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Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1956-1957.

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

40 WEST 68th STREET

NEW YORK 23, N. Y.

RABBI JAMES G. HELLER
215 Fourth Avenue
New York 3, N.Y.

November 17, 1955

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
E. 105th St. & Ansel Rd.
Cleveland 6, Ohio

Dear Abba:

I think you know already that you are a member of a Committee of the CCAR, to suggest a method of nominating vice-presidents. This Committee was originally appointed last year, with Felix Levy as Chairman. He withdrew, and I took his place. A preliminary report was made at the last convention. There was discussion, which seemed to me to reveal a very considerable degree of interest and concern.

We have been authorized by the Executive Board of the Conference to hold a meeting of our full committee, with the normal expenses paid. In looking over the personnel of the committee, I have found that the most central place for us is Pittsburgh. Sol Freehof is delighted to have us. I am, therefore, calling a meeting of the committee at Rodef Shalom Temple, for 10 o'clock the morning of December 8th (eighth). This is possible for Sol. I trust that it will be possible and convenient for you. Please make every effort to be there, and stay until the latter part of the afternoon. Will you drop me a line air-mail to the above address, telling me that you will be able to attend?

For your information, also, here are several items in advance: The Committee consists of the following: Heller, Ch., Abba Hillel Silver, Solomon Freehof, Abraham Feldman, Joseph Fink, Philip Bernstein, Jacob R. Marcus, Felix Levy, and, I assume, Brickner and Regner ex-officio.

I enclose a sheet, which has upon it the relevant paragraphs from the report of the Nominating Committee at the Asbury Park Convention of June, 1955. This was referred to the Executive Board, and resulted in the reappointment of our Committee with the duty of going ahead on point b).

-1-

OFFICERS

BARNETT R. BRICKNER, President
Cleveland, Ohio

ISRAEL BETTAN, Vice President
Cincinnati, Ohio

STANLEY R. BRAV, Treasurer
Cincinnati, Ohio

SIDNEY M. LEFKOWITZ, Recording Secretary
Jacksonville, Fla.

MAURICE GOLDBLATT, Financial Secretary
Indianapolis, Ind.

SIDNEY L. REGNER, Executive Vice President
New York, N. Y.

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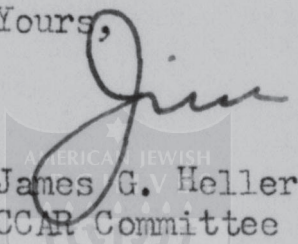
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

I enclose also two suggestions which came into the office of the CCAR, one from Korn and one from Ballon.

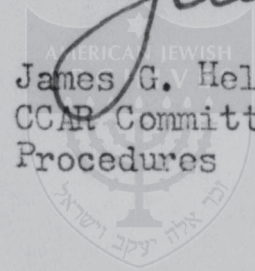
I enclose another sheet with the relevant sections of the present Constitution of the CCAR.

Please let me hear from you as promptly as possible. With most cordial fraternal greetings,

Yours,


James G. V. Heller, Chairman
CCAR Committee on Nominating
Procedures

Enclosures



FROM REPORT OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE

JUNE 1955

In view of the fact that the procedures in connection with the election of the officers of the Conference has become a matter of study by the Conference, be it resolved that the scope of the study be broadened to include the consideration of the following items:

a. A one-year term for the presidency.

b. The election of three or four Vice Presidents, perhaps to be named on a geographical basis; and further be it resolved that this additional study of the subject of elections be included as part of the report of the committee that will study the election procedures as first order of business at the next convention.

Referred to Executive Board.

COPY OF EXCERPT
FROM LETTER

Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel
1723-29 North Broad Street
Philadelphia 22, Pennsylvania

Rabbi Barnett R. Brickner
Cleveland 3, Ohio

My dear Barney:

.....

I did want you to have my own feelings in the matter of future Nominating Committees. It is my feeling that all nominations except that of the Vice-President ought to be presented by the Nominating Committee. I believe that the nominations for the Vice-President ought to be handled from the floor without any action on the part of the Nominating Committee whatever. The election should take place in closed ballot for the Vice-Presidential Office immediately after nominations, so that there is no opportunity for campaigning, etc.

I have the confidence that the Conference will elect the right man, even choosing among many, and even if more time would be required for this kind of activity; nevertheless, I am one who strongly believes that giving the men the right to direct their own destinies and in making it possible for the right man to be elected to the Exalted Office which you are so ably handling yourself.

.....

Sincerely,

Dr. Bertram W. Korn

COPY OF EXCERPT
FROM LETTER OF

Rabbi Sidney Ballon
Nassau Community Temple
165 Woodfield Road
West Hempstead, New York

Rabbi Barnett R. Brickner
8206 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland 3, Ohio

Dear Barney:

.....

Many thanks to you for placing me on the nominating committee. I appreciate the privilege. I should like to suggest that future nominating committees should, if practical, be given a list of the men of the Conference eligible for the Executive Committee. This would make possible the consideration of all deserving men. As it was, I found that choice depended on the names that happened to come to mind or on those who sought the office and had someone speak up on their behalf. The Conference is so big that even a 17-man nominating committee might overlook someone when relying on memory alone.

.....

Sincerely,

Rabbi Sidney Ballon

SECTIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CCAR HAVING TO DO WITH
THE TASK OF OUR COMMITTEE

Article VI, Section 1: "The Officers of this Conference shall be a president, vice-president, recording secretary, financial secretary, and treasurer who shall be elected at each annual convention.....

Section 3:- "No member of the Conference shall serve as President or Vice-President for more than two consecutive terms.....

BY-LAWS

Article II - Temporary Committees

Section 1. The President shall appoint, at the opening session of each Convention of the Conference, the following temporary committees, and such other committees as the Executive Board may deem necessary:-

- (a) On President's Message
- (b) On Resolutions
- (c) On Nominations
- (d) On Public Relations and Thanks.

Section 4. The Committee on Nominations shall submit a list of names of candidates for all offices, members of the Executive Board and members of Commissions on which the Conference is represented, to be voted on at a session of the annual Convention.

Article VI.- Amendments.

The By-Laws may be amended by a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members present at any official Convention.

CLASS OF SERVICE

This is a fast message unless its deferred character is indicated by the proper symbol.

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

W. P. MARSHALL, PRESIDENT

SYMBOLS

DL=Day Letter

NL=Night Letter

T=International
Letter Telegram

(19)

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GQ CLAO46 PD AR=NEW YORK NY 1 1148AME=

1955 DEC 7 PM 12 32

:DR ABBA HILLEL SILVER=

:EAST 105 ST AND ANSEL RD=

=AWAITING WORD FROM YOU MEETING PITTSBURG DECEMBER
EIGHTH PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT MATTER UTMOST
IMPORTANCE CCAR WIRE IF YOU ARE COMING=

:JAMES G HELLER=

:CCAR=

Charge Telegram

December 1, 1955

1:50 PM SL to MA

RABBI JAMES G. HELLER

215 FOURTH AVENUE

NEW YORK 3, NEW YORK

RETEL REGRET WILL BE UNABLE TO ATTEND

ABBA HILLEL SILVER



CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

40 WEST 68th STREET

NEW YORK 23, N. Y.

December 15, 1955

To the Members of the Committee on Nominating & Electoral Procedure

Dear Colleague:

I would like to report to you on the meeting of our Committee, to revise the electoral procedure of the CCAR, which met Dec. 8th in Pittsburgh. Present at the meeting were: Heller, Ch., Felix Levy, Sol Freehof, Jake Marcus, Jos. Fink, and Sidney Regner, ex officio. We regretted that Feldman, Silver and Bernstein were unable to be there.

The meeting got down to business at once, had an amicable and fruitful discussion, and made decisions on the three matters that had been referred to it, first by the Nominations Committee of the Conference, and then by the Executive Board.

Let me first dispose of the two simpler proposals. The Committee did not feel that the term of the President should, by constitution, be limited to one year. But it was suggested that, if any member of the Committee, or of the Conference, should like a test made, an amendment to this effect could be brought to the next convention, voted upon, and if favorably acted upon, referred to the Executive Board for their recommendation.

Neither did the Committee approve the suggestion that four Vice-Presidents should be nominated and elected, representing regions of the country. It was felt that this would introduce into the deliberations of the CCAR an undesirable element, and that it would make more difficult the main problem of choosing the man to succeed the President. We shall submit our negative reaction to both these, in the report to the Conference which I shall draw up later on.

The main matter had to do with the manner of choosing a Vice-President. Various proposals had been considered. The Committee discussed them: such as having an election on the floor of three candidates for the office; electing a Nominating Committee by mail-ballot in advance of the convention; etc.

By a vote of five, with one abstaining for the present, the Committee voted for the following proposal. I shall here give you the gist of it, and enclose on a separate sheet a tentative formulation of the way it should be put into the By-laws.

-1-

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HARVEY E. WESSEL, Tyler, Texas

The proposal is that, at the opening session of the Conference, immediately after the President's Message (and the Hespedim), a Committee on Committees, to consist of five, shall be elected by secret ballot. This would mean, obviously, that nominations should be made from the floor (the number of nominations could be determined by motion at the session). The Committee on Committees would then be required to bring to the next session, the following morning, the names of the three Committees of the Convention, on Nominations, Resolutions, and President's Message (there could also be one on Thanks, though this has remained in desuetude for some years). Probably it would be wise to specify the number who shall serve on the Committee on Nominations. I am suggesting 21 tentatively. The report of the Committee on Committees at the morning session shall be made, and modified, adopted, or rejected by the Conference. From there on the course of events shall be as in the past, - that is, the Committee shall nominate all those specified in the Constitution, including one nominee for Vice-President, and the Conference shall vote upon them as before.

It is important that the members of the Committee shall read all this carefully, and send me comments and suggestions. It will be necessary to collate these, and come to some conclusion. We were authorized to call only one meeting of our Committee, between Conferences, and at the expense of the CCAR. This has been done. The rest will have to be done by correspondence. I believe we should have another meeting in Atlantic City, immediately before the opening of the convention. Later on I shall notify you of the precise time and place.

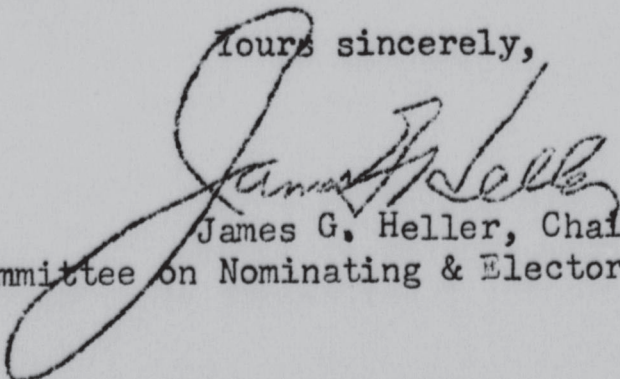
One of the reasons I want to get going is that it was agreed that, whatever proposal should be formulated by the Committee should be mailed out to the members of the CCAR, for their comments and suggestions. As soon as I hear from all of you, I shall get up a letter, send you a copy, and after hearing from you have it sent out. I shall also keep you informed as to the responses we get to it, as they come in.

I am sure you will agree that this is a matter of prime importance. It was obvious at the last Conference that a large majority of our men feel that the old system of selecting a Vice-President is outmoded, and has been leading to abuses. The method proposed is not ideal. It means that, in effect, the matter will be in the hands of the Conference itself. This is an aspect of democracy, and will involve the gains and the dangers implicit in this. But it will also put an end to the charge that presidents of the Conference have often been predetermining their successors at one remove.

Please read this letter and the enclosed formal proposal carefully, and do let me hear from you. I was glad that we had the excellent meeting in Pittsburgh, regretted that three of you could not come, and hope to go forward rapidly and effectively in this matter.

With very cordial personal greetings, I am

Yours sincerely,


James G. Heller, Chairman

Committee on Nominating & Electoral Procedure

Enc.

The latest draft of the Constitution of the CCAR is in Yearbook, Vol. LXIII (Estes Park), pp. 72-79. You may wish to refer to it in connection with the following proposal.

Proposed Amendments of the By-Laws

Substitute for By-Laws, Article II - TEMPORARY COMMITTEES , the following:-

Section 1. At the opening session of each Convention of the Conference a Committee on Committees, to consist of five members, shall be nominated and elected from the floor. This Committee on Committees shall chose its own chairman from among its number. It shall meet immediately and bring in to the next session of the Convention nominations for the following committees and of such other committees as the Executive Board may deem necessary:-

- (a) On President's Message
- (b) On Resolutions
- (c) On Nominations
- (d) On Public Relations and Thanks

The Committee on Nominations shall consist of twenty-one members, one of whom shall serve as chairman. The Chairman shall be named by the Committee on Committees.

Nominations for these committees shall be voted upon by the Convention at the session at which the report is made by the Committee on Committees.

Section 2. No member of the Committee on Committees shall nominate himself as a member of any one of the four committees named above, nor shall any member of the Committee on Committees be eligible for nomination by the Committee on Nominations as an officer of the Conference or as a member of its Executive Board.

* * * * *

Section 2, then becomes Section 3.
Section 3, then becomes Section 4.
Section 4 becomes Section 5.

* * * * *

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

40 WEST 68th STREET

NEW YORK 23, N. Y.

April 19, 1956

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver,
E. 105th St. & Ansel Road,
Cleveland 6, Ohio

Dear Abba:

I have been waiting for some time to write to you. You will recall that I sent out a preliminary report of our Committee on Nominating and Electoral Procedure to all members of the CCAR. You got a copy of this. This was in pursuance of the instructions of the CCAR at its last convention.

I got 20 replies. These were not greatly helpful. 16 of them in general favored the committee proposal and 4 the minority report of Dr. Marcus. Some of the letters objected to any change. I shall bring the letters with me to Atlantic City. I shall also, within the next few days, formulate a proposed report to be presented to the Conference and would like your comments, objections or suggestions.

Barney appears to want the matter to come up on the opening evening of the convention, Monday, June 25th, after the President's report and the memorials. The conference could go into executive session for this purpose. His reason for this, I am sure, is so that the proposed amendment may be voted on thus early and put into force at this same meeting.

I am sure that you will agree that we ought by all means have a meeting of our committee for a number of purposes: to discuss the material from members; to go over the report; to plan the discussion on the floor. I am eager that the members of our committee should help in explaining and advocating the proposal. I should like to call this meeting of the committee for luncheon on Monday June 25th, in between the sessions of the Commission on Jewish Education. Will you please make arrangements to be in Atlantic City the forenoon of that day. The room will be announced later.

I believe we are making steady progress, and that the Conference as a whole wants this change.

Yours as ever,

James C. Heller
JAMES C. HELLER

JGH:DBS

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ACTIONS BY THE CONFERENCE ON REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.Extremist Groups

The President of our Conference is rightly disturbed by the utterances and activities of extremist groups within the household of Israel. Honest differences of opinion are not only justifiable but are also deserving of vigorous expression in the interest of truth. We affirm the right of every individual or group to give voice to its points of view with complete frankness. As religious liberals and as believers in the democratic process, we will defend this right with all our power. But when the exercise of this right leads to the questioning of the motives of others and the denial of their right to differ and when the unity of the Jewish people is threatened by extremist utterance and behavior, we regard it as our duty to oppose all such divisiveness. Differing from other religious elements in theological interpretation and in practical program, we still believe in K'lal Yisroel and in the maximum of cooperation in the furtherance of our common religious principles and in service to our people everywhere. The exigencies of the hour have placed this obligation upon us. Although saddened by every word and deed leading to divisiveness, we are enheartened by the brotherly spirit of most of our colleagues in all rabbinic bodies and by their outreaching for cooperation and fellowship. We give them the assurance of our reciprocal regard and of our fraternal desire to work with them in the furtherance of the ideals we share.

American Council for Judaism

The CCAR repudiates the ideology and tactics of the American Council for Judaism. Since this Conference took action in 1943 urging the dissolution of the Council and requesting Conference members to withdraw their membership from the Council or to refrain from affiliating with the Council, the Council has; (1) impaired the vital work of the United Jewish Appeal in a time of dire emergency; (2) injected damaging divisiveness within some of our own Reform congregations; (3) sought to influence the United States Department of State in a policy contrary to the best interests of both the United States and the State of Israel; (4) reinforced the efforts of Arabs and others to incite prejudice and enmity against the State of Israel and Jewish people throughout the world; (5) impugned the patriotism of the vast majority of American Jews including the members of the CCAR; and (6) distorted and misrepresented the nature and meaning of Judaism.

Therefore, the CCAR reaffirms its repudiation of the American Council for Judaism and declares that the latter does not represent liberal, Reform Judaism or any other valid interpretation of Judaism.

State of Israel

Your Committee is at one with the President of our Conference in his concern with the increased threat to peace in the Middle East which has become a source of alarm to all who abhor war or the threat of war. We call upon the United States, which supported the creation of the State of Israel by the United Nations and was the first to recognize it, not to abandon Israel or endanger its existence.

We look askance at an arms race in the Middle East, but in the light of Soviet arming of Egypt, we urge our government to preserve the balance of power by making available to Israel the defensive material she so desperately needs. We deplore the sending of arms by our government to member states of the Arab bloc while rejecting appeals from Israel for similar aid.

We recognize that the preservation of a balance of power in the Middle East, however imperative, is but a temporary measure, and in the long run, only a strong determination by the United States and the United Nations to preserve peace with justice can avail. We urge, therefore, that the Tri-Partite Declaration of 1950 guaranteeing Israel's territorial integrity be reaffirmed and that the United Nations declare that any victim of aggression in the Middle East will at once receive whatever support may be necessary from that international body.

Violation of Religious Rights of
American Citizens in Arab States

We fully share the deep concern of the President of our Conference over the violations of religious rights of American citizens by the Arab states of the Middle East. The denial of entry or transit to American Jews, barring of Jewish personnel from serving in military installations or with diplomatic missions on Arab soil, forbidding Christian clergymen from wearing the insignia of their faith, interdicting public announcement of Christian services, boycotting and blacklisting American businesses with Jewish personnel and corporations which do business with the State of Israel are among the most flagrant discriminatory practices.

We urge our government to exercise its moral and legal obligation to insist and insure, as it has done many times in the past, that full rights and privileges be accorded to American citizens of all faiths.

Conferences on Middle East Matters

Our president suggests conferences be arranged for discussions of Middle East matters to counteract Arab propaganda hostile to Israel. We agree with him, and recommend to our members support of those agencies already concerned with this project.

