform Congregation of Beth Israel. Any citizen of Jewish faith can join any Congregation. No one is denied the opportunity of a religious affiliation of his own choice. The action of Beth Israel assures that this will remain the case; and that those who desire to worship in a Reform Temple, with a Reform Rabbi expounding Reform philosophies and uttering traditional Reform prayers, will have the opportunity to so continue. This opportunity was made certain in the first instance by the development of Beth Israel as an American Reform Congregation.

If one joins the Orthodox or Conservative Synagogue he is *expected and required* to conform to traditional Orthodox customs, to recite Orthodox prayers, and to obey certain Synagogal laws and customs. We honor them for their insistence upon such compliance. *Who shall gainsay the right of a Reform Congregation also to have principles?*

Many congregations throughout the nation have different classes of memberships—some confine their voting privileges to those owning pews. Beth Israel is a democratic congregation but, nevertheless, it is an American Reform congregation and it is planned it shall continue to so remain.

CONGREGATION IS AUTONOMOUS

We welcome *fair* criticism. But, some of the criticisms have been intemperate, some of the editorials have been threatening and abusive. All efforts to coerce must necessarily fail because as it has been so well pointed out by Rabbi David Philipson in his book, "The Reform Movement in Judaism:"

"Judaism in the United States is congregational. The Congregation is *autonomous*. There is no chief rabbi, no consistory, no synod, no assembly; each Congregation is responsible to itself, and hence it lies with the Congregation, and it alone, to determine what *its policy* shall be."

We believe, and we assert, that the principles adopted by Beth Israel are the generally understood and accepted basic principles of universalistic, prophetic Reform Judaism. Of course they differ from the principles of traditional Judaism, whether Orthodox or Conservative. Were this not a fact, there would be no necessity for separate congregations; different theological schools; different rituals or prayer-books; different Rabbinical Conferences; different Congregational organizations; and trained Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Rabbis. The assertion, however, of Reform principles does not indicate a lack of respect for the religion of others, Jews or Christians. In America, we can hold our own religious views and disagree with those of others, without a fair imputation that we are discrediting or disrespecting those holding contrary views. And, for the same reason, we have the right to expect that those holding different views from ours will accord to us the same privilege and the same respect.

To deny membership in Beth Israel, for instance, to a Christian who does not subscribe to the basic principles of Reform Judaism casts no aspersions upon his religious views. No religious group can long be held together in harmony and in its religious aspirations if it becomes a hodge-podge of conflicting religious beliefs. It ultimately would have to discard the convictions of all in order to proceed forward or agree upon a synthetic type satisfactory to none.

There can be *co-operation* between followers of different religious ideologies; there can be wholesome respect for each other's religious convictions; there can be harmony between them and a common viewpoint on many matters in which all are equally interested; but there can be no so-called "unity" within a *mixed* Congregation unless one group or the other surrenders the religious convictions that conflict with those of the other group.

It is assumed that the members of a Religious Congregation *voluntarily* join a particular Jewish group (where they have the choice of joining six other local congregations) because they have a knowledge of the type of services which they will attend and the religious principles which they will hear expounded and to which they are presumed to adhere. *Orthodoxy has its principles and they are strict in the requirement of observance*; Conservative Judaism also has its principles. Shall it be seriously argued that Reform Judaism alone is to be that development of Judaism "without principle"—a hodge-podge of conflicting ideologies, of loosely held adherents *who neither know nor care what the religious movement really stands for, of which they are a part?*

THE EFFECT OF BETH ISRAEL'S PRINCIPLES UPON ZIONISTS

Question. What effect does the adoption of the basic principles have on the membership of Zionists in the Congregation, and upon those who may desire to join who are avowed Zionists?

Answer. (a) The basic principles have no effect whatsoever upon the membership of those individuals who call themselves "Zionists" but who are *cultural* Zionists—those who *were* members at the time of the adoption of the principles. (b) The principles likewise do not affect in any way either members or applications for membership of individuals who call themselves "Zionists" but who are *cultural* Zionists—those who favor the development of educational, recreational, cultural and economic endeavors of the Palestinian Jews; and who are desirous of assisting our co-religionists in Palestine as well as everywhere else; and who look upon Palestine as a haven of refuge for the Jews. If they are not interested in the political affairs of Palestine, do not advocate and pray for a Jewish nation, under a Jewish king or president, with a Jewish parliament or congress, under a Jewish flag and with a Jewish army, etc., there is no inconsistency in their applying for membership in Beth Israel Congregation.

Q. How do the principles affect *applicants* who believe in *political* Zionism?

A. Reform Judaism has for its central and basic fundamental principle the rejection of *nationalism*. If, therefore, an applicant, *religiously* speaking, believes and prays that the restoration of Palestine as a "Jewish" nation, state or commonwealth is necessary in order for Judaism to attain its highest possibilities; if he believes and prays that the Jews are in "exile" and "homeless"; that we are being "punished" for the sins committed by our fathers while living in Palestine and that when the full measure of expiation is accomplished, the restoration will take place, the Temple will be restored and the Jewish laws revived; then, of course, he cannot conscientiously accept the "basic principles" of Reform Judaism and Congregation Beth Israel and become a voting member of the Congregation. He may become an associate member.

NATURE OF REFORM JUDAISM

It is logical that in seeking to learn the religious views and aspirations of a group that one should resort to the prayer-book used by such group. *As we pray so we believe* (or should believe). Therefore, in this study, use has been made of passages from the Union Prayer Book, the generally accepted ritual of American Reform Congregations. In a recent issue of "Liberal Judaism" (February, 1944), Rabbi David Philipson, the historian of the Reform Movement in the United States contributed an article entitled "The Union Prayer Book." Concluding the article he says:

"... Important though such external considerations of language, order of prayers, length of services and the like are, still more important by far is the subject of the *content of the prayers* and the principles that underlie the Reform prayer-book . . . Although the Reform movement in Judaism is part and parcel of the Emancipation movement in all of its phases . . . still it is based upon some well-defined *principles* which find expression in the Reform ritual and differentiate it from the traditional Siddur. . . . The chief and underlying principle of the Reform movement is the *universalistic* interpretation of Judaism as over against the *nationalistic*. If the Reform movement does not signify this, it signifies *nothing*. This is the burden of its thought. Here lay the parting of the ways between the Reformers and the traditionalists. Upon this basis the Reformers built. . . . In these latter days of ours, we are hearing about the compatibility of Reform and nationalism, or Zionism. . . . If Jewish nationalism means that a special Jewish country or state is necessary for Judaism to attain its highest possibilities (and I believe this is the contention of the neo-nationalists in these days), then this runs absolutely *counter* to the *fundamental teaching* of Reform. . . . If we examine the liturgy of the Reform Synagogue, we will find that there is no other point on which there is so much *unanimity* among the Reformers. Gradually all the prayers of a purely *nationalistic* character in the traditional Siddur were either dropped altogether or so changed as to receive the universalistic coloring. . . ."

The Jewish Encyclopedia in commenting upon the "Union Prayer Book" says:

"The characteristic doctrines of the Reform movement which *differentiate* it from traditionalism find constant expression in the prayers: the belief in the coming of the Messianic era instead of a personal Messiah; the *universalism* of Israel's mission as a priest-people in place of *nationalism* involved in the belief in the return to Palestine, the establishment of the Jewish state, and the restoration of

the Aaronic priesthood; the repudiation of the belief in a bodily resurrection and the substitution of the belief in spiritual immortality. . . . Sermons in the vernacular, a mixed choir, the organ, family pews, uncovered heads during worship, and a confirmation service for boys and girls are distinguishing features of public worship in Reform Congregations in the United States. The observance of the second days of the holy days has been abolished as well as all minor fast and feast days except Hanukkah and Purim. . . . *Woman* is accounted of *equal* importance with man in religious life. . . ." (Vol. X, page 358.)

Rabbi Frederic A. Doppelt contributed a very fine historical review of "Reform Judaism and the Prayer-book" to the October 1941 issue of "The Synagogue." The following are excerpts from his article:

"The Union Prayer-book, however, does stand out in contrast—though not necessarily in conflict—to traditional liturgy. . . . It makes extensive use of the *language of the land* (English) in preference to Hebrew, and so makes worship more intelligible. . . . It omitted every negative passage *about non-Jews*—especially the benediction: 'That thou didst not make me a Gentile.' . . . It cleared Jewish liturgy of every mention of *angels and demons*, in the medieval sense of the word. In deference to western as over against oriental culture, it did away with the dubious blessing '*that Thou didst not make me a woman.*' . . . By far the most crucial aspects of the Union Prayer-book center about the major principles in traditional Jewish life. With one incision of its liturgical scapel, for example, it removed from the body of Jewish liturgy the entire *sacrificial cult*. . . . It found this institution of appeasing God via burnt offerings as primitive and repugnant, nevertheless, in the traditional prayer-book, that cult has always monopolized important space. Reform Judaism found it no longer consonant with nineteenth century thought to foster the age-old dream of a *Messiah* in the flesh destined to redeem Israel. . . . It cut out of Jewish liturgy every prayer expressive of this historic longing . . . and carefully altered the word 'Go-el' which means 'redeemer' to the more impersonal term 'G'ulo' meaning '*redemption.*' Again, with a single sweep, it discarded every supplication for the restoration of *Zion* . . . in harmony with aspirations arising out of the whole philosophy of Jewish emancipation during the nineteenth century and in line with the doctrine of Israel as a *religious community only*—a doctrine of Reform Judaism evolved out of its interpretation of Jewish theology. . . ."

SHALL WE GO BACK

Reform Judaism has been a progressive religion. It broke away definitely from rabbinical traditional Judaism and adopted the conception of Judaism as a universal faith as differentiated from the particularistic, national interpretation of Orthodoxy. There is a tendency in Reform circles to go *backwards* and it was this apparent trend, publicly proclaimed, which caused the laymen in Beth Israel to determine to take timely steps to forcefully indicate that this old American Reform Congregation (established 1856) does not agree with or welcome this tendency. *No contention is made that Reform Judaism precludes change.* But there is a certainty that if the changes proposed take Reform Judaism *back to traditional principles*, then Reform Judaism disappears. What are the evidences of the trend?

The opponents to the basic principles circulated an article of Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, Executive Director of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations which they claimed contained "the true tenets of American Reform Judaism." To show what is "in the air" as to proposed "compromises," the following are taken as excerpts from the article:

" . . . The Union is seeking . . . the most inclusive unity with the whole body of Israel that can be attained. It is seeking such unity, likewise, by taking the initiative in approaching the large Yiddish speaking masses in America. . . . There is blame on both sides. . . . But while skeptics may continue to scoff and cynics will seek ulterior motives, the fact remains that there is a *determined* and genuine attempt being made on both sides to *find some common ground* between a liberal *re-interpretation of our faith* and of our role as Jews in the modern scene and the masses of Jewry who have never known anything about Reform except its *negative and least attractive phases*. . . . To effect such a *reapproachment* there must be *changes of attitude on both sides*. Insofar as Reform is concerned these changes are marked. . . . Take, for example, the present program of the Union with regard to the re-introduction of *ceremony and form* into the practice of synagogue and home. There are those who interpret this as a complete volte face and a *humiliating surrender* of the principles of Reform. . . . The same applies to our present attitude

to Zionism. Foremost among the things which *seemed true* fifty years ago . . . that the dream of returning to Zion was seriously out of harmony with the spirit of that supposedly humanitarian age . . . grim reality has compelled re-thinking . . . consequently, *Reform Judaism* has provided many of the outstanding leaders in the Zionist movement today, while the Union, itself as *early*(?) as 1937, voiced its unequivocal demand for the liberal and legal fulfillment of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate for Palestine. . . ." (Reprint from Rosh Hoshannah Edition (1943) Jewish Herald-Voice.)

The *backward movement*, largely due to the intensive drive in the past few years for the Zionist political program, is evident in speeches and in actions of Rabbis. To succeed, the inherent and central idea of American Reform Judaism—its universalism—must first be broken down. It should be remembered that Reform Judaism was the product of laymen—the bringing of Jewish traditional beliefs and customs and practices into harmony with the necessities of the layman's participation in day to day living among other peoples. There has been no mandate given to individual Rabbis or to any Rabbinical Conference or to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and *no* authorization, from the American Reform laymen, to abandon the principles of American Reform Judaism!

That there is such a tendency is referred to in the speech of Rabbi Armand E. Cohen (Conservative) before the Central Conference of American Rabbis (1943) as reported in *Liberal Judaism*, July 1943: Rabbi Cohen says:

"A *strange phenomenon* has become increasingly apparent to all of us in recent years. Within the Conservative movement divergent philosophies have become crystallized. And in the same spirit of objectiveness it may be said the lines have been drawn more tightly in the Reform rabbinate. Many of us have looked with a *new-born reassurance* at the *return to traditionalism* among an important segment of our Reform colleagues. An American rabbinate is slowly *emerging*, consisting of Reform and Conservative men who are becoming *more and more like-minded* in their philosophy of Jewish survival and destiny in Palestine and in the Diaspora."

The tendency is reflected in the passage of the resolution for "a Jewish Army," by the Central Conference of American Rabbis (1942) forced through by the Zionistically-inclined Reform Rabbis, in violation of the understanding that the issue would not receive consideration at the Conferences; the action of the delegates of the Central Conference of American Rabbis to the American Jewish Conference, 1943, in supporting the maximal Zionist demands for a Jewish Commonwealth; the failure of the delegates from the Union of the American Hebrew Congregations to forthwith protest such Resolution, and the failure of the Executive Board of the Union, since, to withdraw from the Conference, so as to remove the impression that the organizations which stand for Reform Judaism's Congregational life (and of which Union, Beth Israel is a member), is supporting such maximal demands; the inclusion of the "new" Zionist service in the 1940 revised edition of the Union Prayer Book, a trek back to the paths of traditional Judaism upon the cardinal and fundamental principle which Reform rejected; and the alarming increase of Reform Rabbis, graduates from Hebrew Union College, the college founded by Isaac M. Wise to teach American Reform Judaism, who, after graduation, openly espouse the cause of political Zionism in conflict with the basic principles of Reform Judaism.

ARE THE BETH ISRAEL "BASIC PRINCIPLES" A RELIGIOUS CREED?

Question. Should the "basic principles" of Beth Israel Congregation be considered as a religious "creed"?

Answer. No, for as Rabbi David Philipson has truly said, "there is a wide difference between the conception of a creed as a fixed and necessary condition of salvation and a *declaration of principles*." (Philipson, "The Reform Movement in Judaism," pg. 256.) Rabbi Philipson further states, reporting the interesting debate upon it, at a meeting in 1850 of the "Jewish Reform Congregation" (Berlin), that Holdheim "held that the belief in definite principles does not exclude the idea of development . . . that principles were absolutely necessary of statement, and that Judaism having such principles, they *could, should and must* be stated." Rabbi Philipson's book in an earlier discussion on this subject arising from debates in the Rabbinical Conferences of 1844-46 states:

"In a more or less direct wise the *debatable* subject of creed and dogma was touched upon in these various utterances: (a) 'Are there dogmas in Judaism, or no'; (b) 'Is a set creed compatible with or foreign to the spirit of Judaism', remains to this day (1931) an *unsettled* point of debate. . . . Reform Judaism must always be impatient of a set creed; still Formstecher was correct, in the main,

when he urged that the conference formulate a *declaration of principles*. Such a declaration was necessary, particularly in view of the decided difference between the traditionalists and the reformers on a number of controverted points. . . . Twenty-five years later the idea . . . was carried into practical effect when the conference of rabbis at Philadelphia (1869) adopted as the working basis of the conference a statement of principles. . . ." (Page 148, "Reform Movement in Judaism.")

Q. What is the *practical* result of requiring voting members, who come into the Congregation, after the adoption of the principles, to agree to adhere to them?

A. It assures the continuation of Beth Israel as a Reform Congregation, as its builders intended it should be. It serves as a means of promoting continued harmony in the congregation because it takes out of the realm of debate doctrinal differences of Orthodoxy, Conservative and Reform Congregations. It preserves for Reform Jews and their children the present and future ownership and use, as a Reform Congregation, of the \$500,000.00 of properties owned by the Congregations; which were contributed to build a Reform Temple and Religious School, in order to maintain and promote "Reform Judaism"—the religious convictions of those pioneer Houstonians and present Reform members, who poured efforts and treasure into the project. It relegates secular, political Zionism to the Zionist Organization of America or to such other organizations as predicate their membership upon a political and national conception of the Jew and his destiny. It opens up to the Orthodox or Conservative Jewish family the use of our religious school and participation in our services, through provision for associate membership without *voting* privileges; if through such association and attendance upon worship, such associate member eventually desire to become a Reform Jew, through conviction and agreement with the basic principles thereof, his membership may then be transferred into *full voting* membership.

IS NON-VOTING MEMBERSHIP "UN-DEMOCRATIC?"

Question. What is there to the assertion that the two classes of membership are "undemocratic" and that there is a first and "second class" membership?

Answer. The status of the non-voting member is comparable to the status of a foreign-born resident of this country, prior to his naturalization. He enjoys all of the rights and privileges and protection of the country but he *cannot vote* until he has lived here five years; and until he *accepts* the American system of government; and until through an examination, he evidences a comprehensive and knowledge of it; and until he signs an oath expressing loyalty to the United States, and further *forswears all previous allegiance* to the government of the country from which he came. Until this happens, he cannot *vote*. If this makes the United States "undemocratic" and creates two classes of "residents," then Beth Israel's plan of associate memberships, which follows the pattern, may also be regarded as "undemocratic."

Q. Do other Reform Congregations have different classes of memberships?

A. Yes, there are a number of types of membership in use by various Congregations, some of them denying membership voting privileges but usually because of a *financial* classification. In a booklet issued by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (1935) in describing "Associate memberships" along with other types, the author states:

"Associate Membership. . . . This is a term frequently applied to a *special* kind of membership at a reduced rate, usually corresponding to some *curtailment of privileges*. The principal types of such membership are: . . . Persons who are *already members of another congregation and join for the sake of the religious education of their children or for some other family reason.* . . ." (Page 29.)

Q. Do other Reform Congregations sometimes stipulate in their by-laws that the Congregation is a "Reform" Congregation, and *confine* membership to those adhering to Reform principles?

A. Yes, quite a number of prominent Reform Congregations have such a provision. For instance, Congregation Rodof Sholom, Pittsburg, Pa. (the pulpit occupied by Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof, president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis), has the following by-law:

"Election to membership: Any person of Jewish faith *believing* in a liberal or *Reform interpretation* of Judaism may become a member of this Congregation. . . . The Board of Trustees may limit membership in the Congregation to such number as they may deem advisable." (Article I, Section 1.)

Q. What is the essential difference between such a by-law and Beth Israel's application blanks with the "Basic Principles" a part thereof?

A. In case of the Pittsburg congregation, the applicant knows not what or whose "Reform interpretation" will admit or reject him; in the case of Beth Israel the Reform interpretation has been made by the membership. In both cases, an applicant believing in traditional or Orthodox Judaism cannot become a full member; but in the case of Beth Israel, he *may* become an *associate* member with full religious privileges. He waives the right to vote.

WHAT WE DID NOT DO

False rumors as to what Beth Israel has done continue up to now, so in order that those who desire to be correctly informed may know, we first state what we did *not* do:

(1) We have not required any member, already a member of the Congregation, to signify his acceptance of the basic principles, orally or in writing.

(2) We do not require any member who observes the dietary law "to eat trefah" or to depart from his dietary observance; nor do our principles bar any one desiring to join the Congregation from keeping "kashruth."

(3) We have not changed and do not intend to change any of the Hebrew content in the Union Prayer Book. Our services continue in accord with the Union Prayer Book, except that we do not use the Zionist alternate Sabbath service No. 5.

(4) We have not taken the voting privileges away from any member of the Congregation (who was a member November 23, 1943), and who may be either a Zionist, or one who observes the dietary laws of Orthodox Judaism.

(5) We have not adopted a "*creed*" for salvation although, we have adopted *principles* as a basis for new applying members, which principles are basic and fundamental to American Reform Judaism, and which our members regard as essential to the perpetuation of that interpretation of Judaism in a Congregation, to which interpretation its religious life and properties have been dedicated for more than fifty years.

WHAT WE DID DO

(1) Reform Jews built and supported our Temple and Congregation and poured efforts and treasure and prayers into its maintenance and development; with the hope that their children would "carry on" as Reform Jews. We have taken a step to *assure* that this may be accomplished.

(2) We have made it possible through "associate memberships" for those who are members of traditional synagogues but who may desire to send their children to a Reform religious school; and those who may desire to occasionally worship with us to do so, although they may prefer because of religious conviction to retain their main affiliations with Orthodox or Conservative Congregations; but we have not given them a vote that may enable an influx of such memberships, in a growing city like Houston, to change the *nature* of this American Reform Congregation.

(3) We have *re-affirmed* the basic principles of Reform Judaism. This has been done after a thorough study of the history of the Reform movement. We are prepared to take our due portion of the *abuse* which was meted out to all of those laymen and Rabbis who first enunciated the reform principles which we seek to *maintain*. The pioneers of the Reform movement suffered abuse and vilification in their efforts to establish Reform Judaism; we are willing to take the vituperation, caricaturing, abusive criticism and misrepresentations that have come our way in our efforts to maintain the principles of Reform Judaism. When we consider that Rabbi Isaac M. Wise was abused shamefully, editorially criticized, charged with being a Christian "convert," excommunicated by Orthodox congregations, bodily assaulted in his own pulpit at Albany on Rosh Hashonah, and his legal contract broken, we do not complain at the criticisms hurled at Houston's action in *re-affirming* the principles of Isaac M. Wise.

BETH ISRAEL'S "BASIC PRINCIPLES"

PRINCIPAL No. 1

We believe in the mission of Israel which is to witness to the Unity of God throughout the world and to pray and work for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. Our watchword is "Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is One." We accept it as our sacred duty to worship and to serve Him through prayer, righteous conduct and the study of our Holy Scriptures and glorious history.

Statement: The statement of Israel's "mission" finds general acceptance in American Reform circles. It is difficult to conceive of any disagreement that the Sh'ma constitutes the "watchword" of Israel. Dr. Kaufmann Kohler states "... the belief in the One and Only God ... constitutes the essence and the foundation of Judaism ... " (Jewish Theology, page 82).

Question. What is the conception of the destiny of Israel from the viewpoint of the Reform Jew?

Answer. Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch writing on the subject of "Reform Judaism" in the Jewish Encyclopedia (Vol. X, pg. 348) has this to say upon this matter:

"Reform conceives of the destiny of Israel as *not* bound up in the *return to Palestine*, and as *not involving national political restoration* under a Messianic king with the Temple rebuilt and the sacrificial service reinstituted. . . . Israel is not in exile. Its dispersion was a necessary experience in the realization and execution of its Messianic duty. It is not doomed to wait for the miraculous advent of the Davidic Messiah. . . . The goal of Jewish history is not a national Messianic state in Palestine, but the realization in society and state of the principles of righteousness as enunciated by the Prophets and sages of old."

Q. Is the "mission" of Israel set out in the Union Prayer Book?

A. Yes, both in Vol. I and Vol. II. In Vol. I, there is a beautiful prayer for the Sabbath asking God to give us grace to fulfill Israel's mission "*to bear witness unto Thy truth among the peoples of the earth*" (page 34). In the stirring prayers of the afternoon service for the Day of Atonement, the mission of Israel, as we Reform Jews understand and believe it, is clearly set out:

"Thou hast taught us through Thy prophets, what is good and what Thou dost require of us: to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with Thee; to plead the cause of the widow and the orphan; to protect the stranger, to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked; to break the bonds of wickedness and to free the oppressed. By such offerings of the spirit can we serve Thee most truly and find favor in Thy sight. *And when Thou didst send us forth to all parts of the earth, it was but to bear witness to this, Thine eternal truth, and to glorify Thy holy name throughout the world.* (Vol. II, pg. 253.) . . . By Thy grace, O God, it has also been given us to see in our dispersion over the earth, not a means of punishment, but a sign of blessed privilege. *Scattered among the nations of the world, Israel is to bear witness to Thy power and Thy truth and to endeavor to unite all peoples in a covenant of brotherhood and peace.*" (Page 254.)

Q. Is there Biblical authority for such prayers?

A. Yes, in the teachings of the Prophets. "Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My spirit upon him, He shall make the right to go forth to the nations." (Isaiah, 42:1.) And again: "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and have taken hold of thy hand and kept thee, and set thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the nations, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." (Isaiah, 42: 6:7.)

Q. Are there other Biblical passages that may be quoted as to the "mission" of Israel among the nations of the world?

A. Yes, for instance:

"I have set thee as a watchman unto the nations of the earth, that thou mayest hear a message from My mouth and mayest admonish them from Me. (Ezek. 3:17; 3:7.)

Q. What was the earliest expression of American Reform rabbis upon this subject?

A. At the Philadelphia Conference in 1869. Plank No. 5 of that statement of principles, reads as follows:

"The selection of Israel as the people of religion, as the bearers of the highest ideas of humanity, is still, as ever, to be strongly emphasized, and for this very

reason, whenever this is mentioned it shall be done with full emphasis laid on the *world-embracing* mission of Israel and the love of God for *all* His children."

Q. Did the Pittsburg Conference of 1885 reiterate this universalistic, prophetic conception of the mission of Israel?

A. Yes, in the following language:

"We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men."

The language used in Beth Israel Principle No. 1 "for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men" is taken word for word from Principle No. 5 of the Pittsburg platform.

Q. Are there *later* Reform Rabbinical expressions on this subject?

A. Confirmation of agreement among Reform Rabbis that Israel's mission is religious and *not* national or political appears in resolutions of many subsequent Conferences, such as in 1897, 1906, and 1920. Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, the founder of American Reform Judaism, and the President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, in his presidential address at the Montreal Conference in 1897 demanded that the Conference declare officially the American standpoint "for the honor and position of American Israel" upon the subject of a "National" destiny of Israel, which it did by resolving:

"That we totally *disapprove* of any attempt for the establishment of a Jewish state. Such attempts show a misunderstanding of Israel's *mission*, which, from the narrow political and national field has been expanded to the promotion among the whole human race of the broad and universalistic religion first proclaimed by the Jewish prophets. . . . We re-affirm that the *object of Judaism is not political nor national, but spiritual*, and addresses itself to the continuous growth of peace, justice, and love in the human race, to a Messianic time when all men will recognize that they form one great brotherhood for the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth."

Q. What is the last formal expression of the Rabbis upon this subject?

A. The mission of Israel is described in the Columbus, Ohio, platform adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, in 1937, as follows:

"Throughout the ages it has been Israel's mission to witness to the Divine in the face of every form of paganism and materialism. We regard it as our historic task to co-operate with all men in the establishment of the kingdom of God, of universal brotherhood, justice, truth and peace on earth."

PRINCIPLE No. 2

We are Jews by virtue of our acceptance of Judaism. We consider ourselves no longer a nation. We are a religious community, and neither pray for nor anticipate a return to Palestine nor a restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state. We stand unequivocally for the separation of Church and State. Our religion is Judaism. Our nation is the United States of America. Our nationality is American. Our flag is the "Stars and Stripes." Our race is Caucasian. With regard to the Jewish settlement in Palestine we consider it our sacred privilege to promote the spiritual, cultural and social welfare of our co-religionists there.

Statement: Upon the principles stated in the above, American Reform Judaism was builded and firmly rests. The thoughts expressed are basic and the language is essentially identical with that used in pronouncements of Rabbinical Conferences. In the questions and answers given herein pertaining to this principle it will be clearly demonstrated that Beth Israel is dealing with a cardinal *religious* precept of Reform Judaism and that its pronouncement coincides with what has been the *traditional position* of this Congregation and American Reform Judaism.

When the first Reform Temple in the United States was dedicated at Charleston, S. C., in 1841, the minister, Gustav Poznanski, exultantly declared:

"*This country is our Palestine, this city our Jerusalem, this house of God, our Temple.*"

—and to this sentiment American Reform Jews for one hundred years have been saying 'Amen.'

There should be no dissent on the part of any American Reform Jew that he recognizes the United States as his nation, his religion as Judaism, and his American nationality. This carries with it the adoption of the 'Stars and Stripes' as his flag.

Question. What is meant by the first sentence, "We are Jews by virtue of our acceptance of Judaism?"

Answer. Simply, that it is the Jewish religion that distinguishes us and that we are Americans of Jewish faith, as there are Englishmen, Germans, Russians, Poles, Italians, Frenchmen, Lithuanians, Chinese, and Palestinians of Jewish faith. The Columbus, Ohio, platform of guiding principles announced by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1937 states:

"We maintain that it is *by its religion* and *for its religion* that the Jewish people have lived. The non-Jew who accepts our faith is welcomed as a full member of the Jewish community."

NATIONALITY VS. RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

Q. From whence comes the language in Beth Israel Principle No. 2, "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, etc.?"

A. The language is taken from the Platform of Principles of the memorable conference of American Reform Rabbis, held at Pittsburg, 1885, and has been reaffirmed many, many times in Rabbinical Conference resolutions, before and since the Balfour Declaration of 1917. The Pittsburg 1885 declaration, a part of their No. 5 pronouncement reads as follows:

"... We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state."

Q. Was there an earlier American pronouncement by Reform Rabbis upon this subject?

A. Yes, the conference of Reform Rabbis held in 1869 at Philadelphia stated clearly the religious viewpoint of Reform Jews regarding its attitude as to the loss of its national existence. The 1869 plank No. 2 reads:

"2. We look upon the destruction of the second Jewish commonwealth not as a punishment for the sinfulness of Israel, but as a result of the divine purpose revealed to Abraham, which, as has become ever clearer in the course of the world's history, consists in the dispersion of the Jews to all parts of the earth, for the realization of their high priestly mission, to lead the nations to the true knowledge and worship of God."

Q. Is this religious attitude of Reform Judaism a different or contrasting one from traditional Orthodoxy?

A. The traditional (Orthodox) philosophy is expressed in their prayers "that the Jews will return to Palestine, again become a nation under the rule of a scion of the House of David, restore the sacrifices under the administration of descendants of Aaron, and worship in the Temple rebuilt on the ruins of the Temple of old; that the Jews in their dispersion among the nations are in a state of exile; that their century long sufferings are a punishment for the sins committed by their fathers while living in Palestine and that when the measure of expiation will be full, the restoration will take place." (Kohler, "Jewish Theology," pg. 330.)

Q. What was the position of the early Reform leaders in Germany upon this question?

A. The Brunswick Conference in 1844 endorsed the answers of the Sanhedrin given to Napoleon in 1807 which "gave assurance to the various governments, of the patriotic attachment of the Jews and to show that there was nothing in Judaism at variance with the best and highest interests of the state." Holdheim, one of the greatest early Reform leaders, said at this Conference on this subject:

"The religious principles must be kept clearly distinct from the political. It is difficult to keep the two separate because they have been connected closely for so long a time. It is important that two things which have been joined so improperly should be sundered finally. We do not grant that there is such a thing as a Christian state, and certainly we should not speak of a Jewish state, or of the overlapping of the religious and political in Judaism."

Likewise at the Frankfort Conference held in 1845 the following declaration was adopted:

"The Messianic idea should receive prominent mention in our prayers but all petitions for our return to the land of our fathers and for the restoration of a Jewish state should be eliminated from our prayers."

Q. Is this contrast between the philosophy of Israel's mission, religiously speaking, between Orthodoxy and Reform; a difference between the conception of Judaism either as a "national or a universal" faith and mission,—is it still a *live* issue in the religious life of Jew and congregation?

A. Yes, in the maze of confused thinking of means and methods to alleviate the sufferings of our co-religionists in Europe, the victims of Nazi hate and brutality, which is heart-sickening and revolting to Jew and Christian alike, many of our people in their hopelessness, including Reform adherents, have been lured into the zone of Zionist political propaganda and influence; many of them become "Zionists," mistakenly believing that they were only endorsing Palestine as a haven of refuge and supporting the social, spiritual, cultural and economic life of our co-religionists in Palestine, as enjoined in the last sentence of the above principle. But the *religious principles* of Reform Judaism regarding *nationalism*, nevertheless, remain *unchanged*.

Q. In the statement of the above principle, it is set forth that "*we neither pray for nor anticipate a return to Palestine nor a restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state;*" does this refer to the prayers in the Union Prayer Book?

A. Yes, it merely states a *fact* because we do not anticipate returning to Palestine and *we do not pray* to return there. All prayers for the return to Palestine, which are common and frequent in the rituals in use by the Orthodox and Conservative Congregations, have been eliminated from the Union Prayer Books which we use. The 1940 revisions of Volume I gives an optional Sabbath service (No. V) with a Zionist caste, which Beth Israel Congregation, by resolution, has protested; and which service has never been read in our Congregation either by our Rabbi-emeritus or our present Senior Rabbi. Reform Judaism's religious philosophy is beautifully expressed in the prayers for the Day of Atonement, from which are quoted:

UNION PRAYER BOOK PRAYERS FOR DAY OF ATONEMENT

(Page 252) "On this day our fathers everywhere recalled with deep sorrow the solemn rites of atonement in the Temple at Jerusalem and lamented the glory which had departed from Zion's hill. In strains, both sad and rapturous, they gave voice to the sense of desolation with which these stirring memories filled their hearts. Happy the eyes, they chanted, that saw the high priest in his sacred vestment . . . ministering at Thine altar. Happy the eyes, that beheld the chief of the sons of Aaron . . . with hands uplifted for blessing like the proud cedar of Lebanon. . . . Happy the ears that heard the thousand voiced song of the Levites . . . echoing the praises of the most high in sweet and soul stirring melodies. But Thou, O Lord, *dost not delight in sacrificial altars; and priestly pomp pleases Thee not.* Thou hast taught us through Thy prophets what is good and what Thou dost require of us; to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with Thee. . . . *And when thou didst send us forth to all parts of the earth, it was but to bear witness to this, Thine eternal truth, and to glorify Thy holy name throughout the world.* (Page 253) . . . Who can fathom Thy purposes, and divine the secrets of Thy judgments? Often in that which comes like a blighting sorrow, there lies hidden the token of Thy deep love. When Thy holy Temple was destroyed, and Israel was driven from his home to become a wanderer in foreign lands, little did Thy people in their mournful plight *foresee the larger destiny which Thou hadst appointed for them.* In their grief and humiliation our fathers searched their hearts for the secret sins which had brought this terrible judgment upon them. On the day of atonement they felt most deeply the bitterness of their *exile* from the Holy Land and the loss of Temple, altar and priesthood as a means of atonement. But the promises of grace which abound in Thy word have opened our eyes to the *deeper meaning* of Thy law. It has been given us to understand that true atonement is perfected in the heart when it turns in sincerity to Thee, and that altar and ministering priests cannot make repentance more acceptable. By Thy grace, O God, it has also been given us to see in our dispersion over the earth, not a means of punishment, but a sign of blessed privilege. Scattered among the nations of the world, Israel is to bear witness to Thy power and Thy truth and to endeavor to unite all peoples in a covenant of brotherhood and peace." (Page 254.)

(Page 255) "We therefore give thanks and praise to Thee, our guardian and redeemer. Thou has preserved and guided us through the centuries of hatred and persecution, that the love of Thy name and Thy law rooted deep in the soul of Israel might quicken every heart and draw it nigh unto Thee. . . . *Not backward* do we turn our eyes, O Lord, *but forward* to the promised and certain future. *Wherever* a sanctuary is dedicated to Thy service, Thou dwellest; and wherever Thy name is worshipped, Thou revealest Thyself anew. And though we *cherish and revere* the

place where stood the cradle of our people, the land where Israel grew up like a tender plant . . . *our longings and aspirations reach out toward a higher goal.* The morning-dawn shall yet brighten into a radiant noon day; the tender sprout shall yet become a heaven aspiring tree beneath which *all the families of the earth* will find shelter. This is the gracious *promise* proclaimed by Thy prophets; and with faith unshaken and heart undismayed we shall labor and wait for its fulfillment. Then will the sanctuary be reared in which atonement and reconciliation will be made by the seven fold brightness of the sun of truth, that first arose on Sinai's mount. Thy law will be established in the hearts of men, and all Thy children will unite in peace and love to serve Thee, their Father and their God."

RABBINICAL CONFERENCES AGAINST "NATIONALISM"

Q. In order to establish a clear case of accepted fundamental basic principles, it is necessary that there be a *general concensus* over a period of time, and under changing conditions. What has been the attitude of Reform Judaism since the 1869 and 1885 declarations and on up to the convention of 1943; when without notice to all the Rabbis that a change of front on basic principles was contemplated, and certainly without a mandate authorization or any authority from the laymen who founded, supported and builded Reform Judaism, the CCAR passed a "neutral" resolution "that Zionism is not incompatible with Reform Judaism"?

A. The Central Conference of American Rabbis spoke out consistently against "nationalism" as long as it was an issue. Naturally when it ceased to be an issue and when it was assumed that all understood the basic attitude of Reform, such pronouncements were considered no longer necessary and were discontinued.

In 1897, 1898, 1899, 1906, 1911, 1917, 1918, and in 1920—we find a clear cut position taken by Reform Rabbis upon the subject of "Nationalism":

The "Universal Jewish Encyclopedia" (1942) says:

"In conferences held in Philadelphia in 1869 and in Pittsburg in 1885, the Central Conference of American Rabbis rejected the hope of return to Palestine when the rabbis declared 'We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community' (1885 Pittsburg platform). *This viewpoint persisted in anti-Zionist ideology and debate since that day.* Just a month before modern Zionism was born (1897) the opponents of Jewish nationalism looked upon the aspirations of the nationalists as 'agitation' that concerns us very little. (CCAR Year Book, 1897, pg. 11.) In spite of this there was concern even in those days that Zionism might intrude upon American shores. Isaac M. Wise . . . saw the danger that the whole of American Israel might be compromised by the supporters of the Herzlian plan which he called 'the momentary inebriation of morbid minds.' The Basel Congress and the Zionist agitation Isaac M. Wise regarded as an 'unpleasant episode' in Jewish history, and he called upon his colleagues in the Reform rabbinate to voice their united opposition." (Vol. X, pg. 666.)

The Rabbinical Convention passed a Resolution (1897) in accordance with the suggestion of Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, its president, reading as follows:

"Resolved, That we totally disapprove of any attempt for the establishment of a Jewish state. Such attempts show a misunderstanding of Israel's mission, which from the narrow political and national field has been expanded to the promotion among the whole human race of the broad and universalistic religion first proclaimed by the Jewish prophets. Such attempts do not benefit, but infinitely harm, our Jewish brethren where they are still persecuted by confirming the assertion of their enemies that the Jews are foreigners in the countries in which they are at home and of which they are everywhere the most loyal and patriotic citizens."

"We reaffirm that the object of Judaism is not political nor national, but spiritual, and addresses itself to the continuous growth of peace, justice, and love in the human race, to a Messianic time when all men will recognize that they form one great brotherhood for the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth."

The following year, in 1898, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations passed a Resolution which began:

"We are unalterably opposed to political Zionism. The Jews are not a nation but a religious community," and the

Central Conference of American Rabbis passed a resolution which included this sentiment:

"We believe that Israel—the Jewish people—like every other religious communion has the right to live, to be at home, and to assert its message in every part of the world." (Vol. X, page 666, *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*.)

The *Encyclopedia* says further, that "*During the twenty years that followed (the 1897 declaration demanded by Rabbi Wise, following the Basel Congress), the Conference of American Rabbis issued resolution after resolution rejecting and repudiating Zionism.*" In 1899 Samuel Sale expressed the political thought of the Conference when he declared:

"The American Jews are so intimately bound up with the history and destiny of this country that it seems to *border on insanity* to ask us to give up our glorious heritage for a mess of pottage elsewhere." (Vol. X, pg. 666.)

In 1905, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* was published, and the noted Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch wrote the article on "Reform Judaism." He lists five (5) *dogmas* of Reform Judaism. Number four (4) reads as follows:

"The dispersion of the Jews and the destruction of the Temple were not acts of providential requital for sins. They were providential devices to bring Israel nearer unto other children of man. The goal of Israel's history is not national restoration and segregation, but the rise of a more nearly perfect humanity in which Jewish love for God and man shall be universalized. Not a Messiah, but the Messianic age, is the burden of Israel's hope." (Vol X, page 350.)

In 1906, at the Indianapolis Convention, the Central Conference resolved:

"We hereby re-affirm that *religion* is the tie which unites the Jews; the synagogue is the basic institution of Judaism, and the congregation, its unit of representation." (Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, page 361.)

In 1911, at the Baltimore Convention the previous statements of the conference were reaffirmed, when the report of the committee on "Church and State" was adopted which read:

"Inasmuch as we are unqualifiedly committed to the total separation of Church and State (see the fourth sentence in Beth Israel's basic principle number two), we discountenance any movement in Jewish communities on other than *religious* basis which would violate this principle and tend to create the impression that the Jews are an imperium in imperio (*sovereignty within a sovereignty*)." (Page 361, *id.*)

In the 1917 Conference of American Rabbis, the following resolution was adopted:

"We herewith reaffirm the fundamental principle of reform Judaism, that the *essence of Israel as a priestpeople, consists in its religious consciousness*, and in the sense of consecration of God and service in the world, and not in any political or racial national consciousness. And therefore, we look with disfavor upon the new doctrines of *political Jewish nationalism*, which finds the criterion of Jewish loyalty in anything other than loyalty to Israel's God and Israel's religious mission."

The Chicago Conference of the CCAR (1918) made an important pronouncement upon this subject, more important than usual because of the Balfour declaration a few months prior to the meeting. The Resolution took exception to the implications of the Balfour declaration "that Palestine was to be a national homeland for the Jews" and declared:

"We naturally favor the facilitation of immigration to Palestine of Jews who, either because of economic necessity or political or religious persecution desire to settle there. We hold that Jews in Palestine as well as anywhere else in the world are entitled to equality in political, civil and religious rights but we do not subscribe to the phrase in the declaration which says, 'Palestine is to be a national home-land for the Jewish people.' This statement assumes that the Jews although identified with the life of many nations for centuries are in fact a people without a country. We hold that Jewish people are and of right ought to be at home in all lands. Israel, like every other religious community, has the right to live and assert its message in any part of the world. We are opposed to the idea that Palestine should be considered the home-land of the Jews. Jews in America are part of the American nation. The ideal of the Jew is not the establishment of a Jewish state—not the reassertion of Jewish nationality which has long been outgrown. We believe that our survival as a people is dependent upon the assertion and the maintenance of our historic religious role and not upon the acceptance of Palestine as a home-land of the Jewish people. The mission of the Jew is to witness to God all over the world."

Again in 1920, the CCAR expressed itself as follows:

"We rejoice, indeed, at the present decision of the San Remo Conference to give to Great Britain, a mandate over Palestine in line with the Balfour Declaration. But, we hold today what the conference declared anent the Balfour Declaration two years ago: *We do not subscribe to the phrase in the declaration which says, 'Palestine is to be a national home land for the Jewish people.'* * * * *Convinced that the mission of the Jew is to witness to God all over the world, emphasizing the religious function of Israel, and rejecting any assertion of Jewish nationality, which it has long ago outgrown, we hold that Israel's Redemption will only be realized when the Jew will have the right to live in any part of the world, and, with all racial and religious prejudice and persecution ended, Israel will be free as a religious power and integral part of all nations, to give world service.*"

"Opposition to Zionism was quiescent in the years following the riots in Palestine in 1929 and the advent of the Nazis to power in Germany in 1933" says the article on "Zionism" in the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia. "In 1935 the Conference (CCAR) resolved that a policy of neutrality and tolerance should be fostered in the Conference attitude towards Zionism. It was mutually agreed that the Conference take no official stand on the subject of Zionism. *In 1942 this resolution was disregarded by the Zionists, who forced through the Conference a resolution supporting the establishment of a Jewish Army under a Jewish flag in Palestine. This action of the Zionists quickened to renewed life the opponents of political Zionism who for nearly twenty years had striven to cooperate in a program of unity with Zionists in aiding the cultural and economic development of Palestine*" (Vol. X, page 666, Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 1942).

The action described above; with other additional actions purposely designed to place all of American Jewry behind the political program of the Zionists (through the American Jewish Conference); the acquiescence by delegates from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the active participation and support by delegates of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in the maximal Zionist platform of such Conference, *made it necessary for Beth Israel Congregation an American Reform Congregation, to set forth a re-affirmation of its basic principles which support universal prophetic Judaism, and which oppose the particularistic, nationalistic conception and interpretation of traditional Judaism.*

Question: Has there been any recent statement, similar in character, of representative Jewish leaders, upon this subject?

Answer: Ninety Reform Rabbis, objecting to the passage of a Resolution in the CCAR "favoring a Jewish Army" met in Atlantic City in June, 1942, and issued a statement of principles, which declared in part:

"Jewish nationalism tends to confuse our fellowmen about our place and function in society and diverts our own attention from our historic role to live *as a religious community wherever we may dwell.*" (Vol. X, page 666, Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (1942).

The statement issued by the Reform Rabbis, further states:

As to Palestine rehabilitation ". . . we stand ready to render unstinted aid to our brethren in their economic, cultural, and spiritual endeavors in that country. But in the light of our *universalistic interpretation of Jewish history and destiny, and also because of our concern for the welfare and status of the Jewish people living in other parts of the world, we are unable to subscribe to or support the political emphasis now paramount in the Zionist program. . . . The spiritual role is especially voiced by Reform Judaism in its emphasis upon the eternal prophetic principles of life and thought, principles through which alone Judaism and the Jew can hope to endure and bear witness to the universal God.*"

This statement was signed by rabbis "occupying leading pulpits in every section of the United States." Among the signers were Dr. Henry Barnston, senior Rabbi of Beth Israel Congregation for 43 years (now Rabbi-emeritus), and Rabbi Hyman J. Schachtel, present senior rabbi of Beth Israel Congregation.

Q. Did not the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1943 declare that "Zionism is not incompatible with Reform Judaism"?

A. Yes, and that is one of the determining factors in causing Beth Israel membership to *reaffirm* its basic principles. An informal resolution passed by a majority cannot at one fell swoop wipe out the facts of history, commonly accepted, over a period

of more than one hundred years. The passage of a resolution by a group, no matter how learned nor by how large a majority, for instance that "we have changed our minds and the world is flat and not round," would not change the fact that, nevertheless, it has been proven that the world is round. A study of the history of Reform Judaism rejects absolutely the compatibility of Reform Judaism and Zionism. Facts are facts and resolutions do not alter them.

Q. Who, among American Rabbis, is regarded as the great reform theologian?

A. Dr. Kaufmann Kohler (1843-1926) is generally accorded that distinction. He called the Pittsburg (1885) Rabbinical Conference and was president of Hebrew Union College for eighteen years (1903-1921). In the biography on this great leader which appears in the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, contributed by Dr. Samuel Schulman, Kaufmann Kohler is described "as the most powerful intellectual force in Reform Judaism in America." Dr. Schulman says further, "By his many-sided scholarship he, more than any other leader, provided the foundation for the ideas which dominate the Reform Movement."

Q. What views and convictions did he express regarding "nationalism" or Zionism and Reform Judaism?

A. Succinctly, we quote a few of them:

(a) "... the leaders of Reform Judaism . . . declared themselves *unanimously* opposed to retaining the belief in a personal Messiah and the *political restoration* of Israel, either in doctrine or in their liturgy . . . the logical outcome of the political and social emancipation of the Jew in western Europe and America . . . Zionism . . . expressed the purely national aims of the Jewish people, disregarding the *religious* aspirations. . . . This term (Zionism) has since become the watchword of all those who hope for a political restoration, as well as of others whose longings are of a more cultural nature. Both regard the Jewish people as a nation like *any* other, denying to it the specific character of a priest-people and a holy nation with a religious mission for humanity. . . . On this account, Zionism, whether political or cultural, can have *no place* in Jewish *theology*. Quite different is the attitude of religious Zionism which emphasizes the ancient hopes and longings for the restoration of the Jewish Temple and State in connection with the nationalistic movement (traditional Jewish theology) . . . Political Zionism owes its origin to the wave of anti-Semitism. . . . The study of Israel's mighty past will, it is hoped, bring the conviction, the power, the hope and the refuge of Israel is in its God, and *not* in any territorial possession. We require a regeneration, *not of a nation*, but of the *faith* of Israel, which is its soul." ("Jewish Theology", Kohler, pgs. 389-390-391.)

(b) "... the underlying idea, the fundamental principle of Reform Judaism to be accentuated more than any other, is that Judaism is no more a national religion than its God is a tribal god . . ." (pg. 329 "Studies, Addresses and Personal Papers," K. Kohler).

(c) "... we, who believe in progressive Judaism . . . protest as one man against the very idea of a return to Judea, as if that were our land, and we but foreigners, aliens and exiles in the country in which we live . . ." (pg. 458, id).

(d) "... Reform Judaism in no way discourages the Jewish colonization of Palestine and adjoining lands, but it can only regard it as a *philanthropic* effort deserving general support . . . it denounces as *treason* the attempt of those who want to sell our birthright, our four thousand-year-old spiritual inheritance, for a mess of pottage . . . and their American citizenship for a land in the clouds . . . a spiritual Zion for all mankind is the goal, the aim of reform Judaism." (pg. 334, id.)

(e) "... the place of the Jew is *not* among the League of Nations but among the League of Religions . . ." (pg. 198 id).

Q. Are there other Rabbinical statements that "we are a religious community" which indicates that this has been the accepted principle of Reform Judaism?

A. The following is a quotation from a very exhaustive and illuminating article on "Reform Judaism and the Prayer Book" written for "The Synagogue" (October, 1941) by Rabbi Frederic A. Doppelt:

"By far the most crucial aspects of the Union Prayer-book center about *major principles* in traditional Jewish life. . . . with a single sweep, it discarded every supplication 'for the restoration of Zion to its pristine position in Jewish life.' This liturgical stroke was, of course, in harmony with aspirations rising out of the whole philosophy of Jewish emancipation during the nineteenth century and was

in line with the *doctrine of Israel as a religious community only*—a doctrine Reform Judaism evolved out of its interpretation of Jewish theology . . .”

and, again in a stirring speech made to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations meeting in Detroit (1941) which speech was entitled “The Failures of the Union,” Dr. Louis L. Mann of Chicago said:

“Not sufficient effort has been made to keep Reform alive and alert. . . . Read the history of Holdheim, Geiger, Einhorn, Samuel Hirsch, Kohler, Isaac M. Wise and Emil G. Hirsch and you will find in Reform Judaism a missionary zeal, a social passion, and a personal sense of consecration that we are woefully lacking today. Stripped of non-essentials, it was a return to prophetic Judaism, with less emphasis upon form, ritual and ceremony and more emphasis upon the practical idealism and social vision of the prophets. But it was something *more!* It was a pronouncement that Israel is a *religious community*, and not a nation in any modern secular sense of that word . . .”

Q. Have other great American Rabbis stressed the religious nature of the Jewish group throughout history?

A. Yes, we cannot give them all; but Dr. H. G. Enelow, president of the CCAR (1927-1929) clearly expressed it:

“If one consults Jewish history as to what the Jews have been throughout the ages, one receives but one answer, and an unequivocal one. The Jews have been a *religious* group, and nothing else, first and last. Their appearance was due to a *religious* motive; their survival has been secured by a *religious* ideal; and their millennial martyrdom—their unparalleled martyrdom all over the world—has been inspired by their matchless *religious* fidelity.”

STATEMENTS AS TO “CAUCASIAN RACE”

Q. Why do the basic principles make reference to the “Caucasian” race?

A. To correct the erroneous impression, even among Americans of Jewish faith, that there is a distinct “Jewish” race; which impression has been capitalized upon by anti-Semites. If there be confusion and misunderstanding in the minds of parents, no blame can attach to children who, at school answering the questions as to their “race” often answer “Jewish”; and give the same erroneous answer when quizzed as to their “nationality.” We believe that Americans of Jewish faith, where the facts are consonant, should not hesitate to assert that they are of the white (Caucasian) race, that their *nationality* is *American* and that their *religion* is *Judaism*. These principles, it must be remembered, are written for the members of Beth Israel Congregation. All members of the Congregation are white. It is known that there are Jews living in other parts of the world, and some in America, who are Ethiopians and Mongolians; but there are none that are members or prospective members of Beth Israel.

Q. What is the *authority* for the statement that the Jews, or “Semites” are members of the general division of classes of the races of mankind known as the “Caucasian” or “White” race?

A. (1) *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* defines “Semite” as:

“A member of the *Caucasian* race, now chiefly represented by Jews and Arabs, but in ancient times including also the Babylonians, Assyrians, Armenians, Phoenicians, and various other peoples of Southwest Asia.”

(2) *Webster's “New” International Dictionary* defines “Caucasian” as:

“Designating or pertaining to the division of mankind comprising the chief races of Europe, North Africa and Southwestern Asia . . . The typical peoples of the race are comprised of the speakers of the Indo-European, *Semitic* and *Hamitic* languages.”

(3) “*The Races of Mankind*” by Dr. Gene Weltfish and Prof. Ruth Benedict, of the Department of Anthropology, Columbia University, says:

“How are races classified? . . . The *three primary* races of the world have their strongest development in areas A, B and C on the map on page 9 . . . A is the area of the *Caucasian* Race, B of the *Mongoloid* Race, C of the *Negroid* Race . . . (pg. 10) . . . Aryans, Jews, Italians are not races. . . . Hitler uses the term (Aryans) in many ways. . . . As Hitler uses it, the term ‘Aryan’ has no meaning, racial, linguistic, or otherwise. Jews are people who practice the Jewish religion.

They are of all races, even Negro and Mongolian. . . . The so-called 'Jewish type' is a Mediterranean type, and no more 'Jewish' than the South Italian . . . Italians are a *nationality*. . . . The Germans, the Russians, and all other nations of Europe are *nations*, not races." (Pages. 11-12.)

(4) Dr. Melville Jacobs, Professor of Anthropology, University of Washington and Associate Editor of "The American Anthropologist" contributed one of the articles to the book "Jews in a Gentile World" (MacMillan, 1942). He says in the chapter entitled "Jewish Blood and Culture:"

"The Jews are hybrids like all other populations and are biologically no better or worse than anyone else. . . . There is no evidence for the existence of a distinctive Jewish blood or 'race,' nor has there ever been a group of family lines of Jews that could be called a 'race.' The Jewish leader who speaks about '*our race*' is talking *unadulterated nonsense*. When either he or she accedes to such a notion, or uses such words, there is an admission in effect that the racial nonsense *uttered by the bitterest enemies* of the Jewish people is likewise biologic truth. It is no longer necessary to reiterate the puerile claim of a common 'racial' character to take dignified pride in participation in a rich *historic and religious* heritage. Therefore, it is correct to affirm the existence of a '*Jewish religion*,' a '*Jewish community of peoples*,' a continuity of *cultural forms* and other non-biological entities . . ." (page 54-55).

In the same book is another notable chapter contributed by Dr. Carleton Stevens Coon, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Harvard University. The chapter which he writes is entitled "Have the Jews a Racial Identity." He says:

"In order to approach this question intelligibly it will be necessary to begin with a review of the *racial history* of *white* peoples, and with a classification of white races, since Jewish history is an essential part of *white racial history* . . ." (page 21). . . . The Jews, therefore, *are not a race*. . . . They are a group of people as united biologically as is the average intermarrying social or geographical unit found among *white peoples*; they have racial peculiarities which serve to differentiate the majority of them anthropometrically from their non-Jewish compatriots and neighbors," (page 35) concludes Professor Coon.

(5) Rabbi Julian Morgenstern, President of Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, O., in an address entitled "Nation, People, Religion, What Are We," delivered October 16th, 1943, says in the opening paragraph of his learned address:

"Our remotest ancestors were of the Aramaean family of the Semitic branch of the *Caucasian race*."

Q. While the designation of "Caucasian" race in close conjunction with designation of nationality and religious affiliation, clearly indicates that the purpose is to negate the impression, in some quarters, that there is a "Jewish" race, is it not also true that "Caucasian" is the generally used generic term as applied commonly and *legally* to the members of the "white" race?

A. Yes, and it has been so held in important court decisions construing Federal statutes regulating immigration, and naturalization of aliens. The U. S. statute reads that "the right to become a naturalized citizen . . . shall extend only to *white* persons, etc., . . ." and the courts have been called upon to define and construe "white" persons. The United States Supreme Court declares:

"'*White persons*' . . . import a racial and not an individual test, and as meaning persons of the *Caucasian* race, regardless of the color of the skin of the individual." (43 Sup. Ct. 65; 260 U. S. 178.)

And a late Federal court decision on this point (1943) rules:

"This section uses the words 'white persons' as *synonymous* with a member of the *Caucasian race*, as popularly understood, so that scientific or ethnological classification of races are not significant in applying this section." (In re Ahmed Hassan, D. C. Mich., 1943, 48 F. Supp. 843.)

And an early Federal court decision held:

"Free *white persons*" included members of the white or *Caucasian* race, as distinct from the black, yellow, red and brown races. (U. S. v. Balsara, N. Y. 1910, 180 F. 694, 103 C. C. A. 660 affirming, and other cases cited following above.)

And in 1921, a Missouri Federal Court decision states:

"Whether or not historically the term 'Caucasian' is accurate as a designation of the white race, it is a term which *appeals to common understanding* and to that of the lawmakers with practical definiteness, and the term "white person" may now be said to have a well understood meaning." Petition of Charr, D. C. Mo. 1921, 273 F. 207.)

AID TO JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN PALESTINE

Q. Does this principle frown upon and discourage efforts to help the Jewish settlement in Palestine?

A. Assuredly not. The educational, social, economic and spiritual life of the Palestinian Jews have always been the object of concern and assistance of American Reform Jews and will continue to be in no lesser degree than it is the concern of all Jews. The last sentence of Beth Israel principle number two (2) reads:

"With regard to the Jewish settlement in Palestine we consider it our sacred privilege to promote the spiritual, cultural and social welfare of our co-religionists there."

DO ALL PALESTINIAN JEWS WANT A "JEWISH" NATION

Q. Do all the Jews living in Palestine favor a "Jewish" nation, state or commonwealth?

A. No; many do not. The movement for a Jewish nation receives more impetus and driving force from *without* Palestine than from within. We quote from the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia:

"Judah L. Magnes, *head of the Hebrew University* (Palestine) since its opening in 1925, and other prominent Jewish and Arab leaders predicted that inevitable conflicts would arise if Palestine became either a "Jewish state" or an "Arab state." Magnes warned (Foreign Affairs, January, 1943) of the danger of war between Jews and Arabs if some compromise was not made by the Jews and Arab nationalists. He asked for the 'union' of Jews and Arabs in the formation of a 'bi-national state' . . . Zionists saw in the . . . 'union' plan the destruction of their hopes for a National State. They called for the repudiation of Magnes and *for his dismissal* for declaring that Jewish nationalism 'is unhappy, chauvinistic, narrow and terroristic in the best style of European nationalism.' (New Palestine, January 8, 1943.)" (Vol. X, pg. 667.)

ISRAEL'S RECORD AS A NATION

Q. Is the history of the Israelites, as a nation, such as to justify the hope that it would make a great contribution to the history of the world, as a restored nation?

A. "In the entire period of five and one-quarter centuries of national existence, Israel as a nation achieved *absolutely nothing* distinctive or unique, to indicate innate ability or genius in that direction. . . . Actually for no more than approximately one-sixth of its somewhat more than three thousand years of existence as a people did Israel play the role of a nation. And for a full three-fourths of this period its role as a nation was inglorious, unhappy and dominated by a persistent and inavertible threat of doom. *As a nation, as a self-governing political entity, Israel contributed little, perhaps nothing at all, to the content and progress of civilization. . . . As a people, however, and particularly as a people dominated by the consciousness of its relation to its God, Israel contributed much, very much, which was basic to the progress of civilization, and constitutes the unshakeable foundation of the social, spiritual and cultural life of all mankind and of our vision and hope of today and tomorrow . . .*" (Excerpts from address of Dr. Julian Morgenstern, President of Hebrew Union College, October 16, 1943.)

ARE JEWS "HOMELESS?"

Q. Is the restoration of Palestine necessary to solve the historic "homelessness" of the Jews?

A. On January 7, 1943, Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel, at that time Rabbi of West End Synagogue (now senior Rabbi Congregation Beth Israel, Houston), issued a statement which answers this question:

"The second point that calls particularly for refutation is the so-called historic *homelessness* of the Jews which the *political Zionist* continually stresses. Here I must confess I don't know what they mean. *We American Jews are not homeless. The British Jews fighting valiantly for Britain do not regard themselves as homeless. Nor do the Russian Jews shedding their blood along the 2,000-mile front. Nor do the Polish Jews fighting with their Christian fellow-citizens in the ranks of the Polish army.* If there are Jews who feel homeless, that emotion derives not from an abstract philosophy but from the reality of persecution. Palestine itself has had within the last 10 years a large increase in its Jewish population. But it was no mystical concept of homelessness that brought them there. Quite the contrary, it was lack of democracy, it was *fascism* that sent thousands of Jews to Palestine from Germany and neighboring countries, just as it sent thousands of them to other parts of the world. *The problem was the denial of fundamental human rights.* It was part and parcel of the same onrushing forces of darkness which sent hundreds of thousands of refugees of Catholic and Protestant faith out of their homes and countries, and which finally precipitated the war.

"If Europe is emancipated—if Europe after the war has a new birth of freedom, there will be no need for artificial lands of refuge for forced migrants. And if Europe and the world are not so emancipated then there is refuge nowhere."

"The followers of Judaism look upon Palestine as the cradle of their faith, but they regard the world as their domicile, so that together with all other God-revering men and women, they may work out a way of life which shall bring justice and peace to all. The Jews are essentially a religious community, whose mission is to lead themselves toward, and co-operate with others into, the way of righteousness."

Q. What were the thoughts of Dr. Kaufmann Kohler on this subject?

A. In a lecture on "Zionism" he says:

"... the very fact that a home should be provided for the Jew implies the idea, wholly erroneous, that the Jews, living in various countries of occidental civilization, still look to Palestine as their home... even the Orthodox Jew, who prays for the restoration of the Jewish kingdom, cannot accept this movement as the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy, which must come by supernatural intercession of Divine Providence... we... who believe in progressive Judaism... protest as one man against the very idea that we are but foreigners, aliens and exiles in the country in which we live... while we love Judea as the land where the cradle of our ancestors stood... we cling with every fibre of our heart to the land of our birth and citizenship... We repudiate the idea that Judea is the home of the Jew, which unhomes the Jew all over the wide earth..."

DOES JEWISH "NATIONALISM" AFFECT AMERICAN SOLIDARITY?

Q. Upon the intimation of "divided allegiance" which suggested the positive statement about the "Stars and Stripes" being our flag, the United States our nation, etc., can there be any doubt as to the loyalty of the Jew, Zionist or non-Zionist?

A. Upon the basis of the record of the Jews, from Revolutionary times on to the present time, there can be none. But "records" are not always consulted and "impressions" are deduced and become lasting. This was probably the reason for the strong statement made by Congressman Julius Kahn, who for twenty-six years represented the state of California in the Congress of the United States. (Mrs. Kahn was elected to succeed her husband as Congresswoman, upon his death.) In an article, "Why Most American Jews Do Not Favor Zionism" (New York Times, magazine section, February 16, 1919) Congressman Kahn sets forth his reasons for opposing the Jewish state:

"1. It creates a divided allegiance between our country with its Stars and Stripes, and Zion, with its white flag and blue star. The American Jew knows but one flag, the Stars and Stripes. 2. The Zionist doctrine is in conflict with our own free institutions (separation of church and state). 3. Palestine is small; it could never support the millions of Jews who live in countries where Jewish persecution is a matter of common occurrence. 4. The greatest danger to the Jews in all those countries where they are on entire equality with every other class of citizens, is that with the establishment of a separate Jewish state they would be looked upon as aliens where today they are respected citizens."

Q. Is there danger to Jews and Judaism in Zionist political national doctrines?

A. We give several statements which are thoughtful views upon related subjects that should provoke thought:

(a) In May, 1921, there appeared an article in *World's Work*, an influential periodical of liberal tendencies, which expresses by way of illustration the present day thinking of many Americans of Jewish faith:

"Americans see in the Zionistic movement a menace to American solidarity; for anything that tends to make any section of the population transfer a modicum of its allegiance, even a sentimental and religious allegiance, to foreign soil is an impediment to that undivided devotion which true Americanism demands. Americanism, after all, is a jealous mistress and can brook no rivals."

(b) That political Zionism and its advocacy may stimulate anti-Semitism in America, is a thought expressed in the book *"Jews In A Gentile World"* (MacMillan, 1942). Dr. J. O. Hertzler, Chairman of Department and Professor of Sociology at the University of Nebraska, contributes one of the chapters in his study on "Anti-Semitism." He states:

"Nevertheless, the Zionist movement at present does serve as another irritant in maintaining anti-Semitism. While only a minority of Jews are Zionists, many more are sympathetic with the movement. The non-Jew feels that the Jew, despite his protestations to the contrary, is still a 'foreigner' at heart; still divided in his loyalty and sympathy; still not a complete national. . . . Many of the Jews, he feels, are still a people more interested in their own nation and their own people than in their allegiance to the countries in which they have thrown their lot. The non-Jew can understand why the cruelly persecuted Jews of Germany, Poland, Rumania, or Hungary should want to go to Palestine. But why do young, supposedly assimilated Jews, with their political and economic and social opportunities, want to go to the marshes or deserts of Palestine painfully to try to hew out an eight acre orange grove? Does the Jew seek to establish a twentieth-century 'international ghetto'? While this dual relationship may be justified in the mind of the Zionist Jew, it is hard to understand and justify in any other mind."

(c) Early in 1944, Resolutions were offered in the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Congress of the United States, designed to have Congress express its disapproval of the British White Paper, ending immigration of Jews into Palestine. The resolution, however, went much further than this, and would have placed Congress upon record as favoring the eventual establishment of a *Jewish commonwealth* in Palestine. There was no opposition to that portion of the resolution protesting the White Paper, but a furore was raised over the attempted "commitment" as to an eventual Jewish commonwealth.

These resolutions (Wright-Compton in the House of Representatives) and the (Wagner-Taft in the Senate) were "deferred"—meaning killed for the time being—by request of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War and the urgent request of Chief of Staff, Geo. C. Marshall. The President of the United States backed the army's stand on requesting the deferment of the consideration "on military grounds."

The American Jewish Conference is responsible for the introduction of these resolutions at this time. Their "interim" committee "represented" (?) Jewish demands. Beth Israel Congregation is on record by resolutions passed November 23, 1943, and through its basic principles, that the American Jewish Conference *does not* speak for the membership of Beth Israel. What a tragedy for Jews of American faith, that in the midst of a war, not yet won, an administration at Washington, in the interest of the success of that war, feels impelled to ask the Congress not to act favorably upon a resolution offered "in the name of the Jews of America."

Rabbi William H. Fineshriber, of Philadelphia, appeared in opposition to this measure before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House. He favored the protest against the immigration curtailment, but urged opposition to the "Jewish Commonwealth." An excerpt from this testimony is here given:

"I come to protest . . . against that section of your Resolutions which speaks of the Jewish people, constituting a so-called 'Jewish Commonwealth' . . . I take it that means Palestine shall be made what would properly be called a Jewish Commonwealth. Does that mean that all of the citizens of the Commonwealth will become Jews, just as *we are* all Americans by virtue of being citizens . . . ? And does it mean that Jews, *outside* of that so-called 'Jewish Commonwealth,' shall, thereafter, *cease to be Jews* just as those, not native of this country or naturalized citizens, are not American? Or does it mean some confused, mixed pattern, unlike anything else in the world political order, a puzzling, bewildering, intermixture tending to make Jews *all over the world* an abnormal concept? There was such a commonwealth up to about two thousand years ago, a state like other states . . . a nation with its own language, its own authorities, its own political development,

which with time went the way of all nations. During its history . . . it had its conquests . . . was in turn conquered . . . it laid tribute on others . . . in turn paid tribute to other countries . . . it fought wars, it had internal strife, civil war, dissensions, political upheavals and finally . . . the Jewish nation was obliterated. Only *one* thing *survived* . . . a great truth emerged that was fashioned and shaped into a great *religion*. Out from among these people came the vision of the *Oneness* of God and, consonant with that, of the eternal *brotherhood* of man . . . came the Ten Commandments as a guide to ethical conduct and later, the exhortations of the prophets and seers . . . and those prophets, and those that preceded them and those that followed them, gave voice to *eternal truths*. . . . Will you now take it upon yourself to turn the clock back, to revert that ancient and universal *faith* into *secular channels*, into the channels of *nationalism*? Ask your Jewish fellow-citizens . . . anywhere in our beloved country what his *religion* is and he will say: 'I am of the Jewish *faith*.' Ask his *nationality* and he will speak with justified pride in the world's greatest title: 'I am an American.' This being so, I pray that no act of yours, no act of the American people whom you represent, will entangle this *crystal clear concept of a religion* with the secular, the *political complexities* of a state or commonwealth. . . ."

(d) The statement issued by leading American Jews, presented to President Wilson and directed to the peace conference of 1919, is as true today as when issued:

"This demand for a Jewish National State not only misrepresents the trend of the history of the Jews, who ceased to be a nation two thousand years ago, but involves the *limitations and possible annulment* of the larger claims of Jews for full citizenship and human rights in *all lands* in which those rights are not yet secure.' Demanding justice and equality for all the people of Palestine, under the fundamental rules of democracy, the signers of the statement saw in the Zionist plan for a national state in Palestine a spirit 'totally contrary to the practices of free government' . . . They asked that Palestine be constituted as a 'free and independent state, under a democratic form of government, recognizing no distinctions of creed or race or ethnic descent' and further declared 'We do not wish to see Palestine now or at any time in the future, organized as a Jewish state.'" (Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. X, pg. 667.)

(e) Rev. Dr. Samuel H. Goldenson, Rabbi of Temple Emanu-el, New York, said in a statement issued December 30, 1942:

"The danger to Judaism in the Zionist doctrines is in its emphasis upon the earlier and narrower features of our heritage, the features that lead to *separatism and exclusiveness*. Such tribal ways of thinking lie behind the very ideologies that are now causing us Jews and the world at large the greatest suffering. How much agony the world would have been spared during these tragic days, if men of every creed had learned to take counsel of the higher and nobler teachings of their own faiths!"

REFORM PRINCIPLES AND AMERICAN-ISM

Q. Why did Isaac M. Wise choose to stress "Americanism" in his passionate preaching of Reform Judaism?

A. Rabbi Allan Tarshish answers this question in his address on Isaac M. Wise before the Central Conference of American Rabbis, held in Cincinnati, 1942. He says:

" . . . Americanization was included in Wise's plan to enlighten the Jew through Reform. . . . 'The Jew must become an American in order to regain the proud consciousness of the free born man.' (Reminiscences, page 331 ff.) Wise did not want Jews to become Americans simply to lose themselves in the mass, but he wanted Jews to feel at home, to have an inner spirit of freedom and independence which would lead to natural growth and progress. It was not the melting pot of Zangwill that he wanted, but rather the 'two way passage' in the pattern of Louis Adamie: he wanted the Jews to be strengthened by the democratic spirit of American life and in turn to use that strength and natural equilibrium for higher *democratic practices* and *religious elevation*. Wise and Reform have helped the American Jew achieve this inner strength and feeling of security, this permanent understanding of the need for a natural balance . . ." (pg. 335, Year Book, CCAR, 1942).

PRINCIPLE No. 3

We believe in the coming of a Messianic Age and not in a personal Messiah. We recognize that it is our hallowed duty to speed the coming of the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, which is the Messianic ideal for which the righteous of all people work and pray.

Statement: Reform Judaism's belief in a Messianic "age" contrasts with traditional Judaism's conception of the coming of a *personal* Messiah. These differences are shown in the contrasts in the prayer books used in Synagogues and Temples.

Question: What is the well known prayer setting forth the Reform Jew's hope for the coming of a Messianic age, as used in the Union Prayer Book?

Answer: It is that portion of the "Adoration" which reads:

"May the time not be distant, O God, when Thy name shall be worshipped in all the earth, when unbelief shall disappear and error be no more. Fervently we pray that the day may come when all men shall invoke Thy name, when corruption and evil shall give way to purity and goodness, when superstition shall no longer enslave the mind, nor idolatry blind the eye, when all who dwell on earth shall know that to Thee alone every knee must bend and every tongue give homage. O may all created in Thine image, recognize that they are brethren, so that, one in spirit and one in fellowship, they may be forever united before Thee. *Then shall Thy kingdom be established on earth and the word of Thine ancient seer be fulfilled: The Lord will reign forever and ever; On that day the Lord shall be One and His name shall be One.*"

Q. What do the Jewish Encyclopedias say about this idea?

A. (1) The Jewish Encyclopedia (1905) in its article on "Reform Judaism" says this, concerning the *dogmas* of Reform Judaism:

"The goal of Israel's history is not national restoration and segregation, but the rise of a more nearly perfect humanity in which Jewish love for God and man shall be universalized. *Not a Messiah, but the Messianic age, is the burden of Israel's hope.*" (Vol. X, page 350.)

(2) The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (1942), Vol. VII, page 502 says:

"The Reform Movement in Judaism discarded the belief in a Messiah and interpreted the ancient Messianic hope to refer to a period of peace and human regeneration, omitting all reference to the restoration of the Jewish nationhood on the soil of Palestine. While at first the main impetus toward the denial of Jewish nationalism was the desire for emancipation, it later assumed a scientific basis, whereby the Messianic ideal was stripped of all its particularistic and national elements. *All references to the Messiah and to the hope for a return to Palestine were removed from Reform prayer books*, and at the various conferences held in Germany and in the United States, this new interpretation of the Messianic belief was given prominence."

Q. What did the Rabbinical Conference at Philadelphia in 1869 say about the Messianic aim of Israel?

A. When adopting its platform, the very first principle read:

"The Messianic aim of Israel is not the restoration of the old Jewish state under a descendant of David, involving a second separation from the nations of the earth, but the union of all of the children of God, so as to realize the unity of all rational creatures and their call to moral sanctification."

Q. What is the first authoritative Reform Rabbinical expression upon this subject?

A. At the Frankfort Conference, held in 1845 in which the great Reform leaders of Germany attended, Geiger, Hirsch, Formstecher, Einhorn, Holdheim and Phillipson, the resolution adopted on this question read as follows:

"The Messianic *idea* should receive prominent mention in our prayers, but all petitions for our return to the land of our fathers and for the restoration of a Jewish state should be eliminated from the prayers." ("The Reform Movement in Judaism," Phillipson, page 180.)

Q. Did the great Pittsburg Conference of 1885 set forth a declaration upon the matter of Israel's Messianic hope?

A. Yes, the first sentence of plank No. 5, reads:

"We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men."

Q. What is the contrast between the teachings of traditional Orthodoxy and Reform Judaism over the question of a Messiah?

A. Rabbi David Philipson, in his book "The Reform Movement in Judaism" says: "Connected with this change of the conception of Judaism from a national to a universal faith is the difference in attitude on the Messianic question. Rabbinical (Orthodox) Judaism posits the coming of a *personal Messiah*; Reform Judaism, rejecting this, teaches the coming of a Messianic *age* of universal peace and good will among men. In the wake of the thought of the great unknown prophet of the captivity, commonly known as the second Isaiah, Reform Judaism applies the idea of Messianic leadership to the people of Israel, not to any one individual." (Pages 5, 6.)

Q. Did Isaac M. Wise preach the doctrines of the Messianic age as distinguished from a personal Messiah?

A. Yes, and he was "excommunicated" for it, as he relates in his book "Reminiscences":

"Shortly after my re-election in Albany the following bull of excommunication, signed by Dr. Raphall and the officers of the Orthodox congregation of Charleston, appeared in the columns of the *Occident*: 'Since Wise declared publicly and decidedly in Charleston that he *does not believe* in the *personal* Messiah nor in bodily resurrection, he is no longer fit to act as rabbi or religious teacher of a Jewish congregation, and hence he should be removed from his post at Albany as soon as possible.' At first I laughed at the presumptuous, medieval, nonsensical document, since my beliefs were *no secret* in Albany, nor did it ever occur to me to conceal them . . ." (Pg. 152, Reminiscences, of Isaac M. Wise.)

PRINCIPLE No. 4

We accept as binding only the moral laws of Mosaic legislation and Prophetic teaching. While respecting the convictions of our Orthodox and Conservative brethren concerning the rabbinical and Mosaic laws which regulate diet, priestly purity, dress, and similar laws, we, however, as an American Reform Congregation, reject the religious obligatory nature of the same, as having originated in ages and under influences of ideas and conditions which today are entirely unsuited, unnecessary and foreign to the beliefs and observances of progressive Judaism in modern America. We shall maintain and use in connection with our religious services only such ritual and ceremonies as may be approved by the Congregation from time to time and which may symbolize, in effective and beautiful form, the principles of our faith, and, which are adapted to the progressive and liberal spirit of our times.

Statement: The principles here enunciated are neither new nor novel. They restate basically *fundamental* Reform Judaism. As written, there are included both positive and negative statements. First, on the positive side is the acceptance of the binding obligation of Mosaic *moral* laws and legislation and Prophetic teaching; and the pledge to maintain and use rituals and ceremonies that symbolize in effective and beautiful form the principles of our faith, and which are adapted to the progressive spirit of our times. Secondly, there are the negations—the breaking away by Reform Judaism from the belief in the *religious obligatory* nature of all written Pentateuchal laws and the oral laws codified in the Shulchan Aruk referring to sacrifices, and the priesthood or to Palestine; laws as having "originated in ages and under influence of ideas and conditions which are today entirely unsuited, unnecessary and foreign to the beliefs and observances of progressive Judaism in modern America."

Question: Is this a new and daring thought of Beth Israel Congregation or is there Rabbinical authority for these statements as *principles* of American Reform Judaism?

Answer: The "Declaration of Principles" of Reform Judaism as adopted by the Rabbinical Conference, held in Pittsburgh in 1885 is the *source* of the language used in this principle. A close reading of the third and fourth plank of the Pittsburgh statement of principles reveals almost an identity of language as well as thought. The Pittsburgh (1885) third declaration reads:

"We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today accept as *binding only its moral laws, and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our*

lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization."

and the Pittsburgh (1885) fourth declaration declares:

"We hold that all such Mosaic and Rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas entirely foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our days is apt to obstruct rather than to further spiritual elevation."

DIETARY LAWS

Q. What does the Jewish Encyclopedia (1905) give as the position of American Reform Judaism on the subject of "dietary" laws?

A. The article on "Reform Judaism from the point of view of the Reform Jew" contributed by Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, Vol. X, page 350, says:

"The Dietary Laws: The dietary laws have had their own history in Reform thought. . . . In the United States, the Biblical equally with the Talmudic dietary laws have fallen generally into disuse, even in so-called conservative congregations. . . . On the principle, fundamental to Jewish Reform, that the national exclusiveness of Judaism is no longer its destiny, these practices (dietary laws), necessarily resulting in Jewish separatism and incorporated into the Levitical scheme to effect Levitical purity, must be looked upon as in the same class with all other sacerdotal and Levitically national provisions."

Q. What was the views of Samuel Holdheim, one of the great leaders of the Reform Movement upon this subject?

A. In 1848 in a published reply to questions asked by Reform Jews of Arad, Hungary, Holdheim said:

"As I have demonstrated scientifically elsewhere, the dietary laws belong to the Biblical laws of cleanliness, which have long since lost all significance. . . . Whatever may have once been the reason for the dietary laws, this much is certain, that this reason no longer exists for us, and has no religious efficacy. . . . Therefore the abrogation of the dietary laws is highly desirable, since, in addition to being a disturbing feature in the civic and social life of the Jews, these laws are particularly prone to continue the differences between them and the other inhabitants." ("The Reform Movement in Judaism," Philipson.)

Q. What was the considered and authoritative opinion of Dr. Kaufmann Kohler, the theologian of the American Reform Movement (president Hebrew Union College, 1903-21), on the subject of the dietary laws?

A. In "Jewish Theology," he states:

" . . . these prohibitions of 'unclean' foods were intended originally for the priesthood and other holy men . . . as a matter of fact, the same class of animals from which the Israelites were commanded to abstain were also forbidden to the priests or saints of India, Persia, Mesopotamia, and partly of Egypt . . . whatever the origin of these customs . . . the Priestly Code itself admits their lack of an Israelitish origin . . . they were simply adopted by the law-giver of Israel to make the whole people feel their priestly calling . . . it cannot be denied that these laws actually disciplined the medieval Jew . . . the question remains whether they still fulfill their real object of consecrating Israel to its priestly mission among the nations. Certainly the priestly character of these laws is no longer understood, and the great majority of the Jewish people among the various nations have long discarded them. Orthodox Judaism, which follows tradition without inquiring into the purpose of the laws, is entirely consistent in maintaining the importance of every item of the traditional Jewish life. Reform Judaism has a different view . . . it cannot afford to encourage the separation of the Jew from his environment in any way except through the maintenance of his religion, and cannot encourage the dietary laws as a means of separation. Its great problem is to find other methods to inculcate the spirit of holiness in the modern Jew, to render him conscious of his priestly mission, while he lives in unison and fellowship with all his fellow-citizens." (Kohler's Jewish Theology, 1918, pages 451, 452, 453.)

Q. How does the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia define "Kashruth"?

A. "Kashruth: A term meaning fitness, worthiness, or legitimacy and applied

generally to objects or persons which meet all Orthodox Jewish religious requirements. The word "Kashruth" is applied to a correctly written scroll of the Torah, to a proper booth used for the Feast of Tabernacles, to a faultless ritual bath, and to a child born of religiously permitted . . . relations. In common parlance, however, the word "kashruth" denotes permitted food." (Vol. VI, page 327.)

Q. What is the attitude, *religiously*, of the Conservative Synagogues on this question?

A. According to the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, "Conservative Judaism is in itself a positive *embodiment of Traditional Judaism*"; and as such the preamble to the constitution of the "United Synagogue of America," a "union of congregations for the promotion of traditional Judaism" gives as one of its ends:

"to further the observance of the Sabbath and the *dietary laws*."

Q. Then the attitude of the Orthodox and the Conservative groups, on the one hand, as to dietary laws, is different from the attitude of Reform?

A. Yes. For instance, in outlining the aspects of Orthodox Judaism, the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (Vol. VI, page 240) says:

"The Orthodox *synagogue controls, through rabbis and supervisors, the various aspects of the religious life of the community, such as Kashruth (maintenance of the dietary laws).*"

Q. What is the extent of *observance* of the dietary laws?

A. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (Vol. VI, page 328) says:

"Until 200 years ago kashruth was observed with great scrupulousness by all Jews. Since then particularly in Germany and in the United States, laxity has grown apace. Reform Judaism never officially rejected the dietary regulations, but among Reform Jews these have fallen into disuse. Many Jews, although reared in Orthodox families, have come to disregard the dietary restrictions, especially when away from home . . ."

Q. Is observance of dietary laws synonymous with acceptance of Orthodoxy; and must therefore "Reform" Judaism accept criticism for lack of observance?

A. In these days when some Reform Rabbis seem determined upon a course that is designed to carry Reform backwards rather than forwards, it is interesting to read the defense of Reform Judaism from the imputed criticism for *disregard of dietary laws* as made by Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, which formed a part of the "Conference Sermon" delivered at the 1937 convention of the General Conference of American Rabbis:

"Let some of our faint-hearted Reform Rabbis who would beat a retreat into those 'former days' and who would lay at the door of Reform the responsibility, for all the present drift and dereliction . . . let them read the myriad of remonstrances regarding the indifference and apathy of the multitude even in the most rigidly Orthodox communities of yesterday or today; let them read Chief Rabbi Hertz's recent diatribe against his own flock's *open violation of the laws of Kashruth*; let them read the description of Orthodoxy's present plight as voiced by one of its own rabbis in the volume of sermons entitled 'The Message of Israel': 'The dietary laws,' he writes, 'are almost universally discarded; the Sabbath has well-nigh disappeared; synagogue attendance is negligible; Christmas trees are becoming ever more popular and intermarriage shows no signs of abating'; let them appraise all such actual conditions as these and be realistic enough to confess with another leader of Conservative Judaism in America: 'We can no more be the Jews of *Hear, Ye Sons* than an aeroplane can be an oxcart. We may believe that type of living quaint and beautiful, but we cannot model our lives upon it. It is a museum piece to be admired but not emulated. In a nostalgic mood we may long for it, but when we are actually confronted with the choice, we will not choose it.' (Israel Goldstein, the Message of Israel, page 198.)"

Q. What is the origin of kashruth?

A. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (1942) says that "*no one knows the origin or purpose of kashruth*. Observance is commanded in the Bible with the simple admonition to 'be holy' (Lev. 11:44)." (Page 330, Vol. VI.)

ARE JEWS WHO "KEEP KOSHER" BARRED FROM BETH ISRAEL MEMBERSHIP?

Q. Does "Principle No. 4" which "rejects the laws which regulate diet" signify, as has been charged, that a member or prospective member of Beth Israel Congregation "who observes the laws of Kashruth is barred from membership"?

A. Certainly not. The principle rejects, as it plainly states, "the religious obligatory nature of the dietary laws." Any individual that is a member of the congregation who does not keep "Kosher" is not regarded as being religiously derelict or of committing a sin. Any member who wishes to keep "Kosher" is free so to do; but in joining Beth Israel Congregation (an American Reform Congregation) he or she realizes, through the re-statement of this principle, that the Congregation, as a religious group (and in accordance with the practice in the every day lives of 99% of the membership) rejects the obligatory religious nature of Mosaic and Rabbinical laws which regulates diet as "having originated in ages and under influences of ideas and conditions which to-day are entirely unsuited, unnecessary and foreign to the beliefs and observances of progressive Judaism in modern America."

RITUAL AND CEREMONIES

Q. Is the restatement of the principle above with regard to "ritual and ceremonies" an indication of a contemplated change in the present ritual or ceremonies?

A. No, it is a reaffirmation of the position of Reform Judaism with regard to the ritual and ceremonies in use which came into being as a part of the Reform movement aimed at beautifying, making intelligible and bringing order and decorum into the public service. It serves, however as a warning to the C. C. A. R. that we will use only such ritual "as may be approved by the Congregation" and in the hopes that the tendency to go back to traditional Judaism and incorporate nationalistic ideology in the ritual, as indicated by the Zionistic service No. V, placed in the Union Prayer Book revision of 1940, will go no further.

Q. Did Isaac M. Wise, the founder of American Reform Judaism speak out on the matter of ceremonial reforms?

A. In an article written in 1854 in the American Israelite, Rabbi Wise declared: "Our religion contains better elements than a mere controversial and casuistical rabbinism, and these better elements must be considered the primary cause of its self preservation. * * * The Jew is conscious of the verities of his religion and therefore he loves them better than his life and worldly interests; he saw himself alone in the world, alone with his sublime idea, and therefore he lived in his faith and for it. It was this elevating and inspiring consciousness, and not rabbinism which preserved Judaism. But now the idea, the sublime cardinal elements, are almost lost sight of in the multitude of thoughtless observance of rabbinical forms . . . Judaism has become a set of unmeaning practices. * * * Therefore, we demand reforms. All unmeaning forms must be laid aside as outworn garments. * * * Another principle of Reform is this: 'Whatever makes us ridiculous before the world, as it now is, may safely be and should be abolished' for we are in possession of an intelligent religion, and the nations from our precept and example should be led to say, 'This is a wise and intelligent people.' A third principle of Reform is 'Whatever tends to the elevation of divine service, inspire the heart of the worshipper and attract him, should be done without any unnecessary delay.' A fourth principle of Reform is this: 'Whenever religious observances and the just demands of civilized society exclude each other, the former have lost their power' for religion was taught for the purpose 'to live therein and not to die therein'; our religion makes us active members of civilized society, hence we must give full satisfaction to its just demands. Last, or rather first, it must be remarked, the leading star of Reform must be the maxim, 'Religion is intended to make man happy, good, just, active, charitable and intelligent.' Whatever tends to this end is truly religious and must be retained or introduced if it does not yet exist. Whatever has an effect contrary to the above must be abolished as soon as possible." (Pages 342-343-344, "The Reform Movement in Judaism.")

Q. To what does this statement refer as to "ritual and ceremonies that symbolize, in effective and beautiful form, the principles of our faith, and which are adapted to the progressive and liberal spirit of our times"? State an outstanding example which contrasts Reform Judaism on this point with traditional Judaism.

A. No better illustration can be given than in the realm of "sacrifices." The Jewish Encyclopedia (Vol. X, page 628) says:

"Rabbinical (Orthodox) Judaism accepted the law of sacrifices without presuming to understand it. Reform Judaism omits from the prayer-book reference to the sacrifices, sanguinary ceremonies being *repugnant* to its religious consciousness; it (Reform Judaism) holds that the Jewish doctrine of sin and atonement is *not grounded on the sacrificial scheme*."

DRESS

Q. What is meant by laws regulating "dress" and Reform Judaism's attitude thereon?

A. The laws concerning dress fall into the same category as do the laws concerning diet. They are a part of the separatist life of Israel and Reform Judaism rejects any obligatory religious significance in regard thereto. As Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch in his article on Reform Judaism points out in the Jewish Encyclopedia:

"Tallit and tefillin are not worn; neither is the kittel on the Day of Atonement, nor are the shoes removed on that day. Worship is engaged in with *uncovered head*. . . . Women no longer regard it as a religious duty to clip or cover up their hair." (Vol. X, page 351.)

PRINCIPLE No. 5

We recognize the complete religious equality of woman with man.

Statement: Beth Israel Congregation as an American Reform Congregation accepts the most advanced ideas with regard to the status of women in the Congregation; the membership of a married man is equally the membership of his wife and each of them have a vote at membership meetings of the Congregation; women are eligible to hold office in the Congregation and to become members of the Board. Of course, we have family pews and use female voices in the choir.

The equality of woman with man in a religious sense is a principle of Reform Judaism. Insistence upon this principle has had its effect in Conservative Congregations but in rigidly orthodox circles the status of woman has advanced but little, and she is still regarded as a "minor."

Question: When and where in the Reform Movement did the question of woman participation in public religious service first receive consideration?

Answer: At the Breslau Conference (1846) the Reform Rabbis passed favorably upon the report of its Commission, which recommended "that the Rabbinical Conference declare woman to be entitled to the same religious rights and subject to the same religious duties as man." One of the six pronouncements regarding woman's status read:

"That the female sex is obligated from youth to participate in religious instruction and the public religious service, and should be counted for minyan."

Q. What do the Jewish Encyclopedias say as to the attitude of Reform Judaism on this subject?

A. The Jewish Encyclopedia (1905) says as to "The Dogmas of Reform Judaism" (Vol. X, page 351):

"Woman is no longer deemed to be a minor, but is admitted to full participation in the religious life of the Congregation."

The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (1942) says:

"The Reform Movement *revolutionized* the position of women in Judaism. From the negligible place which women occupied in medieval Judaism as far as public worship was concerned, they have advanced to religious parity with men." (Page 242, Vol. VI.)

Q. What was the attitude of Rabbi Isaac M. Wise upon this matter?

A. Excerpts from an address by Rabbi Allan Tarshish before the meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis held in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1942 upon the subject "Permanent Contributions of Isaac Mayer Wise" gives the background of Rabbi Wise's views:

"Wise's underlying idea that religion must be rational and serve the enlightened mind, is still basic and permanent. In this spirit, Wise urged the *emancipation of women*. The prayer, 'Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who has not made me a woman,' he considered a great insult (Wise by May, p. 148). He was the first to introduce family pews, he urged women as members of the Congregation, of various committees, especially of the choir and Sunday School, and even as members of

the Board (*Wise* by May, p. 363) . . . He felt that equality should be symbolized in the marriage ceremony through a mutual repetition of the formula and the exchange of rings. (*Israelite*, May 6, 1870.) The emancipation of women and the principle of equality has become a part of congregational organization, is in full accord with the spirit of American Democracy, and remains a necessary foundation of progressive life." (Year Book, CCAR, 1942, page 334.)

PRINCIPLE No. 6

The treasures of Divine revelation were given in the Hebrew language and in such language are preserved the immortal remains of a literature that influences all civilized nations. As the fulfillment of a sacred duty therefore, the cultivation of the Hebrew language must always be urgently desired by us. However, the Hebrew language has become unintelligible to the vast majority of our co-religionists; therefore, while a measurable content of Hebrew is essential and desirable in our rituals and services, it must be used wisely as is advisable under existing circumstances.

Statement: This paragraph as to Hebrew does not change nor *contemplate* changing one iota the present status as to Hebrew in Beth Israel Congregation. It states the difference in religious attitude between Reform and Orthodoxy, where the prayers in the latter, are almost entirely in Hebrew. It was placed in the principles because there is some demand in certain quarters that Reform "go backwards" and substitute more Hebrew in the services.

Question: From what source did the language used in the above principle come?

Answer: It is taken from the statement of principles of the Reform Rabbis who met in Philadelphia in 1869. Their statement on this subject reads:

"Urgently as the cultivation of the Hebrew language, in which the treasures of divine revelation are given and the immortal remains of a literature that influences all civilized nations are preserved, must be always desired by us in fulfillment of a sacred duty, yet it has become unintelligible to the vast majority of our co-religionists; therefore, it must make way, as is advisable under existing circumstances, to intelligible language in prayer, which, if not understood, is a soul-less form."

Q. What are opinions of the early Reform leaders on this subject?

A. David Einhorn one of the foremost leaders of Reform in Germany, and later one of the foremost American Reform Rabbis (Har Sinai Congregation, at Baltimore), said upon this subject, during the Frankfort Rabbinical Conference, 1845:

" * * * The prime consideration is that the service *should be understood* and therefore the mother tongue is the only admissible language. * * * Sentiment is praiseworthy but not that sickly sentimentalism which lames—nay, kills, all spiritual life. We cannot strike the rock of a dead language and expect the living waters which will quench the thirst of the people to issue from it." (Reform Movement in Judaism, Philipson, page 171.)

Q. It has been charged that Beth Israel contemplates eliminating *all Hebrew* from the prayer book and service. Is this true?

A. Absolutely not. The historic attitude of Reform Judaism upon this subject has merely been restated. Orthodox Judaism insists that Hebrew is the only allowable language of prayer for the Jew. Reform Judaism contends that prayers should be understood and intelligible otherwise there is no efficacy.

Q. Is this principle recognized in the Union Prayer Book?

A. It is. The Union Prayer Book with its extensive use of English in Prayers is the best evidence. Rabbi Frederic A. Doppelt, writing upon the subject of "Reform Judaism and the Prayer-book" (Synagogue, October, 1941) says "The Union Prayer Book . . . makes extensive use of the language of the land *in preference to Hebrew*, and so makes worship more intelligible"; and Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, in The Jewish Encyclopedia (1905), writing upon the subject of "Reform Judaism" says, "In public and private prayers the use of the vernacular language *predominates*. For this there is good historical precedent."

Q. What is the position of Orthodox Judaism on this matter of Hebrew?

A. "Orthodox Judaism maintains that the Mitzvoth, in creating Jewish life, also create the environment in which the Jewish people as a minority must live for its survival. . . . The religious life of the Jew is thus expressed in the seventh day Sabbath, the *Jewish dietary laws* . . . and also in the *use of the Hebrew language at prayer*." (Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. VI, page 239.)

Q. What is the stand of Conservative Judaism in relation to Hebrew?

A. One of the stated purposes and ends of the "United Synagogue of America" (which represents the Conservative Congregations), sets forth as a part of its Constitution:

"to maintain the traditional character of the liturgy with Hebrew as the language of prayer."

Q. Is it true that Beth Israel contemplates the discontinuance of the teaching of Hebrew in its Religious school?

A. No, we are constantly striving to improve the technique of our Hebrew teaching methods. More than 40% of our Religious school budget is allocated to the teaching of Hebrew. The principle clearly states our position when it declares "that the cultivation of the Hebrew language must always be urgently desired by us because . . . the treasures of Divine revelation were given in the Hebrew language and in that language are preserved the immortal remains of a literature that influences all civilized nations."

PRINCIPLE No. 7

The basis of brotherhood among the Jews throughout the world is Religion. Hence, it is our duty to help our co-religionists whenever and wherever the need may arise, even, as we must help all mankind that may be in need, in accordance with the principles of our faith.

Statement: "The tie which binds" the Jews of America with those of China, Africa, Poland, Russia, England, France, Germany and those living in all other part of the world, is the tie of brotherhood, through Judaism, our common religion. It is the same basis of religious kinship which exists, for instance, between an Englishman who is a member of the Episcopal faith and an American of the same faith. There should be no dissent from the stated principle of religious duty to help our co-religionists in need, whether living in one part of the world or another; and it is equally binding upon Reform Jews to help "all mankind" that may be in need, as a cardinal precept of the religious philosophy of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, for "Have we not all one Father, hath God not created us all"?

Question: What of the Jews of Palestine?

Answer: We have the obligation to assist our fellow co-religionists who live in Palestine. And, in addition, as stated in "Basic Principle No. 2" we consider it "our sacred privilege to promote the spiritual, cultural and social welfare of our co-religionists" in the Jewish settlement in Palestine.

Q. Has the Central Conference of American Rabbis expressed itself in consonance with this principle?

A. The Indianapolis Convention of 1906 declared:

"We herewith, reaffirm that religion is the tie which unites the Jews; the synagogue is the basic institution of Judaism, and the congregation, its unit of representation"; and

at the Conference held in 1937 at Columbus, Ohio, the C. C. A. R. stated:

"5. Israel. Judaism is the soul of which Israel is the body. Living in all parts of the world, Israel has been held together by the ties of a common history, and above all, by the heritage of faith. . . . We maintain that it is by its religion and for its religion that the Jewish people has lived. The non-Jew who accepts our faith is welcomed as a full member of the Jewish community."

CONCLUSION

A careful reading and study of the foregoing clearly shows that the basic principles prepared by Beth Israel laymen are the principles that by general understanding and tacit consent have been accepted by American Reform Congregations for more than one hundred years. A clear and courageous re-statement of such principles by laymen seemed necessary in this day of confused thinking and political manipulation of basic principles to meet present exigencies. Therefore, a re-affirmation of such principles was deemed advisable and Beth Israel has acted.

The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (1942) says that "It is significant that both

in Europe and in the United States *laymen* took the initiative in urging reforms. *It was a people's movement*" (Vol. VI, page 241); and Rabbi David Philipson asserts "that it is significant that the first *Reform prayer-books*, both in Europe and the United States, were the production of *laymen*" (Liberal Judaism, February, 1944, page 6).

The confused situation of Reform Judaism in America, now existing, is not unlike the situation which brought Reform Judaism into being in Germany as a product of the thinking and the courageous action of laymen. All one needs to do is to substitute "Reform Judaism" for Judaism in the following article which appeared in Geiger's *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift*, in 1837 to see the similar conditions existing then which brought the Reform movement into being, and the situation now which prompted Beth Israel's re-statement of "basic principles," both the result of the action of laymen. The article written by a laymen and entitled "Reflections of a Laymen" says:

"The Jews have progressed, Judaism has stood still. There may be some who have a correct understanding of what Judaism really is, but as long as there is no clear, unmistakable *declaration* of what is to be considered pure Judaism and what only temporary *form*, so long will the religion continue in its present distortion. As yet Judaism is supposed to include every jot of the traditional rabbinical interpretation . . . the prime need is a sifting of the mass of accretions that have attached themselves to Judaism, and the separation of the pure metal from the dross; the rabbis should do this; however, the rabbis, *ministering as they do to congregations of many elements*, are placed in a difficult position, and in their longing to have the confidence of all, are *fearful* of taking *decisive steps* forward even if they would; be the rabbis chargeable with neglect in a fearless expression of their religious convictions or no, it becomes the duty of us non-theologians, if we have the welfare of Judaism, truth and progress at heart, to make *solemn declaration* of our views in order to remove from ourselves the reproach,—first of indifference, and secondly, of a *contradiction* between our *thoughts* and *acts* on the one hand and our *religious profession* on the other, as well as to encourage by this sign of earnest participation, such rabbis as are perhaps ready and anxious to take decisive steps forward. . . . The statement is to be a general statement of convictions . . . it is necessary to publish such a statement . . . in whatever community a sufficient number of intelligent *laymen* may be found *they must unite in a declaration* of this kind. . . . The *differences* in Judaism exist; better that the sympathizers range themselves together than they act single-handedly; better that a *clear* understanding be arrived at than that *compromises* be resorted to; better, in short, that the present state of affairs be made the *starting point of true progress* than that, through willful blindness, it lead to complete *disintegration*." ("The Reform Movement in Judaism," Philipson, page 115.)

It was in keeping with these thoughts and in the maintenance and the furtherance of the traditional precious beliefs of American Reform Judaism, as we understand them from our study of the history of Reform Judaism and, as we have accepted them in the recitation of our prayers in the Union Prayer Book, that Beth Israel's committee, compiled, and its Trustees approved, and the members of the Congregation adopted the "basic principles."

Note: Where emphases are used in quotations, they have been supplied by the compilers of the hand-book.

POLICY FORMULATION COMMITTEE
Of
BETH ISRAEL CONGREGATION
HOUSTON, TEXAS

ISRAEL FRIEDLANDER, *Chairman*;
M. N. DANNENBAUM,
IKE L. FREED,
DR. THOMAS FREUNDLICH,
MRS. CARL J. HERMAN, SR.,

HERBERT E. LEVY,
MRS. W. W. MUNZESHEIMER,
MAX H. NATHAN,
TOBIAS SAKOWITZ,
IRVIN M. SHLENKER.

The President of
CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL
HOUSTON, TEXAS

Replies to

DR. SOLOMON B. FREEHOF
President
Central Conference of American Rabbis

HIGHLIGHTS

- *Dr. Kaufmann Kohler Speaks for Himself*
- *Nationalism and Reform*
- *C. C. A. R. Neutral or Partisan*
- *Myths Concerning Basic Principles*
- *"Consistency"—Pittsburgh "Virtue"
versus Houston "Vice"*
- *Creeds, Dogmas, Principles*
- *Kashrus and Reform*
- *The "Four Freedoms" and Jewish Nationalism*

Prepared by "Policy Formulation" Committee
Approved by Board of Trustees

AN OPEN LETTER

(Reading time, 22 minutes)

HOUSTON, TEXAS, MAY 1, 1944.

DEAR RABBI FREEHOF:

We acknowledge receipt of your undated letter which was given nationwide circulation. Your communication is in the nature of an answer to the critical resolutions, adopted by Beth Israel Congregation, at a special meeting, held November 23rd, 1943. Our resolutions criticized policies, trends and *specific acts* of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, of which you are president. Upon receipt of your letter, the board of trustees of the congregation, requested its "Policy Formulation" Committee to prepare this formal reply on behalf of the congregation, which they, the trustees, have approved. The "Policy Formulation" Committee prepared the resolutions and the basic principles of the congregation which are the matters dealt with in your communication and, therefore, the questions at issue in your communication are well understood by the members of the committee.

Your letter does not discuss or even attempt to answer the specific charges made by us against definite acts of the Central Conference. You group them under one heading and state that we, in effect, charge that "the Central Conference has become Zionistic and has thereby abandoned the essentials of Reform Judaism." You deny this in general terms but admit that there has been a departure "from some of the ideas and practices laid down by Reform leaders in past generations." You defend such changes upon the basis that Reform Judaism is a liberal Judaism which signifies the right to change. You assert that "Reform Judaism proclaims the right of each generation to change customs and rituals and even to restate doctrines, provided the essential principles of Judaism are preserved and strengthened by such changes"; and you base your defense of the acts of the Central Conference, to which we object, upon a general quotation* of Dr. Kaufmann Kohler, president of Hebrew Union College (1903-1921). Of course, there can be no disagreement with the generic statement of the right and duty of each generation "to weigh all utterances and opinions in the scale of modern research and by the standard of recent investigations" as set out by Dr. Kohler; but you absolutely fail to state when and by whom this 'modern research' and 'recent investigations' were made, or what discoveries were made or philosophic reasoning applied that would justify the implication that what was the accepted true interpretation of Reform Judaism in the lifetime of Dr. Kaufmann Kohler, and for a hundred years prior thereto, is erroneous today. You further qualify the right of change providing "the essential principles of Judaism are preserved and strengthened by such changes"; and we of Beth Israel would have no case whatsoever except for the firm conviction that the acts of the Central Conference are a deviation and perhaps an abandonment of *essential principles* of Reform Judaism and that Reform Judaism is definitely not being "preserved or strengthened" by such changes, but is being weakened and undermined by the abandonment of its prophetic, universalistic message.

If you will refer back to our resolutions, you will find that we are not so much concerned with a change of "pattern" as we are with evidences of an abandonment of *fundamental* ideals and principles. The first paragraph of our resolutions reads:

"We are deeply concerned by the processes which, during the last two decades, have vitiated the broad universalism of this (reform) Judaism and have set in motion within it, forces which do not belong to the new world of emancipation and promise, but which are attuned to and are a part of the old world's concept of segregation and despair for Jewish life."

DR. KAUFMANN KOHLER'S UNCHANGING VIEWPOINT

In the preparation of the resolutions and the basic principles of the congregation we made a study of the available printed addresses and lectures of Dr. Kaufmann Kohler and it is our judgment, in the light of this study, that

Dr. Kohler would feel deeply hurt and would likely resent very much that a disciple of his would use a general statement as a means to attack the very doctrines which he believed and taught throughout his entire lifetime. Since you have called Dr. Kaufmann Kohler to the witness chair, we shall quote him liberally to show that he clung tenaciously to the doctrines of Reform Judaism that we are defending and that, up to the time of his death, he never abandoned the principles set forth in the Pittsburgh platform of 1885, although the period from 1885 to 1926, the year of his passing, represented a span of more than forty years. The Pittsburgh platform (1885) represented much of his thinking and leadership. From such platform of principles we drew *some* of the material which went into our basic principles. In the Pittsburgh platform will be found this:

"We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state," and further

"We hold that all such Mosaic and Rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity and dress, originated in ages and under the influence of ideas entirely foreign to our present mental and spiritual state."

Can you point to a single utterance of Dr. Kohler, made between the date of the Pittsburgh conference in 1885 up to the date of his death in 1926 (which occurred after the World War and after the Balfour declaration), which contradicts the above principles? When Dr. Kohler stated that we should not confer upon Geiger, Holdheim, Einhorn, and Hirsch "the claim of infallibility" (to which general statement we give complete acquiescence) he certainly had no idea that it would be used by a president of the Central Conference to strike down the *fundamental* and *basic principles* of Reform Judaism, as preached by these great founders and leaders of the movement, and as confirmed by Kohler himself. Dr. Kohler says "we would sin against the very spirit of progress which made them leaders and prophets of their age, should we attempt to canonize their *every word*." True, but does this indicate an endorsement of the abandonment of what Dr. Kohler says is "the *fundamental* and the *main* issue between Orthodox and Reform Judaism"?

Dr. Kaufmann Kohler in his work on "Jewish Theology" (1918) says:

"The burden of the thought of *Rabbinical Judaism* is *national*. The hope expressed in the traditional prayers is that the Jews will return to Palestine, again become a nation under the rule of a scion of the house of David, reinstitute the sacrifices . . . and worship in the temple rebuilt on the ruins of the temple of old; the Jews, in their dispersion among the nations, are in a state of exile; their century-long sufferings are a punishment for the sins committed by the fathers while living in Palestine; when the measure of the expiation will be full, the restoration will take place. *This doctrine Reform Judaism rejects.*" (Page 330, "Reform Movement in Judaism.")

Dr. K. Kohler brings out time and time again in his writings, this antithesis between what he designates as "Mosaic-Rabbinical" and "Reform" Judaism. He characterizes it as the "*fundamental*" and the "*main*" issue between the two interpretations. In his lecture on "The Faith of Reform Judaism," he stamps the issue of *nationalism* as "the main issue between Orthodox and Reform Judaism." He says:

"... the restoration of the past, restoration of the state, restoration of the temple, restoration of the whole Mosaic law, is the hope, and the aim, and the object of prayer of Orthodox Judaism . . . against this expectation . . . Reform Judaism takes a stand . . . it was no longer Israel's nation, but a people with a religious destiny, and with the fall of the second temple and state, the sacrificial cult and the priesthood ceased forever . . . the *underlying* idea, the *fundamental* principle of Reform Judaism to be accentuated *more than any other*, is that Judaism is no more a national religion than its God is a tribal god . . ." (page 329, "Studies, Addresses and Personal Papers, K. Kohler.")

"WAILING OVER PALESTINE—RETROGRESSIVE"—DR. KOHLER

You use the general quotation of your witness, Dr. Kohler, about "sinning against the very spirit of *progress*"; therefore, we use the words of your witness to indicate whether he would regard the position of the Central Conference as one of progress or one of retrogression. On July the 4th, American Independence Day, which fell upon the Sabbath after the seventeenth of Tammuz, Dr. Kohler delivered a notable discourse on "Palestinian or American Judaism," during which address he states:

"... Every Jew today ought to take side with either view, the *progressive* or the *retrogressive* one, as regards the Holy Land; he must decide whether this day, as the first Sabbath between the seventeenth of Tammuz and the ninth of Ab, should be devoted to wailing over Jerusalem's sad fate, or (being the fourth of July), given over to joy and thanksgiving in view of the Holy Land of Freedom and Human Rights, which on this day was offered to all men and nations. In short, he must face the question whether we, as Jews, still mourn over our past political power and glory, buried under the ruins of Zion, and awaiting a resurrection, or whether we are to celebrate the Fourth of July, not merely as Americans socially, but also as *Jews* in a political and *religious* sense as well, thanking the Sublime Ruler of history for the new aims and prospects opened on this free soil for the realization of our Messianic expectations . . ."

Other quotations of Dr. K. Kohler could be multiplied many times which would protest within themselves most eloquently, and far beyond any argument that we might be able to make, against the use of a generic quotation by him, that has no application whatsoever, to defend the acts of the Central Conference in *abandoning essential principles* by the advocacy of racial-nationalism. Here are a few additional quotations uttered by *your witness*:

"As far as we are concerned, who believe in *progressive* Judaism, we occidental Jews, protest as one man against the very idea of a return to Judea, as if that were our land and we but foreigners, aliens and exiles in the country in which we live"; and,

"... the main reason for our most strenuous opposition to Zionism is that we deny the very fact that we are still a nation in the political sense . . ."; and,

"Reform Judaism in no way discourages the Jewish colonization of Palestine and adjoining lands, but it can only regard it as a *philanthropic* effort deserving general support . . . It denounces as *treason* the attempt of those who want to sell our birthright, our four thousand year old spiritual inheritance for a mess of pottage, for temporary and material consideration, and their American citizenship for a land in the clouds . . . a *spiritual* Zion for all mankind, is the goal, the aim of Reform Judaism." (The emphasis of the word "treason" is Dr. Kohler's.)

NATIONALISM INCOMPATIBLE WITH REFORM

Beth Israel has not challenged the ideas, trends or acts of the Central Conference upon *unimportant* matters. We are protesting retrogression and the abandonment of *essential* and *fundamental* principles of Reform Judaism. In the February 1944 issue of "Liberal Judaism," Rabbi David Philipson, the historian of the Reform movement, says:

"The *chief and underlying principle* of the Reform movement is the universalistic interpretation of Judaism, as over against the nationalistic. If the Reform movement does not signify this, it signifies nothing; this is the burden of its thought . . . *all* of the development of Reform has been along this line. In these latter days of ours, we are hearing much about the compatibility of Reform and nationalism, or Zionism. There is much splitting of hairs and logic chopping in the attempt to harmonize two incompatibilities."

You cannot be serious in your contention that the Central Conference of A. R. has *only* "changed a past emphasis" as you phrase it, upon 'nationalism', a subject matter which we assert is basic. You do state that it "may well be

debated" as to whether the doctrines you have changed are essential and indispensable. These doctrines that we charge you have abandoned, your witness Dr. K. Kohler states, are "the main issues between Orthodox and Reform Judaism"; and Dr. David Philipson says that "the chief and underlying principle of the Reform movement is the universalistic interpretation of Judaism, as over against the nationalistic."

From whence comes the authority to the Central Conference to abandon underlying, fundamental principles? It should not be necessary to remind you that laymen were responsible for the beginning and the development of the Reform movement, and that it was in the nature of a definite breaking away from *Rabbinical* Judaism. Do not laymen still have an important stake in its perpetuation? Have they given the Central Conference a mandate to abandon the fundamental and underlying principles which characterize the chief differences between it and Orthodoxy? If this is done what then will be the difference between the two except in minor outward manifestations of synagogue worship?

RIGHT TO "MODIFY"—BUT NO RIGHT TO "ABANDON ESSENTIALS"

The right to change religious ideas and ideals is an inherent right. Democracy confers upon its citizens a similar right to change the form of government; but such rights are inherent in the individuals affected thereby, and are not rights to be effectuated by the rabbinate on the one hand, or by public officials on the other. However, if the rabbis, constituting the Central Conference, should succeed in having the Reform congregations abandon the essential, underlying, fundamental and cardinal principles of Reform Judaism, as enunciated by Geiger, Holdheim, Einhorn, Hirsch, Isaac M. Wise, Kaufman Kohler, David Philipson, etc., conceding for the purpose of this statement (which we do not concede) their *right* so to do, by reason of such changes, we would then no longer have Reform Judaism! That this is acknowledged, may be the reason for the current movement to disguise the name of "Reform" Judaism under the vague name of "Liberal" Judaism. This, Beth Israel Congregation also protested.

Let us see what Dr. Kaufmann Kohler had to say about this:

"The term 'Liberal Judaism' which some American rabbis have adopted, following the example of leading English and German Jews, implies to my mind, a certain *vagueness* and *laxity* and fails to accentuate the principle of *Reform and progress*, upon the recognition of which, as the vital spirit and motive power of Judaism throughout history, the *whole modern movement rests*" (footnote, page 593).

In your letter of reply you deny that the Central Conference has become Zionist. Here are your words:

"The answer to this implied charge can be made unequivocally. The Conference has not become Zionist. It has, however, ceased to be anti-Zionistic."

C. C. A. R. "ACTS" COMMIT CONFERENCE TO ZIONISM

This would seem to imply that the Central Conference is benevolently "neutral" on this subject, because you state that it leaves "to each member of the Conference to decide for himself whether to accept or reject Zionism." If this were true it would be serious enough, because the abandonment by the rabbis forming the Central Conference, which is presumed to be representative of Reform Judaism, of a position that historically represents the underlying principle of the movement, is a long step forward towards the abandonment of the movement itself. However, a review of recent specific *acts* of the Central Conference indicates that you have gone far beyond taking a neutral position and has become, as a Conference, Zionist in belief and in action. Here are the particular acts on the part of the Central Conference, which we specifically set forth in our resolutions:

1. In 1940, the Central Conference revised the Union Prayer Book for the Sabbath. In such revision of Volume I, you incorporated an alternate service (V) which service is admittedly nationalistic in character, contrary to the tradition of Reform Judaism which has

been to eliminate from Reform rituals all prayers for national restoration. Congregation Beth Israel has voiced its protest by resolution and by its senior Rabbis refraining from the use of such nationalistic ritual in any Sabbath service.

2. In your 1942 Convention, the Central Conference adopted a resolution favoring a Jewish army. A Jewish army necessarily implies the endorsement of a Jewish nation. Such resolution indicated that the Conference had not only ceased to regard Israel's mission as a universalistic religious one but had definitely embraced political Zionism. Beth Israel at that time protested this action by the Central Conference in a letter dated June 3, 1942, addressed to Rabbi James G. Heller, president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, written by the incumbent president of the Congregation.

3. The official representatives of the Central Conference to the American Jewish Conference, 1943, actively supported the maximal Zionistic platform demands, written into the resolutions of that Conference. The action of the delegates of the Central Conference in so doing was later *officially* endorsed and *upheld* by the *Executive Board* of the Central Conference. These actions have placed the Conference *officially* as the advocate and supporter of the demands for a Jewish Commonwealth. This is a clear abandonment of any "neutral" attitude, and does not coincide with your statement that the Central Conference has "not become Zionistic, but has merely ceased to be anti-Zionistic."

4. The adoption of the resolution in 1943 declaring that there is "no essential incompatibility between Reform Judaism and Zionism," which sought by the resolution of a simple majority of rabbis, a majority composed of a substantial number of graduates of the Jewish Institute of Religion (a seminary which emphasizes the nationalistic interpretation of Judaism), to turn back the pages of historic facts. Upon such pages from decade to decade, are recited over and over again the fact, that the very *essential essence* of Reform Judaism is *opposition* to Jewish racial nationalism and to the emphasis upon the racial, folkloristic, tribal vestiges of Judaism which stemmed from it.

We submit that these acts show that the Central Conference has gone far beyond the passive state of "ceasing to be anti-Zionistic." But you went even further. In the 1943 Central Conference you passed a resolution "suggesting" that such rabbis as had joined the American Council for Judaism should resign; but, you failed to be unbiased enough to also "suggest" that such rabbis as were members of the Zionist Organization of America, should also resign their membership! The Central Conference could not have gone much further than it did, unless it had followed the leadership of Dr. Stephen S. Wise and carried out the threat, which we understand he made at the 1943 meeting, to the effect, that if the delegates refused to accept the "mild" resolution on the subject of Zionism and "its compatibility with Reform Judaism," he would offer a resolution "to change the name of the Conference to 'the Central Conference of Zionist Rabbis.'"

Adopting military tactics that "a bold offense is a good defense," you attempt to maintain your weak position attacked by our resolutions, by criticizing the basic principles adopted by Congregation Beth Israel.

We confess that some of the important planks in our basic principles came from the Pittsburgh platform of 1885, which conference Dr. Kaufmann Kohler called. We did not use or intend to use the *entire* Pittsburgh platform or the entire text of any previously published statement of principles; but we gave nothing *new* to American Reform Judaism, as all of the positive and negative statements have formed a part of Reform thinking and believing since the inception of the movement in the United States.

That portion of the principles which relates to the use of the Hebrew language in the ritual is taken from the Philadelphia (1869) platform announced by the Reform Rabbinical Conference. This is the reason that you did not find it in the Pittsburgh (1885) platform. You point out that we omitted

from our basic principles the statement of the Pittsburgh platform on "social justice" which plank you state was the object of the thinking of Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch. You did not mention that we also passed over the expressions of the Pittsburgh platform relating to "bodily resurrection" and "Hell" and "Paradise." We considered carefully the matter of "social justice" and it was omitted *consciously* because we considered that it was fully covered and included as a part of our basic principle No. 1, when we state:

"It is the mission of Israel . . . to pray and work for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men."

"Justice among all men" appeared to us then to include "social justice" and notwithstanding your criticism, we still believe it to do so. Since, however, you mention Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, will state that we did study very carefully at the time of the preparation of the basic principles, the article which he wrote for "The Jewish Encyclopedia," titled "Reform Judaism from the Standpoint of the Reform Jew," and particularly that portion thereof in which he sets out the "dogmas" of Reform Judaism. We are of the opinion that the basic principles of our congregation *conform* in all important respects to the dogmas set out by him in this important contribution to the literature of Reform Judaism. When the discussion as to "dietary laws" is reached in this letter, we shall refer again to Rabbi Hirsch's treatment of the dogmas of Reform Judaism.

We have searched again our basic principles and the Pittsburgh platform to see the significance of your criticism that we had consciously left out of our principles the important word "priesthood" in our "borrowings from the Pittsburgh platform." We can find the use of no such word in the Pittsburgh platform although it does appear in the earlier Philadelphia platform. It does not appear to us to be significant, however, as Reform Judaism definitely rejects "Aaronic priesthood"; and Israel as a priest people is certainly signified in the mission of Israel as set out in our principle No. 1, "to witness to the Unity of God throughout the world." In a similar manner, we do not see the significance of the criticism that we omitted the words "Jewish people" from the principles, since we make it clear that "We are Jews by virtue of our acceptance of Judaism," which is a statement and a viewpoint from which we do not believe Dr. K. Kohler would dissent. It also would seem to be the spirit of the Columbus (1937) platform of principles, but which thought was more beautifully set forth in the draft by Dr. Samuel Schulman, which draft was rejected by the rabbinical committee which prepared the Columbus platform.

BETH ISRAEL FOLLOWS FREEHOF CONCEPT

In the July, 1943 issue of "Liberal Judaism" you contributed an article upon a subject which relates to matters akin to our resolutions and our basic principles. The title of your article is "Controversy Among Rabbis." We are intrigued by conclusions reached by you in the article which looks forward to the day when

"we will concede the right of Jews all over the world to organize their communal life in the specific way *that seems best to them* . . . the Jews in Palestine will organize their life as a nation; the Jews in Russia, perhaps as a racial state . . . the Jews in America as a *religious community* . . ."

We presume that when that time arrives there will be no protest against the Reform Jews of Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, Texas, being "conceded" the equal right and privilege of organizing in the manner "which seems best to them." Our basic principle No. 2 states that

"We are Jews by virtue of our acceptance of Judaism. We consider ourselves no longer a nation. *We are a religious community*, and neither pray for nor anticipate a return to Palestine . . ."

which seems to conform to your prediction as to how the Jews in America will organize their communal life. Our principles are for an American Congregation.

CONGREGATION IS AUTONOMOUS

We cannot agree with you when you state that we do not have a right to "exclude from the Congregation those who do not agree with the ideas which you have selected"; and you base your argument upon the charge that we have set up a creed. You state having a creed "is Orthodox Judaism" and not Reform. If this be true, and we have set up a creed, which we deny, at least what we have done cannot be said then to be "un-Jewish." First, as to our right as a Reform congregation to determine our own policy. We quote from Rabbi David Philipson's book, "The Reform Movement in Judaism," page 334:

"... Judaism in the United States is Congregational. The Congregation is autonomous. There is no *chief rabbi*, no consistory, no synod, no assembly; each congregation is responsible to itself, and hence it lies with the congregation, and it alone, to determine what its policy shall be . . ."

The by-laws of the *Union of American Hebrew Congregations* state:

"Congregational autonomy. Section 27: Nothing contained in this constitution and by-laws shall operate so as to interfere in *any manner* whatsoever with the worship, the school or any of the Congregational institutions of its constituent members."

We believe that we have the unquestioned *right* to adopt basic principles, and to predicate the admittance of *new* members upon an acceptance thereof. We desire to have our congregation continue as a Reform congregation. A confusion of ideas and ideals leads to the upbuilding of a neo-Reform congregation. By reason of a failure to understand and to accept the principles of Reform Judaism many congregations have in effect become "Conservative" Congregations. This attempt to make of Reform Judaism "a mother hubbard" is what has led to the present state of confusion in congregations, in the Central Conference, in the Union of A. H. Congregations and in the Hebrew Union College.

PITTSBURGH'S VIRTUE AND HOUSTON'S VICE (?)

You assert that Beth Israel has no right to exclude from membership, those who do not believe, at the time of applying for membership, in the basic principles of the Congregation; basic principles which you, in your letter, do not challenge as being the underlying principles of Reform Judaism,—you only assert the right to *modify* them. If we of Beth Israel do not have such right, by what right may we inquire, does Congregation Rodof Sholom, of Pittsburgh, Pa., the Congregation guided by your able spiritual leadership, *exclude* from its membership all persons of Jewish faith who believe in the traditional interpretation of Judaism? The by-laws of Congregation Rodof Sholom, Pittsburgh, Pa., your congregation, read:

"Any person of Jewish faith *believing* in a *Reform or Liberal* interpretation of Judaism may become a member . . ." (Article I, Section 1.)

Your by-law definitely *excludes* from membership all persons of Jewish faith who do not believe in a liberal or Reform interpretation of Judaism! This *excludes*, in effect, *all Orthodox and Conservative Jews*! This is not an uncommon provision in the by-laws of many leading Reform congregations throughout the nation. Beth Israel has gone one step forward and provided the applicant with a clear-cut statement of what is "a Reform interpretation of Judaism"; and adopts a *re-affirmation* of what has been the generally accepted interpretation, until a majority of Zionist "Liberal" Rabbis willed it otherwise. Beth Israel has done something else, in addition; it has made provision for *full use* of all of the facilities of our Congregation, by providing "associate" memberships. This, your congregation, and others with similar by-laws of exclusion, have not done although you do provide for the use of your religious school by the children of non-members. Many Reform Congregations have non-voting members, listed either as "Contributing," "Associate" members, etc. Some congregations still confine voting membership to "pew owners."

We believe that there is less virtue in denying voting membership to Jewish persons on a basis of financial consideration or discrimination; and more authority and dignity to grant voting privileges only to those applicants who are like-minded and like-believing with the principles of the religious organization to which they apply for membership! We see little logic in opening up voting membership to those who *admit*, when applying for membership, that they do not believe in the principles of the congregation, for, such a membership confers the privilege of participating in the selection of the rabbis, of officers and trustees, and gives to such non-believing member an interest in the ownership and the disposition of the physical properties that have been contributed throughout the years by those who desired to build and to perpetuate an American Reform Congregation.

"Associate" memberships are not unknown in American congregations. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations issued a booklet describing manner and means of financing Congregations and set forth a description of "associate" memberships as follows:

"Associate membership is a term frequently applied to a special kind of membership, at a reduced rate, usually corresponding to some *curtailment* of privileges. The principal types of such membership are . . . persons who are *already members of another congregation* and join for the sake of the religious education of their children or for some other family reason . . ." ("Financial Security for the Synagogue," page 29.)

DEMOCRACY AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

To say that "associate" members with all of the privileges of worship, and without the privilege of voting because they confess at the outset a disagreement with the religious basic principles of the congregation, are "second-class" members, is to charge that this great democracy called the United States of America has millions of "second class" residents. All foreign-born residents of the U. S. while possessing all of the rights of citizens are denied the right to *vote* until they have met certain requirements. These requirements include a prior term of residence in this country; a knowledge of the "basic principles" of the government of the United States; an affirmation that the applicant "believes in the form of government" of the U. S.; a declaration under oath that the applicant will "support and defend the Constitution and the laws of the U. S."; and an oath "renouncing and abjuring all allegiance and fidelity to any sovereignty of whom he has heretofore been a subject or citizen." Until this has been accomplished, such a resident cannot become a full voting citizen; but there is *no discredit or dishonor* attaching to him or to his status. He is just not given the right to exercise the voting franchise that would enable him to effect a change in the form of government of the United States, to which he has not given adherence. In *similar manner* we reserve voting privileges to those applicants who *believe* in the *basic principles* of American Reform Judaism.

CREEDS, DOGMAS, PRINCIPLES

We deny that we have established a "creed" in the commonly accepted sense of that term, as applying to religion,—a *creed for salvation*. There has been much debate over the years among Reform leaders, up to the present time, as to the subject of "creeds" and "dogmas." Rabbi David Philipson, in his book, "Reform Movement in Judaism," says that the subject of whether there are or are not dogmas in Judaism "is still a favorite theme of discussion"; and, further, that whether a set creed is compatible or foreign to the spirit of Judaism "remains to this day an *unsettled* point of debate" (pages 148, 149). You point out that Orthodox Judaism does have a creed; therefore, while not conceding that we have adopted a creed, still apparently had we done so, there would seem to be nothing un-Jewish about it. The first Reform congregation established in the United States, at Charleston, S. C., did have a creed of ten articles (pages 331-2 of "The Reform Movement in Judaism"). In an elaborate note on this subject, in his book, "The Reform Movement in Judaism," Rabbi David Philipson says:

"Ever since Moses Mendelssohn in his 'Jerusalem' claimed that Judaism has no dogmas, this has been the subject of discussion. *Geiger* held that there *are* dogmas in Judaism, but no creed as a condition of salvation . . . *Holdheim* taught likewise that Judaism has dogmas, but does not make their acceptance a *conditio sine qua non* of salvation as does Christianity . . . Hess in a leading article . . . claimed that a creed is *not objectionable* if it be understood that the statement of creed is merely a consensus of opinion . . . ; in other words, a creed must not be made the *measure of salvation*, but is to be considered merely as a definition or declaration of principles . . ." (page 458n).

Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch states in his article on "Reform Judaism" in the Jewish Encyclopedia that there *are* dogmas of Reform Judaism and sets them out concretely. He, too, makes the distinction between dogmas and a creed for salvation. He defines "Dogma No. 4" as follows:

"The dispersion of the Jews and the destruction of the temple were not acts of providential requital for sins. They were providential devices to bring Israel nearer unto the children of man. The goal of Israel's history is *not* national restoration and segregation, but the rise of a more nearly perfect humanity in which Jewish love for God and man shall be universalized. Not a Messiah, but the Messianic age, is the burden of Israel's hope."

MYTHS REGARDING BARRING OF MEMBERS

Your letter states that "the clear purpose of the by-laws is (a) to keep from membership in the congregation those individuals who believe in a Jewish state in Palestine, (b) who believe in Kashrus as an essential practice in Judaism, and that (c) the Hebrew language is indispensable in school and in worship." It is our judgment that had you personally read and analyzed introspectively the text of our basic principles, you would not now make this assertion with regard to them. You evidently took your interpretation of them from the erroneous and purposely distorted headlines and editorials of the Zionistically-controlled Anglo-Jewish and Yiddish newspapers.

In the explanatory literature issued by the congregation, before and since the adoption of the basic principles, it was made clear

"... that this re-statement of basic principles is an exposition of the principles of Congregation Beth Israel as a group—a *religious group*—and has nothing to do with any person's individual taste for dress, diet or politics . . ."

JEWISH "NATIONALISM"

(a) As to a Jewish state or nation in Palestine: the principle, as we state it, is in strict conformity with the *religious* viewpoint of Reform Judaism. Quoting *Holdheim's* views, as expressed at the Frankfort Conference (1845), Dr. David Philipson, in "The Reform Movement in Judaism," page 176, says:

"... those who have a higher conception of Judaism . . . are convinced that the ceasing of the separate political existence of Jewry was *necessary* for the highest interests of Judaism and commanded by the *religion*. . . The rigidly Orthodox, as well as the Reformers, stand on *religious ground*; the difference between them is that the former (Orthodox) desire the restoration of the old *political status in the interest of religion*, while the latter (Reform) posit the closest adherence to the politico-national conditions of the *present* as the demand of *religion*."

The rituals of the traditional synagogue and that used by the Reform congregations emphasize this difference in *religious* attitude towards Palestine. Our basic principle number two is in conformity with the prayers of the Union Prayer Book. Any Jew, however, who desires to participate in the up-building of Palestine as a haven of refuge for Jews and as a cultural center is certainly not affected, in any manner, by this principle. In fact, the principle states that

"With regard to the Jewish settlement in Palestine, we consider it our sacred *privilege* to promote the spiritual, cultural and social welfare of our co-religionists there."

Of course, the principle is written for a Reform religious organization and did take cognizance of what Dr. Kaufmann Kohler states is the "main issue" between Orthodoxy and Reform Judaism, i. e., "nationalism"; and, therefore, it states

"We (Beth Israel Congregation) consider *ourselves* no longer a nation . . . We are a religious community, and (*we*) neither *pray* for nor do (*we*) anticipate a *return* to Palestine nor a restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state. We stand unequivocally for the separation of Church and State . . ."

If, therefore, an individual applicant does in fact *pray* for his return to Palestine; if he believes, *religiously* speaking, that the restoration of Palestine as a "Jewish" nation, state or commonwealth is necessary in order for *Judaism* to attain its highest possibilities; if he believes that the Jews outside of Palestine are in "exile" and are "homeless," etc.; then, naturally, the matter of Palestine is no longer a philanthropic or even a political matter with him,—it is a *religious* conviction and he accepts the religious viewpoint of traditional Judaism. Not believing in the Reform interpretation of Judaism upon its most essential principle, he may become an associate member in our Congregation;—in *your* congregation, he is *denied all affiliation*, unless both the applicant and the congregation shut their eyes to what is a Reform interpretation of Judaism and thus evade the plain implications of your by-laws.

DIETARY LAWS

(b) We emphatically deny that Principle No. 4 is a bar to membership for any *observant* Jew who may desire to join Beth Israel. This principle uses language taken largely from the Pittsburgh platform, and states:

" . . . While *respecting* the convictions of our *Orthodox* and *Conservative* brethren concerning rabbinical and Mosaic laws which regulate *diet* . . . we, however, as an American Reform Congregation, reject the *religious obligatory nature* of the same, as having originated in ages and under the influence of ideas and conditions which today are entirely unsuited, unnecessary and foreign to the beliefs and observances of progressive Judaism in modern America . . ."

This principle rejects the "religious obligatory" nature of the dietary laws. Any member or applicant who desires to keep "Kosher" is free so to do; but those who do not, are *not* regarded as religiously *derelict* or of committing daily *sins*. This statement of principle is in conformity with the daily practices of 99% of the members of Beth Israel and, perhaps, an equal percentage of the members of all other American Reform Congregations, including most of the spiritual leaders. We certainly do not desire to encourage the membership applications of those who, after becoming members, would regard practically all of the *other* members of the Congregation as "sinners" and "hypocrites." Dietary laws are a part of "nationalistic" Judaism. Concerning such laws, Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch says:

"The Dietary Laws: The dietary laws have had their own history in Reform thought . . . In the United States, the Biblical, equally with the Talmudic dietary laws, have fallen generally into disuse, even in the so-called conservative congregations, though no rabbinical conclave or synod ever sanctioned or suggested this. On the *principle, fundamental* to Jewish *Reform*, that the national exclusiveness of Judaism is no longer its destiny, these practices (dietary laws), necessarily resulting in Jewish separatism and incorporated into the Levitical scheme to effect Levitical purity, must be looked upon as in the *same class* with all other sacerdotal and Levitically *national* provisions" (Vol. X, page 350, Jewish Encyclopedia).

In 1848, in reply to a question asked of him by Reform Jews in Arad, Hungary, Samuel Holdheim replied as follows, regarding dietary laws:

"... the dietary laws belong to the Biblical laws of cleanliness which have long since lost all significance . . . whatever may have once been the reason for the dietary laws, this much is certain, that this reason no longer exists for us, and *has no religious efficacy* . . . therefore, the abrogation of the dietary laws is highly desirable, since, in addition to being a disturbing factor in the civic and social life of the Jews, these laws are particularly prone to continue the differences between them and other inhabitants" ("The Reform Movement in Judaism," page 279.)

Upon this same subject, Dr. Kaufmann Kohler speaks out with great clarity and authority in his lecture to the students of the Hebrew Union College on "Backward or Forward?":

"Must we, or can we observe the ordinances and statutes bequeathed to us by Mosaico-Rabbinical Judaism; must we, in order to be real Jews, keep all the rites and ceremonies prescribed by law and tradition? . . . these laws . . . rabbinical Judaism, at the downfall of temple and state, transformed into walls of a fortress around the Jews, to shield them during their exile against absorption in the multitude of nations . . . In the rabbinical system, a divine ordinance must be obeyed without asking for the reason. The same is the case with all the rituals and particularly, the *dietary laws* of Moses . . . as Reform or enlightened Jews . . . can we, or ought we, to observe all these obsolete and meaningless practices of the past . . . in the name of *hundreds of thousands of Jews* who no longer believe in the divine origin of the entire Mosaic laws and its rabbinical superstructure; in the name of all who are *honest* enough to say: 'I avoid *everything unclean*, but I do not think that to eat oysters or pork is a sin that can, in any way, compare with lying or cheating, . . . I claim the name of Jew for all who, while standing on the platform of Reform or enlightened Judaism, *discard on principle* all ritualism of the past and seek for better and more adequate forms of religious devotion and life."

THE HEBREW LANGUAGE

(c) There is even less warrant for your statement that the basic principles have for their "clear purpose" the keeping from membership "of those who believe that the Hebrew language is *indispensable* in school and in worship." The only person who could be construed to be barred from voting membership would be an individual who believes that Hebrew is the *only* allowable language of prayer. Such an individual would not apply for membership in an American Reform Congregation, using the Union Prayer Books, in which English prayers predominate. He would naturally join an Orthodox Congregation, using Hebrew exclusively for its prayers. Our Principle No. 6 says:

"... As the fulfillment of a sacred duty . . . the cultivation of the Hebrew language must *always be urgently desired by us*. However, the Hebrew language has become *unintelligible* to the vast majority of our co-religionists; therefore, while a measurable content of Hebrew is *essential and desirable* in our rituals and services, it must be used wisely as is advisable under existing circumstances."

Let us quote Einhorn on this subject:

"... Hebrew is the language of the study of the Law, but it is not the organ wherewith to express the feelings of the people. Aforetimes prayer was only a cry of pain; a scarcely intelligible expression sufficed for this; but now people need a prayer that shall express thoughts, feelings and sentiments; this is possible only through the mother tongue . . . The prime consideration is that the service should be understood . . . Sentiment is praiseworthy but not that sickly sentimentalism which lames—nay, kills—all spiritual life. We *cannot* strike the *rock of a dead language* and expect the *living waters* which will quench the thirst of the people to *issue* from it" (pages 167 and 171, "Reform Movement in Judaism").

Summing it up, we unhesitatingly and emphatically assert that as to the subjects of "nationalism," "dietary laws" and the use of the vernacular (English) in our ritual and services, we stand upon the ground of authoritative Reform Judaism.

And we further confidently assert, that we have not adopted a creed for salvation. There is a clear distinction between the act of worship and the act of voting. One concerns itself with the inherent right of an individual, while the other is a conferred privilege, either fully or partially given or withheld, in the case of voluntary associations, religious or otherwise. Beth Israel has kept its sanctuary open to all who may desire to worship, but it has wisely reserved the direction and control of the affairs of the congregation, in the case of new applicants, to those who signify an agreement with the well recognized and accepted basic principles of American Reform Judaism. It was to maintain and to advance this interpretation of American Judaism, that the pioneers of our congregation built Beth Israel, and to that end poured effort and treasure into the endeavor. We owe it to them, to ourselves and to our children to take ordinary precautions, when we observe what has happened in other congregations, to insure that this approximately century old religious organization shall not be diverted from its dedicated purposes, at the instance, and by the votes, of those who join, not believing in those purposes but actually and admittedly opposed, in principle, to them. If and when, the membership of the congregation, those who have joined voluntarily a Reform congregation with full knowledge, good faith and clear conscience of its principles, change their outlook or interpretation, they should have and do have full right to amend the by-laws and the basic principles. Until there appeared recently upon the national scene manifestations of doubt, compromise and abandonment of principles of American Reform Judaism by the custodians of these precious principles—Rabbinical leaders and organizations as well—we did not realize the necessity for such action. Local conditions and repercussions from the national scene forced it vividly to our attention and we are now convinced that our action was not only wise but a necessary one.

"MAJORITIES"—NOT INFALLIBLE

Your letter asks—"If the judgment of the *majority* of the Reform Rabbis on this question is not acceptable to you, whose judgment will you accept?" This is a fair question and is entitled to a frank answer. First, you imply an *infallibility* to the judgment (or in this case the "dictum") of a majority that we do not accept. No one would reject more quickly than you, a proposal that the Christian people being in the majority, we Jews, should accept the judgment of "the majority." Majorities are often wrong. It took many years for a change in the personnel of the Supreme Court of the United States, to where the conservative opinion of a majority could be displaced with liberal interpretation. In the meanwhile, America remained encouraged by the clear, incisive and logical *minority* "dissents" of Justice Holmes, afterwards joined by Justice Brandeis. We do not believe the more or less off-hand opinion of a majority of the members of the C.C.A.R., brushing aside the one hundred years of accepted and unchallenged essential character of the Reform movement, and yielding to the immediate emergent situation of despair, is either persuasive or controlling. *Laymen created Reform Judaism and we derive our right to independent action from their example.* The present situation in the C.C.A.R. is not unlike that which brought the "Frankfort Society of the Friends of Reform" into being and, which, might be said to be the genesis of the first Reform congregation. In 1837 there appeared in Geiger's paper in Germany a letter entitled, "Reflections of a Layman," which read in part:

"... the prime need is ... the separation of the pure metal from the dross; the rabbis should do this; however, administering as they do to congregations composed of *many* elements, the rabbis are placed in a difficult position, and in their longing to have the confidence of all, are fearful of taking decisive steps forward even if they would; ... be the rabbis chargeable with neglect in a fearless expression of their religious convictions or no, it becomes the duty of us non-theologians, if we have the welfare of Judaism, truth and progress at heart, to make solemn declaration of our views, in order to remove from ourselves the reproach—first, of indifference, and secondly, of a contradiction between our thoughts and acts on the one hand, as well as to encourage ... such rabbis as are perhaps ready and anxious to take decisive steps forward" ("Reform Movement in Judaism," page 116).

THE ACCEPTABLE GUIDE-POSTS

Not being willing to accept the judgment of the present majority in the Central Conference we, of Beth Israel, have studied the history of the Reform movement, and prefer to accept the teachings of Geiger, Einhorn, Holdheim, Hirsch, Philipson, Isaac M. Wise, Enelow, Kaufmann Kohler, and others. We accept the rabbinical pronouncements of Conferences held in the United States from 1869 which, up until the past ten years, spoke out with courage, in harmony with the basic principles we have approved. Time and time again, before and after the Balfour declaration, they reiterated the position of Reform Judaism. Further, we are greatly encouraged by the actions of a large representative group of Reform rabbis who, dissenting from the position of the "majority" in the Central Conference, fashioned a true Reform platform of principles at Atlantic City in 1942. This statement was sponsored by some of the great American Reform rabbis of the present time and we have been guided, on our way, in seeking the truth as to Reform essentials, by that statement signed by such rabbis as Henry Cohen, Fineshriber, Wolsey, Binstock, Lazaron, Reichert, Barnston, Rosenau, Calisch, Lefkowitz, Goldensen, Schachtel, and many others.

The Central Conference meeting at Buffalo in 1917 and presided over by Rabbi William Rosenau held the beacon aloft at a time when the activities of the political Zionists had again made the question of nationalism an issue in the Conference. Acting upon the recommendation of the president, the platform committee brought in a resolution which was adopted and which read:

"We hereby *re-affirm* the *fundamental* principle of Reform Judaism, that the essence of Israel as a priest people consists in its *religious* consciousness, and in the sense of consecration to God and service in the world, and *not* in any *political* or *racial national* consciousness. And, therefore, we look with disfavor upon the new doctrine of *political Jewish nationalism*, which finds the criterion of Jewish loyalty in anything other than loyalty to Israel's God and Israel's religious mission."

And, again the next year, when the Central Conference met in Chicago (June, 1918), after the Balfour declaration, the Conference expressed its grateful appreciation to the British Government for its evidence of good-will towards the Jews, but declared:

"... We do not subscribe to the phrase ... 'Palestine is to be a national home-land for the Jewish people.' This statement assumes that the Jews although identified with the life of many nations for centuries are in fact a people without a country ... Israel like every other religious communion has the right to live and assert its message in any part of the world ... Jews in America are part of the American nation. The ideal of the Jew is *not* the establishment of a *Jewish state*—not the reassertion of Jewish nationality which has long been outgrown. We believe that our survival as a people is dependent upon the assertion and maintenance of our historic *religious* role and *not* upon the acceptance of *Palestine as a home-land* for the Jewish people. The mission of the Jew is to witness to God all over the world."

Upon these platforms and many more like them setting forth fundamental and essential principles we of Beth Israel stand firm today. Because there is a difference in philosophy and in practice we have separate congregations,—Orthodox, Conservative and Reform. We have rabbis who are trained in different theological schools. We have organizations of these rabbis into separate groups, and organizations of the congregations into separate groups. We, laymen of Beth Israel, are sincerely interested in Judaism, and we believe that American Reform Judaism is today at the cross roads. It has the opportunity of becoming what Isaac M. Wise envisaged it or else meeting the fate of the atrophy which overtook it in Europe. We believe with Dr. K. Kohler that the place of the Jew "is not among the League of Nations but among the League of Religions." We are deeply concerned with the lack of progress in "American Reform Judaism" and we want to see its influence and its numbers not only maintained but greatly extended.

"FOUR FREEDOMS" VS. JEWISH NATIONALISM

The United Nations are fighting for the ideals of the Four Freedoms, those ideals which will guarantee to the Jew, as to all peoples, civil and religious freedom in every land. These ideals of truth, justice, mercy, freedom and peace are the ideals of the prophets of Israel to whom the Reform Jew goes back for his interpretation of the mission of Israel. The Four Freedoms are not the product of the thinking of today's great leaders, Churchill and Roosevelt, but are the ideals of the Jewish Prophets. Isn't it sad that while these great Christian leaders are re-asserting these great ideals, that so many of our Jewish Rabbis should be bending their energies, their ingenuity and their influence towards the goal of attempting to secure a particular portion of land upon which to rear a nation based upon racial-nationalism—an ideology which today stands discredited before the world? Eloquent is the dissent uttered by Dr. Julian Morgenstern, president of Hebrew Union College, in his address delivered October 16, 1943, to the student body of the college, on the subject, "Nation, People or Religion, What Are We?" when he said:

"And irresistibly the question arises, doubly pertinent after the recent American Jewish Conference, whether at this critical moment in human history . . . when the world is frantically trying to rescue itself from the impending cataclysm and is groping eagerly, and with rising hopes, for some form of organization which will transcend the now almost outgrown and outmoded pattern of nationalism, and especially racial nationalism . . . is it not foolish, is it not sad, is it not *tragic* for the Jewish people, which has dreamed the dream and voiced the hope and proclaimed the message of world-unity, and of world-salvation in such world-unity, to *itself reject the message*, its faith and its destiny, and seek for itself a salvation, *impossible* of realization, in the *vain* and *exploded* theory of restored racial statehood? . . ."

Please pardon the length of our reply. We are laymen, not theologians and, therefore, have had to rely on expressions of Jewish Reform leaders, whose thinking we have adopted. Assuring you of the great respect that we hold for your great religious attainments and for the exalted position which you occupy, we remain,

Very respectfully and sincerely,

LEOPOLD L. MEYER,

President Congregation Beth Israel.

To Dr. Solomon B. Freehof,
Pittsburgh, Pa.

(*) *Committee note:* The committee did not obtain a copy of the volume "Hebrew Union College & Other Addresses," by Dr. Kaufmann Kohler, until after the above reply to Dr. Freehof had been typed, signed and mailed. This is the book from which Rabbi Freehof took his quotation and upon which he based his plea for justification of acts of the Central Conference. In our Resolutions, we charged such acts with being acts of "retrogression" upon the part of the Conference. The quotation used by Rabbi Freehof appears as a part of a Memorial Address, delivered at Chicago Temple Sinai upon the life and accomplishments of Samuel Hirsch. The address was delivered in 1889, only four years after the Pittsburgh Conference. Dr. Kaufmann Kohler certainly did not foresee the quotation being used as a repudiation of the principles promulgated at that Conference, of which he was the moving spirit, and which principles he re-affirmed until his death in 1926.

When you read Dr. Kohler's full address, and particularly *the balance of the paragraph* from which Rabbi Freehof took the quotation used by him, quoted below, you have a clear picture that shows how *indefensible* is the use of the general statement "we would sin against the very spirit of *progress* . . . should we attempt to canonize their every word, etc." to defend or excuse acts of *retrogression*, (not acts of progress), on the part of the Central Conference:

" . . . The work of reform, then, is far from being completed. Judaism has to undergo many changes yet. But all the greater is our indebtedness to those men (Geiger, Holdheim, Einhorn, Hirsch and others), who have risen to the demands of their age, turning Judaism *from stability and stagnation to progress and enlightenment*, and elevating it *from Orientalism and Ritualism* to the ideal of a broad ethical and prophetic religion of humanity. Their *providential* task consisted in their *having shown the world* that Israel is *not* a mere relic of the past, a curse-laden wanderer with the mark of sin on his care-furrowed brow; but, like Abraham, still a seed of great promise; that Judaism is *not* the desolate and forsaken daughter of Zion, but like Sarah still the princess among the religions of the world. *Not a race-religion*, the heirloom of a single Oriental tribe, but a light and a bond interlinking *all nations* and sects; that its staff of life is not withered, but was only waiting for the spring-tide of *modern civilization* to burst forth into new buds and blossoms, and ripen new fruit to feed humanity thereon." (ppg. 77, 78).

POLICY FORMULATION COMMITTEE.

(Note: Except where otherwise noted, emphasis in quoted portions of letter is supplied).



POLICY FORMULATION COMMITTEE

of

Beth Israel Congregation
Houston, Texas

Israel Friedlander, Chairman
M. N. Dannenbaum
Ike L. Freed
Dr. Thomas Freundlich
Mrs. Carl J. Herman, Sr.

Herbert E. Levy
Mrs. W. W. Munzesheimer
Max H. Nathan
Tobias Sakowitz
Irvin M. Shlenker

Circulated 7

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP
CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL
ORGANIZED MAY 8, 1856

TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL:

Houston, Texas,.....194.....

I/we hereby apply for membership in CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL, Houston, Texas, subject to the provisions of its Charter and by-laws and rules of the Congregation. I/we understand that Beth Israel is an American Reform Congregation and I/we subscribe to the basic principles thereof, as set forth on the back of this application, which principles I/we have read and signed.

It is understood that the membership applied for is for the current fiscal year of the Congregation, ending June 30th, 194.....; and that membership continues to renew itself automatically thereafter from year to year as long as I/we shall comply with the by-laws and rules of the Congregation; and shall pay the dues for my/our membership as fixed annually by the Board; or until such time as I/we shall have resigned from the Congregation in the manner provided in the by-laws.

Subject to the action and approval of the Board of Trustees, I/we request that my/our membership for the current fiscal year be placed in Group Classification*.....; which would require the payment of annual dues in the sum of \$.....,

of which amount \$..... is hereby attached to pay the dues proposed to { Jan. 1st, 194.....
July 1st, 194.....

NOTE: Dues are payable annually in advance but at the option of the Board may be paid in semi-annual installments. At least one-half of the proposed annual dues must accompany the application.

Sign Here.....

Application Recommended:.....

Applicant's Signatures.....

WRHS AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

NECESSARY STATISTICAL DATA

Age..... Married..... Wife's or
(If "Jr." Member) Single Husband's Name.....

Residence Address:..... Phone No.:.....

Occupation or Profession:..... Firm's Name:.....

Business Address:..... Phone No.:.....

How Many Children to enter Religious School?..... Names.....

Have you ever been a member of Beth Israel?..... Last year of membership:.....

Congregational Name..... (R:C:O:*) City..... Year.....

Affiliations Name..... (R:C:O:*) City..... Year.....

Past 5 Years: Name..... (R:C:O:*) City..... Year.....

Name..... (R:C:O:*) City..... Year.....

What is your present religious affiliation, if any?.....

* MINIMUM ANNUAL DUES CLASSIFICATION GROUPS

"A"	\$750.00	"E"	\$225.00	"J"	\$60.00
"B"	600.00	"F"	200.00	"K"	48.00
"C"	500.00	"G"	150.00	"L"	42.00
"C"	400.00	"G"	125.00	"L"	36.00
"D"	300.00	"H"	100.00	"M"	24.00
"E"	250.00	"I"	75.00	**"M"	18.00

JUNIOR MEMBERSHIPS \$12.00 (Single Persons, Age 28 limit)

* R—Reform.
C—Conservative.
O—Orthodox.

** "M" Classification restricted to widows and single persons.

APPLICATION OF

THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE HERE-
BY RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING
ACTION TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

(Signed)

Committee.

The following action taken upon the within appli-
cation by the Trustees at their meeting held

....., 194.....

Executive Secretary.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL
HOUSTON, TEXAS

(An American Reform Congregation)

1. We believe in the mission of Israel which is to witness to the Unity of God throughout the world and to pray and work for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. Our watchword is "Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is One." We accept it as our sacred duty to worship and to serve Him through prayer, righteous conduct and the study of our Holy Scripture and glorious history.
2. We are Jews by virtue of our acceptance of Judaism. We consider ourselves no longer a nation but we are a religious community and, therefore, we expect neither a return to Palestine nor a restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish State. We stand unequivocally for the separation of Church and State. We are neither a nation, a nationality nor a race. Our religion is Judaism. Our nation is the United States of America. Our nationality is American. Our flag is the "Stars and Stripes." Our race is Caucasian.
3. We believe in the coming of a Messianic Age and not in a personal Messiah. We recognize that it is our hallowed duty to speed the coming of the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, which is the Messianic ideal for which the righteous of all people work and pray.
4. We accept as binding only the moral laws of Mosaic legislation and Prophetic teaching. We reject the rabbinical and Mosaic laws which regulate diet, priestly purity, dress, and similar laws which originated in ages and under influences of ideas and conditions which today are entirely unsuited, unnecessary and foreign to the beliefs and observances of progressive Judaism in modern America. We shall maintain and use in connection with our religious services only such ritual and ceremonies as may be approved by the Ritual Committee of the Congregation from time to time and which may symbolize, in effective and beautiful form, the principles of our Faith, and, which are adapted to the progressive and liberal spirit of our times.
5. We recognize the complete religious equality of woman with man.
6. The treasures of Divine revelation were given in the Hebrew language and in such language are preserved the immortal remains of a literature that influences all civilized nations. As the fulfillment of a sacred duty, therefore, the cultivation of the Hebrew language must always be urgently desired by us. However, the Hebrew language has become unintelligible to the vast majority of our co-religionists; therefore, it must make way, as is advisable under existing circumstances, to intelligible language in prayer, which, if not understood, is a soulless form.
7. The basis of unity among the Jews throughout the world is Religion. Hence, it is our duty to help our co-religionists whenever and wherever the need may arise, even, as we must help all mankind that may be in need, in accordance with the principles of our faith.

I/we having read the foregoing basic principles do subscribe to the same.

Houston

Basic Principles of Congregation Beth Israel
Houston, Texas
(An American Reform Congregation)

1. We believe in the mission of Israel which is to witness to the Unity of God throughout the world and to pray and work for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. Our watchword is "Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is One." We accept it as our sacred duty to worship and serve Him through prayer, righteous conduct and study of our Holy Scriptures and glorious history.
2. We are Jews by virtue of our acceptance of Judaism. We consider ourselves no longer a nation but we are a religious community and, therefore, we expect neither a return to Palestine nor a restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish State. We stand unequivocally for the separation of Church and State. We are neither a nation, a nationality nor a race. Our religion is Judaism. Our nation is the United States of America. Our nationality is American. Our flag is the "Stars and Stripes." Our race is Caucasian.
3. We believe in the coming of a Messianic Age and not in a personal Messiah. We recognize that it is our hallowed duty to speed the coming of the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, which is the Messianic ideal for which the righteous of all people work and pray.
4. We accept as binding only the moral laws of Mosaic legislation and Prophetic teaching. We reject the rabbinical and Mosaic laws which regulate diet, priestly purity, dress and similar laws which originated in ages and under influences of ideas and conditions which today are entirely unsuited, unnecessary and foreign to the beliefs and observances of progressive Judaism in modern America. We shall maintain and use in connection with our religious services only such ritual and ceremonies as may be approved by the Ritual Committee of the Congregation from time to time and which may symbolize, in effective and beautiful form, the principles of our Faith, and, which are adapted to the progressive and liberal spirit of our times.
5. We recognize the complete religious equality of woman with man.
6. The treasures of Divine revelation were given in the Hebrew language and in such language are preserved the immortal remains of a literature that influences all civilized nations. As the fulfillment of a sacred duty, therefore, the cultivation of the Hebrew language must always be urgently desired by us. However, the Hebrew language has become unintelligible to the vast majority of our co-religionists; therefore, it must make way, as is advisable under existing circumstances, to intelligible language in prayer, which, if not understood, is a soulless form.
7. The basis of unity among the Jews through the world is Religion. Hence, it is our duty to help our co-religionists whenever and wherever the need may arise, even, as we must help all mankind that may be in need, in accordance with the principles of our faith.

I/we having read the foregoing basic principles do subscribed to the same.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

To the Board of Trustees
Congregation Beth Israel:

I/we hereby apply for membership in Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, Texas, subject to the provisions of its Charter and by-laws and rules of the Congregation. I/we understand that Beth Israel is an American Reform Congregation and I/we subscribe to the basic principles thereof, as set forth on the back of this application, which principles I/we have read and signed.

It is understood that the membership applied for is for the current fiscal year of the Congregation, ending June 30th, 194__; and that membership continues to renew itself automatically thereafter from year to year as long as I/we shall comply with the by-laws and rules of the Congregation; and shall pay the dues for my/our membership as fixed annually by the Board; or until such time as I/we shall have resigned from the Congregation in the manner provided in the by-laws.

(provision regarding setting of dues)

Application Recommended:



Applicants' signatures

Necessary Statistical Data

Age: _____ Married _____ Wife's or Husband's name _____
Single _____

Residence Address: _____ Firms' Name: _____

Business Address: _____ Phone No: _____

How many children to enter Religious School? _____ Name _____

Have you ever been a member of Beth Israel? _____ Last year of Membership _____

Congregational Name _____ (R:C:O:*) City _____ Year _____

Affiliations past NAME _____ (R:C:O:*) City _____ Year _____

5 years:

What is your present religious affiliation, if any? _____

*R--Reform

C--Conservative

O--Orthodox