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Union of American Hebrew Congregations and Central
Conference of American Rabbis, Joint Placement Commission,
1950.

February 8, 1950

Rabbi Louis I. Egelson
Administrative Secretary
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
Merchants Building
Cincinnati, Ohio

My dear Rabbi Egelson:

I received this morning the report of the Joint Placement Commission, Documents A and B, and the explanatory material, Document C, which has been sent to the congregations affiliated with the Union, requesting that their Boards consider this plan and make suggestions within sixty days. It is very surprising to me that in submitting this material to the Boards of congregations, accompanied by a full array of arguments for the plan, there was not also sent along an outline of the arguments against the plan. This would have helped the Boards to a fairer appraisal of the placement plan.

Judging from the discussion which took place at the Bretton Woods meeting of the CCAR last year where the plan was adopted in principle, there was considerable opposition to the plan. I assume that there were also some serious doubts expressed about the plan at the meeting of the Executive Board of the UAHC in Atlantic City. The Boards of the congregations should be made aware of the reasons behind the opposition and concern. Otherwise, an unfortunate impression will be created that someone is eager to "rush this thing through" which I am sure is not the case.

I would, therefore, suggest that the Union immediately request some leader of the opposition to the plan to give the arguments against the plan as Rabbi Gittelsohn has given them for it, and to send out that statement immediately as a supplementary document to the congregations who have now received the report of the Joint Placement Commission.

With all good wishes, I remain

Very cordially yours,

ABRA HILLEL SILVER

AHS:er

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Union of American Hebrew Congregations

34 WEST SIXTH STREET • CINCINNATI 2, OHIO • PHONE PARKWAY 7345

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE BROTHERHOODS • THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE YOUTH

February 14, 1950

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
East 105th Street at Ansel Road
Cleveland 6, Ohio

Dear Rabbi Silver:

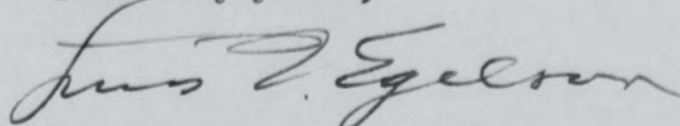
I appreciate very much your letter of February 8 with reference to the Placement Plan that I recently sent to you and to the President of your congregation. I believe that your point is well taken and I am communicating it at once to Rabbi Gittelsohn.

You have surmised correctly that, at the meeting of the Executive Board of the Union when the Placement Plan was presented, there were some objections raised to it by the laymen. One of the laymen, a member of the Placement Commission, who had objected to some of the elements of the Plan at the meeting of the Commission, did argue in favor of the Plan at the Executive Board meeting after his objections had previously been answered. The difficulty will arise, of course, as to the congregation's yielding some of its sovereignty. But as Rabbi Gittelsohn pointed out to the Executive Board, the rabbis are yielding much more individual sovereignty than the congregations are asked to yield.

As soon as I receive word from Rabbi Gittelsohn, I shall transmit the additional material that he may send me to the Presidents and Rabbis of our affiliated congregations.

With kind regards, I am,

Sincerely yours,



Administrative Secretary

LE:SG

430 DeMott Avenue
Rockville Centre, L.I., N. Y.

February 27, 1950

Rabbi Louis I. Egelson
34 West 6th Street
Cincinnati, Ohio

Dear Lou:

Thanks for forwarding the correspondence from Drs. Silver and Freehof.

My immediate reaction is that while of course we want the congregations to consider all possible approaches to the problem, this is hardly the time, nor is it the present function of the Joint Placement Commission to draw up a statement of objections to the plan which it has been commissioned to promote.

Specifically the plan is not now before the individual congregations for adoption. As I understand the intention of the UAHC Board, it was to send the plan out now for any suggested revisions the congregations might like to make before it is submitted to the Biennial next November. The plan is to be adopted by the UAHC in two stages: (a) by the Biennial in November 1950; and (b) by an agreed-upon percentage of individual congregations following the Biennial. Shortly there will be ample opportunity at both stages for a full expression of the objections to be made by congregations or individuals. If it is felt then that a written statement of arguments against the plan should be sent out, of course it can be done. Since the time table has been outlined as directed above, I can scarcely see that anyone should get the impression that an attempt is being made to rush the thing through. To the contrary we are certainly proceeding at a very slow, cautious rate and giving everyone ample opportunity to digest, suggest, criticize, comment or oppose before the thing even comes up officially before the Biennial.

I might add that actually what we have come to refer to as Document "C" implies all the serious objections that have been registered to the Plan by way of commenting on each of them. I would certainly be the last person in the world to have any possible objection kept from discussion. I think, however, that the points raised by both Drs. Silver and Freehof are being adequately and fairly handled by our present procedure.

While writing may I thank you for the first batch of congregational letters which arrived only last Friday? It will be some time before I can even look through them, but I shall appreciate receiving them and hope you will continue sending such communications to me.

Cordially,
/s/ ROLAND
Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn

rbg/h

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34 WEST SIXTH STREET • CINCINNATI 2, OHIO • PHONE PARKWAY 7345

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE BROTHERHOODS • THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE YOUTH

March 1, 1950

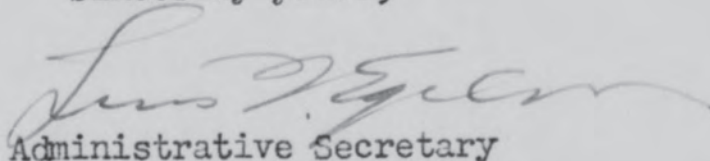
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
East 105th Street at Ansel Road
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

I am sending you herewith copy of a letter that I have received from Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn, the Chairman of the Joint Placement Commission, in which he makes the point that the congregations will have an opportunity to discuss the matter again after the Placement Commission has correlated the suggestions that may come in from the congregations considering the Plan.

With kindest regards, I am,

Sincerely yours,


Administrative Secretary

LE:SG
Encl.

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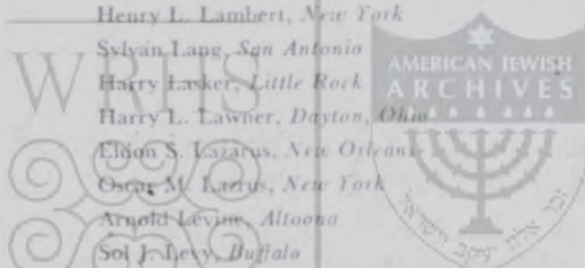
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Amiel Wohl, *Cincinnati*
Walter Wolf, *Indianapolis*



RABBI ROLAND B. GITTELSON

430 DE MOTT AVENUE

ROCKVILLE CENTRE, L. I., N. Y.

ROCKVILLE CENTRE 6-4300

April 7, 1950

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple,
Ansel Road & East 105th Street,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Dear Dr. Silver:

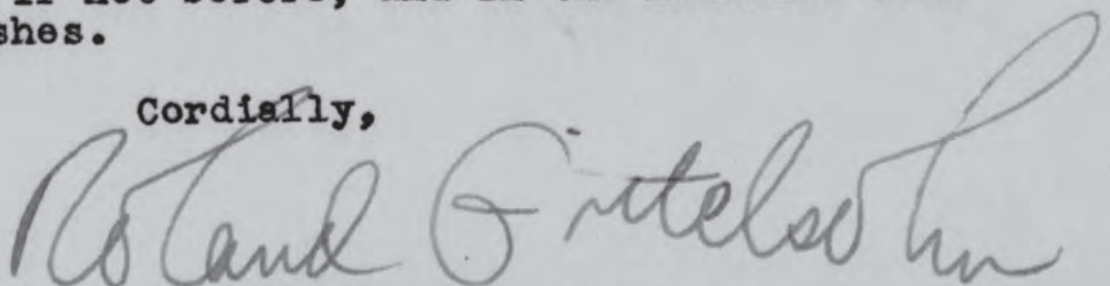
Though I am sure you have been kept informed regarding activities and intentions of the Joint Placement Commission via my letters to Lou Egelson and Sidney Weitz, I am anxious for you to have this personal and direct word from me also.

I am deeply appreciative of your interest, as well as Dr. Freehoff's in the proposed placement plan and would not want you to think that my reluctance to furnish a statement of objection for distribution to congregations is in any way due to a lack of interest in both sides of the question. I feel, however, that there will be ample opportunity both at the Biennial in November and during the months following when the approval of the individual congregations will be solicited after the plan is passed by the Biennial and the arguments on both sides would be explored. My own statement explaining various matters and sent out with the proposed plan was requested by the Union in order to answer a number of questions that had come to them from constituent congregations.

The Placement Commission meets next in New York on April 23. While I know it is difficult for you to absent yourself from your Sunday morning Service, I do want you to know that we would consider it a privilege to have you attend that meeting if you can and to give us the benefit of your experience. If that should be impossible I would be happy to submit to the Commission any statement you might wish to draw up in writing giving your position.

I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you at the Conference, if not before, and in the meantime send my very best wishes.

Cordially,



rbg/h

Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn

April 10, 1950

Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn
430 De Mott Avenue
Rockville Centre, Long Island
New York

My dear Rabbi Gittelsohn:

Thank you for your letter of April 7th. I appreciate your writing to me although I am unable to follow the logic of your position. To request Boards of congregations to pass comment on a rabbinical placement plan without making available to them all the arguments pro and con, for such a plan is, to my mind, both unreasonable and unfair. I ~~do not~~ believe that the major discussions of a move so revolutionary in the history not alone of American congregations but of Jewish congregations as such should precede the meeting of the Biennial so that delegates ^{who will} ~~to~~ come to the Convention will have a very clear understanding of all that is involved. I certainly do not follow the logic of having the Biennial adopt such a plan in November and then begin a large-scale discussion of the plan when individual congregations are asked to approve the plan.

I appreciate very much your gracious invitation to attend a meeting of the Placement Committee on April 23rd. As you indicate in your letter, it is extremely difficult for me to get away on a Sunday as I have to be in my own pulpit on that day. I shall, however, send you the draft of a statement which Dr. Freehof and I will make available to you in the hope that this statement will be sent to the congregations early enough before the Biennial Convention and before Boards of congregations are asked to express an opinion and to make suggestions on the proposed Rabbinical Placement Plan.

With all good wishes, I remain

Very cordially yours,

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

AHS:er

April 13, 1950

Dr. Solomon B. Freehof
4915 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh 13, Pa.

My dear Sol:

Using your draft, I have touched it up here and there with a suggestion of my own. I am enclosing it herewith. If it is agreeable, please send it on to Rabbi Gittelsohn to whom I wrote as per enclosed. Please make sure that this statement of ours reaches him before the meeting of his Commission on April 23rd.

With all good wishes, I remain

As ever yours,

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

AHS:er
Enc. 2

April 25, 1950

Dr. Nelson Glueck,
Hebrew Union College,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Dear Nelson:

The Joint Placement Commission at its meeting in New York on April 23, 1950 considered in detail a statement sent to us by Drs. Solomon B. Freehof and Abba Hillel Silver in opposition to the proposed Placement Plan.

After carefully considering the various points raised in that statement and making a number of changes in the text of the Plan to clarify matters which the statement indicated had not been adequately expressed in the original, the Commission reaffirmed its support of the basic plan and authorized the preparation of a reply, not by way of argument, but rather to explain those respects in which the Commission honestly believes the fears raised by Drs. Silver and Freehof are unfounded.

The Commission requested me as its chairman to send both the original Silver-Freehof statement and the answer to the presidents respectively of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and the Union of American Hebrew congregations and of course to the authors of the original statement.

You will find both these memoranda enclosed herewith. If you desire any further information on this point, please do not hesitate to write to me. I am sure I need not add that with this official communication come my most cordial personal greetings.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn

rbg/h

RABBI ROLAND B. GITTELSON

430 DE MOTT AVENUE

ROCKVILLE CENTRE, L. I., N. Y.

ROCKVILLE CENTRE 6-4300

April 25, 1950

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver,
The Temple,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Dear Dr. Silver:

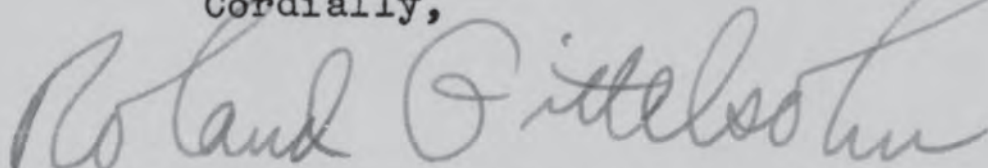
First of all may I thank you and Dr. Freehof for the very clear and forthright statement you sent for the consideration of the Joint Placement Commission? This was placed number one on the Agenda of our meeting in New York last Sunday. It was read verbatim to the members of the Commission and was very fully discussed. The enclosed letter to the presidents respectively of the Conference, the Union and the School speaks for itself.

As chairman of the Commission I want to thank both you and Dr. Freehof for sending us this statement. I think that, better than anything else we have had, *it* helped the members of the Commission to realize that precisely because we as individuals have been so very close to the problem for nearly two years we forget that not all our intentions or purposes are explicit to others who read the Plan without having participated in our deliberations.

We found on Sunday that at a number of points the plan needed additional clarification or modification in order to insure against some of the abuses mentioned in your statement. Just as soon as the secretary of Sunday's meeting is able to send me the minutes, we intend to draw up a revision of the Plan in which I think you will find many of your fears have been removed. The Commission would be happy at any time to hear from you further and greatly values your cooperation and active interest.

While this is an official and formal communication, may I add to it my own good wishes?

Cordially,



Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn

rbg/h
cc-Israel Thurman

STATEMENT OF JOINT PLACEMENT COMMISSION, APRIL 23, 1950

The plan proposed by the Joint Placement Commission of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis has unfortunately been misunderstood by some individuals and groups who have read into it dangers and fears which are in point of fact non-existent. It is the honest and mature judgment of the Placement Commission that if those who have voiced objections and fears could have participated in our deliberations they would have for the most part been satisfied that the proposed plan provides every necessary safeguard against abuse.

It has been said for example, that the plan is an "impairment of the independent status of the Rabbi" and is "alien to the spirit of the Synagogue and the rabbinate." Surely the Central Conference of American Rabbis is alert to any infringement upon rabbinic independence and is most zealous in safeguarding the spirit of the Synagogue and the rabbinate. The Central Conference of American Rabbis, in convention assembled during June of 1949, after full and free discussion extending over several sessions, approved the proposed placement plan by an overwhelming majority. It was clearly recognized by the Conference that in order to enjoy the benefits of this or any plan, each participant, including the rabbis, would have to relinquish a measure of absolute autonomy. It is the considered and recorded judgment of the Central Conference of American Rabbis as well as the Executive Board of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations that this would not amount to appreciably impairing the independent status or injuring the spirit of either Synagogue or rabbi. To the contrary, it is only thru such a plan that unseemly "competition" among rabbis and undignified methods of procurement by

congregations both of which are truly alien to the spirit and demoralizing in the practice of Judaism, can be eliminated.

There has been a second misunderstanding to the effect that the proposed plan will in practice amount to a "mechanical System of appointment and advancement by seniority". A careful reading of Article IV, Section E, as amended in accordance with the wish of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, should remove all misapprehension on this score: "It shall be the purpose of the Placement Bureau to provide advancement for those who by their accomplishment and their experience have merited such promotion, it being understood, however, that seniority alone can not be the sole criterion."

The doubts expressed by some individuals concerning an over-emphasis on seniority can be even more fully dissipated in connected with the further fear that the plan will lead to some kind of hierarchy or dictatorship in the placement of rabbis. This is a very proper matter of concern. That we on the Commission share it with our colleagues and associates should be evident from our statement in Article II, Section B: "It is our belief that a Placement Bureau can be created without involving either rabbis or congregations in any kind of hierarchical system. Throughout this report there will be discovered a recognition that in the last analysis the final choice must rest with individual rabbis and congregations. No bureau or committee should arrogate to itself the privilege of forcing upon a congregation, a rabbi whom it neither chooses nor wants. Nor, per contra, should a rabbi be directed to accept or retain a pulpit which he does not want. These considerations should be regarded as basic. Our aim is to suggest a system that will enhance, rather

than diminish or impair, the rights of both congregations and rabbis."

Subsequent passages and paragraphs of this plan implement this intention fully. It is provided for example that "recommendations of candidates for pulpits ... may be of either one or several men depending upon circumstances and the request of congregations". No limit has been set to the number of names a congregation may request or the number of times it may return to the Bureau for additional names. Provision has even been made for the congregation to suggest to the Bureau the specific name of a rabbi in whom it is interested. It is altogether possible that under some circumstances the Bureau might recommend to such a congregation the names of others who should likewise be considered for the pulpit. In the last analysis, however, if the congregation insists on its original choice, the Bureau could veto that choice only on one of the following conditions:

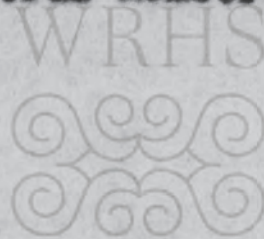
- a. If it knew of some moral disqualification on the part of the candidate.
- b. If the candidate's commitments and responsibilities to his present congregation precluded his leaving at the time without grave injustice.

We believe that rabbis and lay-men alike will agree that in such eventualities the Bureau should be able to prevent a particular choice. It is not our intention to permit such veto under any circumstances other than these.

The proposed plan is a strong one. Only strong measures can cope with our present placement problems. It would be a costly error to under-estimate the extent of unhappiness and discontent in the rabbinic profession today or the reprehensible methods which have been most regrettably employed on occasion by both congregations and

rabbis for the filling of pulpits. The evil we seek to correct is not minor; the methods we attempt cannot be mere gestures.

Rabbi Emil Leipziger, a past-President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and for many years Chairman of its Committee on Ethics and Arbitration, put the matter in its proper perspective at the 1949 Conference: "As chairman of the Arbitration Committee, I can say that the cases that have come before us show a condition in the rabbinate and in the congregations which call for some plan which we ought to approve in principle ... I think that some kind of sanctions are extremely important and I believe they will be approved by the thoughtful members of the congregations of the Union."



Silver-Freehof Statement

The proposed plan for a Placement Commission is undesirable from nearly every point of view. It is a radical and unwarranted departure from the tradition of synagogue organization and autonomy, and is an impairment of the independent status of the Rabbi. Although the plan presumes to obviate certain difficulties which have arisen in the matter of engaging rabbis and securing pulpits, it will create even more serious difficulties both for the congregations and the rabbis; in fact, it may do irreparable hurt to congregational life and to the American rabbinate.

The Placement Commission proposes a complete control over Rabbi and congregation in the matter of pulpit placement. No matter how much the statement of the plan may be softened in its phraseology, the control which it proposes is a complete one. If the plan is adopted, no rabbi will be able to accept a congregation except through the Placement Commission, and no congregation will be able to accept through the Placement Commission. Of course, neither the Rabbi nor the congregation need accept the first or the second offer of the Commission, but after refusing once or twice the Rabbi or the congregation will simply have to do without pulpit or Rabbi. No pulpit will be obtained and no Rabbi will be accepted except through the Commission. This is the core of the proposal; and anticipating beforehand the inevitable incidents of non-compliance with it, the plan proposes strict sanctions and penalties in the hope of enforcing a basically unworkable plan.

The principal argument in favor of such a revolutionary step in American congregational life and in the rabbinate is the fact that from time to time seeming injustice is done by congregations in the

selection of rabbis; i.e., that men of lesser ability or experience are given preference over more able and better equipped men. Furthermore, an undignified situation develops when many rabbis offer themselves as candidates for an available pulpit. While such incidents of unfairness and undignified conduct undoubtedly occur, it does not follow that under the new plan such injustice will be obviated or that dissatisfaction will not be as wide-spread with the recommendations of Placement Commission as with the independent selection of a congregation. There is no guarantee that "undignified" pressures will not be resorted to on the part of applicants for pulpits which will be directed towards the Placement Commission.

There is much discontent in the Methodist Church where ministers are assigned, and in those churches in which the Bishop makes the assignment. Injustice is not absent from any plan which is executed by fallible human beings.

The proposed new plan which is hostile to the very genius of the autonomous synagogue and the independent rabbi will inevitably tend to suppress the career of young and promising men. A Commission such as is proposed is bound to give undue weight in its considerations to seniority and length of service. Younger men will be told to "wait their turn". No such Commission will have the courage to appoint a promising man "out of turn" without invoking the same wide-spread criticism which is invoked today when a congregation prefers a younger man. A congregation acting independently may occasionally make a bold decision of this kind, but a Commission cannot.

No profession would dream of constricting itself within such


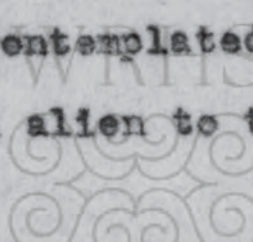
a framework. Colleges and universities, professional schools of all kinds, art institutions, not to speak of business management would regard such a scheme as abhorrent and as distinctly harmful to the progress of their professions and colleges. Decidedly, they insist upon a maximum of freedom and flexibility, in selecting their key people. Certainly the rabbinate and the congregations ought not to stultify themselves by submitting to what must, in the final analysis, come to be a mechanical system of appointment and advancement by seniority. Young men of unusual ability who would be discouraged from entering other professions where such a procedure prevailed, would certainly be discouraged from entering the rabbinate.

The present informal method undoubtedly encourages at times unseemly competition and intervention on the part of individuals whenever there is a congregational vacancy, but the proposed new method would be infinitely worse. All the pressuring and intervention will be directed against half a dozen men who will have the fate of the rabbinate and the congregations in their hands. The pressure on these men will be continuous, and their decisions will in all probability meet with as little general satisfaction on the part of those whom the Commission will fail to recommend as is the case today.

Under the plan there will be a Commission which will be increasingly entrenched with growing power over Rabbi and congregation. The Commission will gradually shake down and come under the control of one or two of its members. Perhaps the executive director of the Commission, because he is the permanent member while the term of offices of the other members may be temporary, will become the actual controlling force in the Commission, and therefore, in the congregational life of American Jewry and of its rabbinate. The whole tone

of the rabbinate will change. A dictatorship which nobody wants, neither the proponents nor opponents of the Placement Plan, may develop which would be disastrous to the freedom and independence of American Judaism. Whatever little benefit the plan might bring is surely outweighed by the danger which it entails.

Some years ago a Code of Rabbinic and Congregational Ethics was adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. It is in the direction of urging upon rabbi and congregation full and loyal adherence to the sound principles enunciated there that the prospect of any improvement in the unsatisfactory condition lies, not in the desperate experiment such as is contemplated in the proposed new plan which is both inoperative and alien to the spirit of the synagogue and the rabbinate.



CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

OFFICERS: 1950-1951

PHILIP S. BERNSTEIN, President
Rochester, N. Y.

JOSEPH L. FINK, Vice-President
Buffalo, N. Y.

PHINEAS SMOLLER, Treasurer
Los Angeles, Calif.

ISAAC E. MARCUSON, Administrative Secretary
Macon, Ga.

SIDNEY L. REGNER, Financial Secretary
Reading, Pa.

OFFICE OF PRESIDENT

117 GIBBS STREET
ROCHESTER 5, N. Y.

August 30, 1950

EXECUTIVE BOARD:

ALBERT G. BAUM, New York, N. Y.
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LOUIS J. CASHDAN, Charleston, W. Va.
FREDERICK A. DOPPELT, Ft. Wayne, Ind.
ABRAHAM J. FELDMAN, Hartford, Conn.
ARIEL L. GOLBERG, Richmond, Va.
HENRY E. KAGAN, Mt. Vernon, N. Y.
NATHANIEL M. KELLER, New Brunswick, N. J.
SIDNEY M. LEFKOWITZ, Jacksonville, Fla.
JACOB R. MARCUS, Cincinnati, Ohio
SELWYN D. RUSLANDER, Dayton, Ohio
SAMUEL D. SOSKIN, Fort Worth, Texas
DAVID L. ZIELONKA, Tampa, Fla.
MAURICE L. ZIGMOND, Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Colleague:

This is my first communication to you, as President of the Conference. My purpose is to secure your guidance and help in matters of common concern, and to keep you informed of important developments.

1. I would like to learn the direction of your interests in Conference work. You will find list of Committees in Yearbook. I would appreciate your indicating the order of your own preferences. Please let me have your first, second and third choices. I must add that a special Committee on Committees will make these recommendations in the Fall and that they must be approved by the Executive Board. However, we will do our best to meet your wishes.
2. Rabbi Joseph Fink, Vice-President of the Conference, will serve as Chairman of the Program Committee for the 1951 sessions. He will be glad to receive suggestions from you. We feel that the size of the Conference requires some changes in program procedures. Please let us have your recommendations. Send them to:

Rabbi Joseph L. Fink
Temple Beth Zion
599 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo 2, N. Y.

3. You will recall the frank statement of Rabbi Gittelsohn concerning the difficulties in the way of implementing Conference action on a Placement plan. Opposition has developed and is being crystalized. Decisions will probably be made at the Biennial of the UAHC in Cleveland, in November. Therefore, it was agreed that the members of the Conference be requested to interpret the the plan to the lay leadership of their congregations and to seek to win sympathetic support for it. I am now reminding you of this and expressing the hope you will act on it without delay.

4. Steps have been taken toward the setting up of a Temporary Placement Committee. You will be apprized of developments as they occur.

5. The Korean conflict and the rapid expansion of the Armed Forces have produced a crisis in the chaplaincy situation. There will shortly be over 100,000 Jews in the Armed Forces and there are only a handful of Jewish chaplains to meet their religious needs. Swift urgent measures must be undertaken to deal with this problem. A chaplaincy committee has been appointed, consisting chiefly of rabbis who served as chaplains in the Second World War. Morris Lieberman is chairman; Morton Berman is vice-chairman.

6. The next session of the Conference will be held on June 19-24, 1951, at the Hotel Griswold, New London, Connecticut.

With cordial regards and all good wishes for the New Year,

Sincerely,

Philip S. Bernstein.

CENTRAL CONFERENCE
OF
AMERICAN RABBIS

OFFICERS: 1950-1951

PHILIP S. BERNSTEIN, President
Rochester, N. Y.

JOSEPH L. FINK, Vice-President
Buffalo, N. Y.

PHINEAS SMOLLER, Treasurer
Los Angeles, Calif.

ISAAC E. MARCUSON, Administrative Secretary
Macon, Ga.

SIDNEY L. REGNER, Financial Secretary
Reading, Pa.

OFFICE OF PRESIDENT
117 GIBBS STREET
ROCHESTER 5, N. Y.

September 15, 1950

EXECUTIVE BOARD:

ALBERT G. BAUM, New York, N. Y.
SAMUEL M. BLUMENFIELD, Chicago, Ill.
LOUIS J. CASHDAN, Charleston, W. Va.
FREDERICK A. DOPPELT, Ft. Wayne, Ind.
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ARIEL L. GOLBERG, Richmond, Va.
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JACOB R. MARCUS, Cincinnati, Ohio
SELWYN D. RUSLANDER, Dayton, Ohio
SAMUEL D. SOSKIN, Fort Worth, Texas
DAVID L. ZIELONKA, Tampa, Fla.
MAURICE L. ZIGMOND, Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Colleague:

I am sending you herewith copy of a letter which has been sent to the president of your congregation. Its content is self-explanatory.

We are deeply concerned over the fact that a small group of congregational leaders have taken it upon themselves to organize a national opposition to the placement plan, and are attempting to influence those who will attend the General Assembly in November.

Our letter to the presidents of congregations will not be effective unless the members of the Central Conference follow up with personal contacts and influence within their own congregations. May I respectfully remind you that your Conference has twice gone on record overwhelmingly in favor of the placement plan. On that basis I ask your support in seeing that the delegates from your congregation come to the General Assembly in Cleveland without prior commitment, and ready to listen with open mind to the democratic discussion there.

Your efforts in this direction will be a service to the Conference and to the dignity of our profession.

Very sincerely yours,

Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein
President, CCAR

Joint Placement Commission

of the UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
and the CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

430 De Mott Avenue • Rockville Centre, L. I., N. Y. • Rockville Centre 6-4300

RABBI ROLAND B. GITTELSON
Chairman
ISRAEL N. THURMAN
Vice-Chairman

UAHC Committee

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Past member, UAHC Executive Board
AARON W. DAVIS
Past-president, Temple Israel,
New Rochelle, N. Y.
RABBI LOUIS I. EGELSON
Administrative Secretary, UAHC
LEE M. FRIEDMAN
Past-president, Temple Israel,
Boston, Mass.
D. ARTHUR MAGAZINER
President, Cong. Rodeph Shalom
Philadelphia, Pa.
ALBERT F. MECKLENBURGER
Past-president, North Shore
Cong. of Israel, Glencoe, Ill.
ROBERT ROSENBAUM
Past member, UAHC Executive Board
JUDGE JOSEPH G. SHAPIRO
Past-president, B'nai Israel,
Bridgeport, Conn.
LAURIE T. SIMONSKY
Past-president, Holy Blossom,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
ISRAEL N. THURMAN
UAHC Executive Board

Ex-Officio

RABBI MAURICE N. EISENDRATH
President, UAHC
JACOB ARONSON
Chairman, UAHC Executive Board

CCAR Committee

RABBI MORTON M. BERMAN
Temple Isaiah Israel, Chicago, Ill.
RABBI ROLAND B. GITTELSON
Central Synagogue, Rockville Centre, N. Y.
DR. NELSON GLUECK
President, HUC-JIR
RABBI ABRAM M. GRANISON
Assistant to the President, HUC-JIR
RABBI JAMES G. HELLER
Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio
RABBI BERTRAM W. KORN
Reform Cong. Keneseth Israel,
Philadelphia, Pa.
DR. ENOCH KRONHEIM
Gates of Hope, Cleveland, Ohio
RABBI MAX MACCOBY
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Washington Boulevard Temple,
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RABBI JACOB M. ROTHSCHILD
The Temple, Atlanta, Ga.
RABBI JACOB P. RUDIN
Temple Beth El, Great Neck, N. Y.
RABBI JACOB K. SHANKMAN
Temple Israel, New Rochelle, N. Y.

Ex-Officio

RABBI PHILIP S. BERNSTEIN
President, CCAR
RABBI ISAAC E. MARCUSON
Administrative Secretary, CCAR

September 5, 1950

Dear Sir:

We have been informed that an effort is being made to organize national opposition to the rabbinic placement plan being sponsored by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis and to secure, in advance of the Union's General Assembly in Cleveland this November, commitments against the plan.

We think it important for you to know that: -

(1) The proposed placement plan is the fruit of nearly two years' thought on the part of the Joint Placement Commission, composed of laymen representing the Union and rabbis representing the Conference. The Commission has tried to incorporate in the plan every reasonable and practical suggestion sent to it, and will continue to make such revisions and changes as may be advisable in the common interest of congregations and rabbis.

(2) The Central Conference of American Rabbis, after full and earnest consideration, overwhelmingly approved this placement plan both in 1949 and in 1950.

(3) The Executive Board of the Union, following submission of the plan for comment to all its constituent congregations and the receipt of but ten communications in opposition, has voted to recommend adoption of the placement plan at the 1950 General Assembly. It has been suggested that, if approved by the Assembly, the plan should then be submitted for referendum approval by all congregations in the Union. It has been further suggested that only after approval by at least two-thirds of all congregations in addition to the General Assembly should the Union proceed with implementation of the plan. The Biennial Assembly, however, is sovereign as to the precise method by which the plan may be instituted.

(4) Prior to the General Assembly in November, the Union Executive Board will circularize all our congregations with statements both for and against the placement plan, in order that each congregation may explore the problem thoroughly and thoughtfully.

(5) At the General Assembly itself, every opportunity will be afforded the delegates for full discussion of the plan before action is taken.

We submit, in all honest humility, that this procedure places the important matter of the placement plan on a democratic basis, and that it is unfair for any groups to solicit advance commitments before full presentation is made to the congregations in the Union. We do not seek or ask any advance commitment in favor of the plan. Our only concern is that each congregation study the plan itself, as well as the arguments pro and con which will be sent in ample time for your consideration, and send its delegates to the General Assembly prepared to listen to the discussion and participate in it intelligently and to vote on a basis of the evidence to be presented there.

This is far too important a matter to be approached as a political tug-of-war. Out of our most earnest concern for the status of the American rabbinate and of congregational dignity and autonomy, we urge that you and your congregation avoid any commitment in advance of the General Assembly.

The Joint Placement Commission will at all times be happy to receive any suggestions you may wish to make or to answer any inquiries concerning the proposed plan.



Very sincerely yours,

Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn
Chairman

Israel N. Thurman
Vice-Chairman

September 22, 1950

Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein, President
Central Conference of American Rabbis
117 Gibbs Street
Rochester 5, New York

My dear Phil:

I received your letter of September 15th addressed to the members of the CCAR along with a copy of the letter of Rabbi Gittelsohn addressed to the presidents of the congregations of the Union. In your letter you express your concern over the fact that a small group of congregational leaders have taken it upon themselves to organize a national opposition to the placement plan and are attempting to influence those who will attend the General Assembly in November. You appeal to the members of the Conference to see to it that the delegates from their congregations come to the General Assembly without prior commitments, "and ready to listen with open mind to the democratic discussion there".

Precisely because I feel as you do, that congregations should have a full opportunity to acquaint themselves with the pros and cons of the placement scheme so that their delegates may vote intelligently on the proposal at the Convention, I suggested to Rabbi Gittelsohn and Rabbi Egelson as early as last February that both sides be presented as objectively as possible to the congregations.

Early in February the Joint Placement Commission sent out its plan to the members of the Union requesting that their Boards consider this plan and make suggestions within sixty days, and I wrote to Rabbi Egelson at the time: "It is very surprising to me that in submitting this material to the Boards of congregations accompanied by a full array of the arguments for the plan, there was not also sent along an outline of arguments against the plan. This would have helped the Boards to a fairer appraisal of the placement plan.... I would, therefore, suggest that the Union immediately request some leader of the opposition to the plan to give the arguments against the plan, as Rabbi Gittelsohn has given them for it, and to send out that statement immediately as a supplementary document to the congregations who have now received the report of the Joint Placement Commission." On February 14th Rabbi Egelson wrote me: "I appreciate very much your letter of February 8th with reference to the placement plan that I recently sent to you and to the president of your congregation. I believe that your point is well taken, and I am communicating it at once to Rabbi Gittelsohn."

On March 1st I received a letter from Rabbi Egelson enclosing a copy of Rabbi Gittelsohn's letter to him which brushed aside my request with the statement: "My immediate reaction is that while, of course, we want the congregations to consider all possible approaches to the problem, this is hardly the time nor is it the present function of the Joint Placement Commission to draw up a statement of objections to the plan which it has been commissioned to promote."

September 22, 1950

His idea seemingly was that the placement proposal should first be acted upon at the Biennial in November without giving the Boards of the temples a chance to discuss the project and to instruct their delegates on the basic issue involved.

On April 7th Rabbi Gittelson wrote me: "I am deeply appreciative of your interest as well as Dr. Freehof's in the proposed placement plan, and would not want you to think that my reluctance to furnish a statement of objections for distribution to congregations is in any way due to a lack of interest in both sides of the question. I feel, however, that there will be ample opportunity both at the Biennial in November and during the months following, when the approval of the individual congregations will be solicited, after the plan is passed by the Biennial, for the arguments on both sides to be explored." In reply I wrote to Rabbi Gittelson on April 10th: "To request Boards of congregations to pass comment on a rabbinical placement plan without making available to them all the arguments pro and con for such a plan is, to my mind, both unreasonable and unfair. I believe that the major discussions of a move so revolutionary in the history not alone of American congregations but of Jewish congregations as such, should precede the meeting of the Biennial so that delegates who will come to the Convention will have a very clear understanding of all that is involved. I certainly do not follow the logic of having the Biennial adopt such a plan in November and then begin a large-scale discussion of the plan when individual congregations are asked to approve the plan."

Rabbi Gittelson invited me to attend a meeting of the Placement Commission in New York on April 23rd, and if that should be impossible, he requested me to submit to the Commission a statement giving my position.

I availed myself of the opportunity extended to me by Rabbi Gittelson, and together with Rabbi Freehof, we drew up a statement which we sent to the Commission and requested that this statement should be "sent to the congregations early enough before the Biennial Convention and before Boards of congregations are asked to express an opinion and to make suggestions on the proposed rabbinical placement plan."

To this day that has not been done.

Instead, the receipt of our statement was acknowledged by the Placement Commission before whom it was read and sent, not to congregations, but to the President of the Conference, the President of the Union, and the President of the Hebrew Union College, with a covering letter purporting to answer the arguments of our statement.

Clearly the impression against which I cautioned Egelson last February that "otherwise/unfortunate impression would be created that someone is eager to rush this thing through, which I am sure is not the case," has been created. A group of congregational leaders have actually exercised their clear constitutional rights to present their side of the story to the Union membership.

From paragraph #3 of Rabbi Gittelson's letter that many of the congregations who were canvassed last February on suggestions to the plan interpreted the request as one calling upon them to express themselves either for or against the plan and that ten congregations actually expressed themselves in opposition. Had they been notified, as Rabbi Gittelson notified them now, that prior to the General Assembly in November the Union Executive Board will circularize all our congregations with statements both for and against the placement plan in order that each congregation may

Rabbi Philip Bernstein

-3-

September 22, 1950

explore the problem thoroughly and thoughtfully, much of the organized opposition against which complaint is now being made would not have taken place.

I write you this long letter because I wanted you, as President of the Conference, to know something of what has transpired before you took office. Rabbi Freehof and I were eager, for the sake of the Conference and the Union, to have this very important issue presented fully and fairly to our constituencies. Our request was turned down. Months later, after an opposition has consolidated itself, the very proposal which we made is adopted. I hope that it is not too late to avert a sharp and bitter controversy which might do considerable harm to the Union.

With all good wishes for a Happy New Year, I remain

As ever yours,

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

AHS:er

cc: Dr. Solomon B. Freehof



September 25, 1950

Judge Meier Steinbrink
Supreme Court of New York
Brooklyn, New York

My dear Judge Steinbrink:

I am enclosing herewith a list of Temple members who may be requested to act as proxy delegates to the forthcoming Union Convention. I have not spoken to any of these people. In writing to them you might ask them to accept the delegateship and to consult me about it. After hearing from you as to who the proxy delegates will be, I shall call them together to a meeting and discuss the whole subject of rabbinical placement with them.

With all good wishes, I remain

Most cordial ly yours,

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

AHS:er
Enc.

Charles Ascherman
3270 Warrensville Center

Dr. S. S. Berger
277 E. 105 Street

Dr. Samuel S. Cohen
3307 Chadbourne Rd.

Marcus Feder, Jr.
2500 Arlington Rd.

Dr. Jos. L. Fetterman
17125 Lomond Blvd.

Stanley S. Friedman
3275 Grenway Road

Mrs. Sydney N. Galvin
15850 Aldersyde Rd.

Jos. A. Guggenheim
17200 So. Moreland Blvd.

Joseph Hartzmark
2229 St. James Parkway

Milton Kane
2464 Charney Rd.

Allen Klivans
16901 Shaker Blvd.

J. B. Kohn
2920 Litchfield Rd.

Walter L. Krohngold
15818 Parkland Drive

Eugene B. Meister
5402 Prospect Ave.

Alexander Mintz
18311 Sherrington Rd.

Robbert Morris
3266 Elsmere Road

Mrs. Lambert Oppenheim
19101 So. Moreland Blvd.

Leo E. Oppenheimer
1954 Woodward Ave.

Aaron Pomeranz
18606 Parkland Dr.

Jack J. Schachter
3538 Cummings Rd.

Mrs. Henry Steuer
2856 Eaton Road

Louis A. Unger
11424 Cedar Road

Paul Wintner
19201 So. Moreland Blvd.

Louis Balantzow
3450 Norwood Rd.

Leonard L. Broida
3212 Redwood Ave.

Jerome N. Curtis
3564 Ingleside Road

Harry Gellin
3145 Yorkshire Road

Joseph H. Gross
2646 Wicklow Road

J. L. Jaffe
11428 Cedar Road

Mrs. L. W. Neumark
2943 So. Park Blvd.

Milton P. Altschul
19101 So. Moreland Blvd.

Clarence Fishel
19101 So. Moreland Blvd.

Sylvester Flesheim
2565 Norfolk Rd.

Louis C. Haas
2621 No. Moreland

Leon Henry
18115 Sherrington Rd.

Everett E. Loeb
2111 Lennox Road

Bertram W. Marks
Commodore Hotel

Herbert S. Schmith
2697 Washington Blvd.

Dr. Irwin Yoelson
16728 Molbrook Road

Sydney Galvin
15850 Aldersyde

Merrill Sands
3329 Braemar Road

Merrill Gross
2565 Warwick Road

A. C. Galvin
2815 Ludlow Road

Edwin R. Bergman
3553 Ingleside Road

William Fertel
13720 Shaker Blvd.

Stuart Halle
13720 Shaker Blvd.

David Kyman
2856 Glengary Road

Joseph Adelson
3260 Lansmere Road

Charles Auerbach
18507 Newell Road

Dr. Leonard Biskind
15810 So. Moreland Blvd.

H. Shander Carran
2627 Fairmount Blvd.

Dr. A. I. Civins
10601 Ashbury Ave.

Joseph G. Ehrlich
13800 Fairhill Road

Isaac Evans
16251 Aldersyde Drive

Jared Faulb
19223 Lomond Blvd.

Lloyd Feder
Hotel Hollenden

Max Friedman
16700 So. Moreland

Alvin Friedman
2932 West Park Blvd.

S. L. Gerson
2985 Montgomery Rd.

William V. Gross
2933 E. Overlook Rd.

David Haber
13610 Shaker Blvd.

Louis G. Herman
18507 Lomond Blvd.

I. S. Hurwitz
2541 Edgemoor Road

Herman Leffert
13302 Cormere

Carol Levison
3294 Maynard Rd.

I. R. Levy
13600 Shaker Blvd.

Wm. H. Loveman
2846 Montgomery Rd.

Edward Meister
13800 Fairhill

Maurice Miller
2872 Washington Blvd.

J. E. Rosenthal
2940 Kingsley Rd.

Maurice Rossin
3802 Washington Blvd.

Dr. H. Charles Schock
3325 Avalon Road

Ralph E. Stein
2713 Lancashire Rd.

Judge Alfred Steuer
2900 Glengary Rd.

Alfred Stotter
2236 Demington Dr.

David A. Unger
13800 Fairhill

Roy Unger
3461 Meadowbrook Blvd.

Paul Wintner
19201 So. Moreland

Dr. Henry Steuer
2856 Eaton Rd.

Victor L. Wise
13610 Shaker Blvd.

J. P. Roth
18675 Parkland Dr.





MEIER STEINBRINK
JUSTICE

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
JUSTICES' CHAMBERS
BROOKLYN, N.Y.

UNOFFICIAL

September 27, 1950

Dear Dr. Silver:

Thank you so much for your letter of September 25th. I have immediately forwarded it to Mr. Herman M. Stein, who is Chairman of the Committee of Presidents who are acting in opposition to the Rabbinical Placement Plan as submitted.

I enclose a copy of the letter which I have written to Mr. Stein. I am sure you will hear from him.

Thanks for cooperating.



Sincerely yours,

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
E 105th Street at Ansel Road
Cleveland 6, Ohio

Enc.

COPY TO DR. SILVER

September 27,
1950.

Mr. Herman M. Stein
Port Authority Building
111-8th Avenue
New York 11, New York

Dear Friend:

Enclosed is a letter from Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, which is self-explanatory, together with a list of 80 names and addresses of persons connected with his temple who it appears are willing to act as delegates from other congregations which, in turn, might be willing to have Cleveland residents attend the convention and vote with the opposition.

Just as quickly as we can, we ought to find out about temples, not only within the City of New York but elsewhere, which desire to have delegates attend but do not wish to incur the expense of railroad fares or hotel bills. We should be sure in communicating with them and asking them to accept the delegateship to then communicate with Dr. Silver so that he may call them together at the meeting, as he suggests. Should you have occasion to communicate by telephone with Dr. Silver, his number out in Cleveland is Wyoming 1-2040..

I shall send a copy of this letter to Dr. Silver.

Cordially yours,

Enc.

Temple B'rith Kodesh

117 GIBBS STREET

Rochester 5, N. Y.

THE RABBI'S STUDY

September 28, 1950

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
East 105th Street at Ansel Road
Cleveland 5, Ohio

Dear Abba:

As you know, only recently and somewhat unexpectedly, have I been projected into the leadership of the Conference. There is much with which I am still unfamiliar, and therefore I appreciate your letter of the 22nd giving me some of the background of the current Placement Plan discussion.

Since receiving your letter I have looked into the matter further and have received confirmation of the facts as you have stated them.

There is some difference concerning the evaluation of the facts and the motivation. I learned that since last Spring the Union Executive Board has been on record as intending to send to the Presidents of congregations the proposed Plan together with statements favoring it and opposing it. The delay, I am told, was due to:

1. The latest revision of the plan was completed in the early Summer.
2. Little could be done during the Summer months when most of the key people were away.
3. The most prominent lay opponent of the Plan refused to write the opposition statement when requested to do so by the Union and the Placement Commission.

There seems to be a genuine desire to send out these statements; in fact, they are now in process of preparation and will be mailed shortly.

Apart from the above, about which there perhaps may be room for some difference of opinion, the important question for me at least is, what should be done now? I note your statement that you "hope that it is not too late to avert a sharp and bitter controversy which might do considerable harm to the Union." Have you anything specific to propose? I assure you it will be given serious consideration.

Let me add this personal word. Originally I approached the Placement Plan with doubts and reservations.

Temple B'rith Kodesh

117 GIBBS STREET
Rochester 5, N. Y.

THE RABBI'S STUDY

-2-

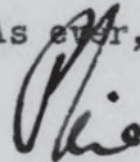
September 28, 1950

However, after listening to the discussions at both sessions of the Conference at which it was almost unanimously approved, I reached the conclusion that it represented the will of the Conference and therefore should be the program of the Conference. Now frankly, I am disturbed as are many of our colleagues that two of the most respected ex-Presidents of the Conference seem to have been made the spearhead for lay opposition to the will of the Conference. Of course, I realize that Conference action, even if almost unanimous, does not bind the thinking of the individual member. You and Sol are completely within your rights in continuing to oppose a plan which you regard as undesirable. At present, however, I see no alternative for the responsible Conference leadership other than to press with vigor for the early adoption of the Plan, allowing of course, for full, free discussion. Must this mean a "sharp and bitter controversy which might do considerable harm to the Union"? I hope not.

Again, if you have any specific suggestions which might help me to guide developments in such a way as to do least harm and most good to our rabbinate and congregations, I would eagerly welcome them. Would you, and Sol, be willing to attend the next meeting of the Placement Commission which will be held in New York on Sunday, October 22nd? Roland Gittelsohn cordially renews his invitation to attend these meetings and I would urge you to come, if you can.

With best wishes for the New Year,

As ever,



Philip S. Bernstein

PSB/ir

RABBI SOLOMON B. FREEHOF, D. D.
RODEF SHALOM TEMPLE
FIFTH AND MOREWOOD AVENUES
PITTSBURGH 13, PENNSYLVANIA

October 4, 1950

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
East 105th Street and Ansel Road
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Abba:

Thank you for sending me a copy of the letter of Bernstein. He need not tell us how painful it is for two former presidents of the Conference to be in the present position of opposing what seems to be the will of the Conference. But there seems to be no way out of it. I have strong reason to believe that there is a considerable undercurrent of objection to the plan among the younger men.

About coming to the meeting on October 22, I have not made up my mind. After all, we are opposed to the entire plan. If we went to the meeting, we could never get them to abandon it in its essentials: namely, the sanctions, which is the heart of the matter. On the other hand, if we do not go, they will say they invited us to participate and we refused. If you want to go, I will go too. Maybe we can think out some compromise that will be acceptable, though for the life of me I cannot at present think of any modification that would be acceptable either to us or to them. If the committee is absolutely determined not to change their plans substantially, then what is the good of our going there merely to have them rebuke us for opposing what the majority of the Conference voted for? If, however, they are prepared to accept sufficient modifications so that there is a possibility of arriving at a satisfactory compromise, then it would be worthwhile going.

Tell me what you think about going.

With best wishes for a happy New Year, in which Lillian joins me, to Virginia, the boys, and yourself,

As ever,

Sol

SBF/rsw

October 18, 1950

Rabbi Philip Bernstein, President
Central Conference of American Rabbis
117 Gibbs Street
Rochester 5, New York

My dear Phil:

I should very much like to attend the meeting of the Placement Commission in New York on October 22nd. Unfortunately, I cannot do so. I must be in my own pulpit that morning, and I have a meeting with Bartley Crum here in the evening.

To my best knowledge the proposed Placement Plan, together with statements favoring it and opposing it, which the Union Executive Board voted last spring to send to the congregations and which you state in your September 28th letter was then "in the process of preparation and will be mailed shortly", has not yet reached the congregations. At least it has not reached my congregation.

We are now within three to four weeks of the Convention. Quite a number of the congregational Boards have already held their last meeting before the Convention. They will accordingly not have an opportunity to discuss this matter at their Board meetings. I regard this as most unfortunate and the whole procedure quite extraordinary.

With all good wishes, I remain

As ever yours,

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

AHS:cr

cc: Rabbi Egelson

REVISED -- OCTOBER 22, 1950

REPORT OF THE JOINT PLACEMENT COMMISSION

of the
Central Conference of American Rabbis
and the
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

I. INTRODUCTION

The Placement Plan hereinafter proposed is the result of ten years of sustained interest and effort on the part of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and more than two years of concentrated joint attention by the Conference, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and representatives of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

The Conference received a report on rabbinical placement in 1942 from a committee headed by Rabbi James G. Heller, and in 1948 from a similar group, prepared by Rabbi Louis L. Mann. Your present Joint Commission was appointed in June of 1948, with Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn as Chairman and Mr. Israel N. Thurman as Vice-Chairman. It has held more than a dozen meetings in all. The presently proposed plan has resulted from a most careful consideration of all factors involved in the matter of placement.

Previous attempts to establish a placement plan did not materialize primarily for two reasons. First, because of the professional displacement necessitated by World War II. Second, because of the existence of two separate seminaries for the training of Liberal rabbis. Never has there been any question, however, that a plan was desperately needed. Now, therefore, is the time for the Conference, Union, and College-Institute together to undertake definite action toward correcting a situation which threatens to become intolerable. To that end, we offer the following plan.

II. GENERAL AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

A. The general aim and the primary purpose of a Placement Plan is to better religious life among our congregations, to improve relations between congregations and rabbis. The practice of the past must not be permitted to stand in the way of a better system, designed to aid congregations to find rabbis, and to assist rabbis in finding pulpits where they can do their best work. The relationship between congregation and rabbi is a sacred one, which depends in large part upon the special fitness of the rabbi, the attitude toward him of the congregation, and the compatibility between them. The plan that follows is a serious effort, resulting from prolonged deliberation, to substitute some measure of order for the present disorder, without, however, drifting into such hierarchical controls as would deprive congregations or rabbis of individual choices or adjustments.

Your Commission has, therefore, approached the task assigned it with an understanding that the problem of placement is one that concerns all the organizations represented by it. Obviously the problem can be solved only when we set up a system of genuine and comprehensive cooperation among these organizations. A harbinger of such cooperation has been the splendid spirit of mutual consultation and concession among the representatives of the agencies constituting our Commission.

B. It is our belief that a Placement Bureau can be created without involving either rabbis or congregations in any kind of hierarchical system. Throughout this report there will be discovered a recognition that in the last analysis the final choice must rest with individual rabbis and congregations. No bureau or committee should arrogate to itself the privilege of forcing upon a congregation a rabbi whom it does not want. Nor, per contra, should a rabbi be directed to accept or retain a pulpit which he does not want. These considerations should be regarded as basic. Our aim is to suggest a system that will enhance, rather than diminish or impair, the rights of both congregations and rabbis.

C. In the program that follows, we attempt to set up the minimum of necessary machinery. Detail in the elaboration and administration of the plan should be left for later determination by the Placement Bureau itself.

III. THE MAKE-UP OF THE PLACEMENT BUREAU

① A. The agencies to be represented on a Placement Bureau shall be the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (called henceforth in this report simply "the School"). We propose that each of these three agencies be represented by four delegates of its own choosing.

About twenty per cent of the graduates of the School are engaged in the work of Hillel Foundations. It was felt wise, therefore, to explore the possibility of Hillel's participation in this plan. The prospects look favorable. It is our hope that future negotiations will determine the method of participation, and provide for representation by Hillel on the governing body of the Placement Bureau.

1. To insure equality of representation as between congregations and rabbis, it is proposed that three laymen and one rabbi be appointed on the Placement Bureau by the Union and the School respectively.

② 2. Delegates shall be appointed for a term of three years, except that the term of the initial delegates shall be arranged in such manner that the terms of not more than one-third of all delegates shall expire in any one year. No delegate shall serve for more than two consecutive terms, nor shall he be eligible for reappointment thereafter until at least three years have elapsed since the expiration of his last term.

3. Each of the agencies represented on the Bureau will be expected to bear its proportionate share of the financial cost of the Bureau's operation.

4. To qualify as delegates, rabbis shall be required to agree not to change pulpits during the period of their appointment.

③ B. The Placement Bureau shall engage the services of a director, who may be either a rabbi or a layman. He shall be selected by the members of the Placement Bureau in a manner which they shall determine.

C. The Bureau shall determine the location of its office and shall consider the advisability of utilizing or establishing regional representation.

D. This plan is to include in its operation all member congregations of the Union and all members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. It shall also include those graduates of the HUC-JIR who are not members of any other national rabbinical body, who shall indicate that they desire to be included in the plan and will abide by its rules. It shall also include those congregations, not members of the UAHC, which shall indicate that they desire to be included in the plan and will abide by its rules. Nothing herein shall prevent the Bureau or its constituent organizations from assisting a non-member congregation in securing rabbinical leadership, nor the direct placing of its graduates by the HUC-JIR, provided this is done within one year of graduation and upon reasonable notice to the Bureau. (4)

E. This plan shall become operative upon adoption by the three bodies.

F. Amendments to this Plan may be made at any time by concurrent action of the three bodies.

G. The Bureau shall be authorized to adopt its own rules of procedure.

H. This plan shall continue for successive periods of three years, but shall terminate at the expiration of any three year period when any party to this agreement shall have given notice of withdrawal six months previously. At the expiration of three years after the adoption of this plan, the three parties thereto--the CCAR, HUC-JIR, and the UAHC, shall review the experience of these years and consider such modifications or amendments as that experience may suggest.

IV. HOW THE BUREAU IS TO OPERATE

For the successful implementation of this voluntary plan for Rabbinical Placement, and in order that the Bureau may best serve both congregations and rabbis, it is self-evident that all contacts and recommendations involving the placement of rabbis shall be initiated by both congregations and rabbis solely through the Placement Bureau. 5

(2) No rabbi shall make himself available for pulpit consideration or recommend a colleague for such consideration except through the Placement Bureau. No congregation shall approach a rabbi either as a candidate for its pulpit or to recommend such candidates, except through the Bureau.

It is necessary for the successful implementation of this plan that the Bureau should be kept informed regarding the proceedings in filling pulpits. It is not the intention of this Plan that the Bureau play any part in determining salary or other terms of employment, either for pulpit candidates or for rabbis already occupying pulpits. X

We urge upon all congregations and rabbis the acceptance of this procedure. To use the Bureau and at the same time follow the present methods of pulpit placement would be to complicate the problem rather than to solve it.

(3) B. Recommendations of candidates for pulpits, to be made by the Placement Bureau to congregations, may be of either one or several men, depending upon the request of congregations. 7

If multiple recommendations are requested, they are to be kept to a minimum. Each rabbi shall be given full, fair and equal consideration, before a selection is made. 7

1. In the implementation of this, as well as all other provisions of the Placement Plan, the Bureau shall strive to operate within the framework and in the spirit of the CODE OF ETHICS adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1940.

with Frank ③ C. Congregations shall have the right to indicate to the Bureau the rabbi or the kind of rabbi they believe best qualified to fill their pulpit. They may describe to the Bureau the various qualifications they have in mind. The Bureau shall give due consideration to the request and to such requirements as age, character, capacity, experience, etc. ⑥

④ D. It shall be the purpose of the Placement Bureau to provide advancement for those who by their accomplishment and experience have merited such promotion, it being understood, however, that seniority should not be the sole criterion. ⑦

E. Trial sermons are not the ideal or the fairest method of determining the fitness of candidates. We cite the language of the Code of Ethics, accepted by the CCAR in 1940: "Every rabbi should be judged by his complete record.....The trial sermon method.....is neither adequate nor conclusive, and may even become undignified and detrimental to religious values." The Placement Bureau should make every reasonable effort to discourage trial sermons. Under no circumstances shall they be used as the sole or the principal criterion in the selection of a rabbi.

F. A rabbi who intends to leave his pulpit should give adequate notice to his congregation. By the same token a congregation desiring to terminate its relationship with a rabbi must give him adequate and proper notice. In default of such action by the rabbi, it shall be the responsibility of the Placement Bureau to decide when a congregation shall be advised that its rabbi intends to sever his connection with that congregation. The Bureau shall not take such action without having previously notified the rabbi in question of its intention.

G. The Bureau shall keep such records as it may require.

H. It will be wise to provide against the contingency in which a congregation believes that it has filled its pulpit, only to discover that the rabbi invited to serve them was unwilling to come. To obviate this condition it is suggested that the Bureau secure a definite commitment from the rabbi in question, stating that if elected he will serve. Such a commitment, obtained by or through the Bureau, is to be regarded as binding on both congregation and rabbi.

V. CONCLUSION

We do not assert that the foregoing is a perfect plan. Your Commission is fully aware that there may be defects in the plan. Even after discussion and decision by the CCAR, the UAHC, and the College-Institute, it will not be possible to set up a system guaranteed to operate perfectly. Among the defects may be noted the fact that any scheme which involves judgment upon human beings by their fellows can never be wholly objective. Such an objection applies even more to the present unregulated practice of selecting rabbis.

We believe that the plan proposed is flexible and that it can be modified or amended as experience is gained.

We therefore strongly recommend to the CCAR, the UAHC, and the HUC-JIR the adoption of this plan and its implementations at the earliest possible moment.

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Union of American Hebrew Congregations

34 WEST SIXTH STREET • CINCINNATI 2, OHIO • PHONE PARKWAY 7345

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE BROTHERHOODS • THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE YOUTH

October 25, 1950

Dear Friend:

We enclose for your consideration a revised text of the Placement Plan as amended by the Joint Placement Commission on October 22nd, 1950.

On two previous occasions, drafts of the Placement Plan were sent to the Congregations affiliated with the Union. The Plan was accompanied by the request that all Congregations should give it serious consideration, and transmit to the Commission their reactions, suggestions, and amendments.

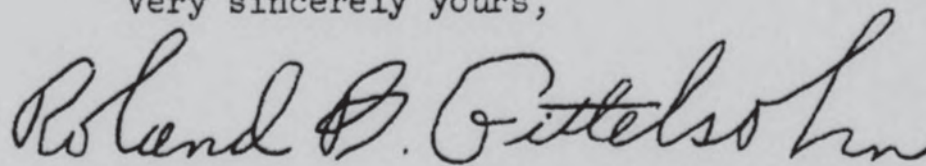
Many such suggestions were received of diverse kinds. The Commission has done its utmost to give weight to these reactions and to reconsider the Plan in the light of them.

Your Commission feels as strongly as ever that a Placement Plan is necessary for the future welfare of Reform Judaism. In accordance with this feeling, we now transmit to you a plan substantially modified, with the intention of meeting valid objections.

We trust that you will make this plan available to all the delegates to the Union Convention, that they may come to the Convention prepared to discuss it intelligently and to take action upon it.

With kind regards, I am

Very sincerely yours,



Chairman, Joint Placement Commission

RBG:jbm

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OF
AMERICAN RABBIS

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October 25, 1950

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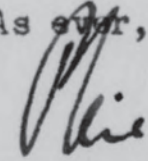
Dear Abba:

I have just returned from New York where, among other functions, I attended for a short period the meeting of the Joint Placement Commission. As you may have already heard, the Commission has decided to eliminate from its proposed plan the "sanctions" provisions. Considerable lay opposition had developed and also the Executive Board of the College-Institute had voted for the plan in principle but against sanctions.

It was because of this growing opposition and the opinion that there would be resulting modifications that the statements about which you write in your letter of the 18th were not sent out. So I was informed on inquiry. I am also informed that communications are going out immediately covering these most recent developments.

With kind regards,

As ever,


Philip S. Bernstein

PSB/ir



SECOND STATEMENT

in

OPPOSITION TO THE PLAN

of the

JOINT PLACEMENT (RABBINICAL) COMMISSION

 *of the* 
UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

“Without sanctions the plan won’t work.

With sanctions nobody wants it.”

OCTOBER 30, 1950

TO ALL MEMBER CONGREGATIONS
of the
UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

There have been many Placement Plans and the documents have been changed with such frequency that a lay person would have great difficulty finding his way through them. It is best to discuss it as a matter of principle. The heart of the plan—and both proponents and opponents agree upon this—is to be found in the following paragraph:

“All contacts, negotiations and recommendations involving the placement of rabbis shall be directed by both congregations and rabbis *solely* through the Placement Bureau.” (Italics ours.)

What does this mean?

Some of the proponents have said it means that we shall have a “channel for communication between a congregation seeking a rabbi and a rabbi”. These are honeyed words. It is not a channel which is being created but a control. The Chairman of the Placement Commission, in an article which appeared in the December, 1949 issue of *Liberal Judaism* (p. 34) entitled “Wanted the Rabbi”, frankly stated “up to the present time we have had neither system nor *control* in the filling of our liberal pulpits.” (The emphasis is ours; note the word “control”.)

The Chairman was asked whether a communication from Congregation X to rabbi Y would *have* to be forwarded to rabbi Y. The answer has been uniform—“only if the Placement Bureau approved”. What would be the standard for approval? We are asked to place our faith in the Placement Bureau, and we are told that only in rare cases would the Placement Bureau disapprove. In the plan, however, the congregations are asked to surrender their rights in unqualified language which leaves the Placement Bureau in such position that for any reason whatever it might decline to allow Congregation X to communicate with rabbi Y. And the subject of such

communications which it could prevent from reaching their goal would be "all contacts, negotiations and recommendations involving the placement of rabbis". The Placement Bureau which the plan would create would be manned principally by professional personnel devoting 24 hours a day and costing about \$27,000 a year. We know as a matter of experience that such bureau would be controlled by the professional director. The laymen would not be able to give the time necessary for its proper functioning. This is the result in almost every national organization. The director really directs; the board of directors and members of commissions are in a large measure guided by the director.

In practice we believe that such a bureau would ultimately control the selection of the rabbi for any congregation having a vacancy. In any event, the plan provides a veto by the Bureau of the selection by the congregation, because, if the Bureau does not approve the choice which the congregation makes, all it needs to do is to refuse to allow communication between the congregation and the selected rabbi.

The proponents of the plan frankly stated that the plan would not work without sanctions, and we agree with them. Such a plan could only succeed if the dictatorial powers involved in the imposition of sanctions could be exercised. Time and time again the proponents have said "without sanctions the plan will not work".

In a communication, dated August 22, 1950, we opposed the plan on the following three grounds:

1. The plan would create a hierarchy (possibly under the control of one individual) that would be destructive of the autonomy of Congregations and of the freedom of Rabbis.
2. The plan provides for sanctions "in ascending order of severity".
3. The plan would put both the Congregation and the Rabbi in a straitjacket, since a Congregation could not interview or consider a Rabbi for its pulpit, nor a Rabbi consider or accept any offer from a Congregation, except through the Placement Commission.

These grounds were elaborated in a statement of Rabbis Silver and Freehof, a copy of which is annexed hereto, marked Exhibit 1.

Both proponents and opponents of the plan agree that it involved a breach of the autonomy of the congregations. Article VIII of the Constitution of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations of America provides as follows:

"Nothing contained in this Constitution or the By-Laws shall be construed so as to interfere in any manner whatsoever with the mode of worship, the school, the freedom of expression and opinion, or any of the other congregational activities of the constituent congregations of the Union."

No congregational activity of a constituent congregation is superior to the selection of a rabbi. Independence and autonomy in the selection of a rabbi is the first and foremost right of a congregation in Judaism. In fact, under the law of the State of New York, where at least 60 of the congregations affiliated with the Union are located, the congregation, and congregation *alone* has the power to choose its rabbi. The power cannot be delegated to a board of trustees, nor may it even be subject to an affirmative recommendation of a board of trustees. The board may or may not recommend, but it can exercise no veto of the congregation's choice. This accords with the traditional Jewish practice. No outside power may override the very expression by a congregation of its choice of a rabbi. Are we now to give to a Placement Bureau power to veto or dictate a congregation's choice when such a power could not even be conferred upon a board of trustees?

Some of the proponents of the plan have tried to say that the plan would be obligatory only upon those who consent to it. The Chairman of the Commission, however, frankly, and with reason, has taken the position that it must be all or none. In the course of the article referred to, the author asked himself a question and proceeds to answer it. He asks:

"Would it not be wise to begin with a looser plan or perhaps just a voluntary code of ethics to be followed only by those who wish to?"

And to this question he makes the following emphatic answer:

"Definitely not. A placement plan must be on the basis of 'all or none'. To adopt a purely voluntary plan would be perhaps to countenance and perhaps even confound our present confusion."

The Chairman of the Commission is opposed to a voluntary plan, and he has every reason to oppose it. He is frankly, for a compulsory plan—one which will enable the Placement Bureau to see that each congregation gets the kind of a rabbi that the Bureau believes it should have.

This view is all a part of the pattern which seeks to impose greater obligations upon the individual congregations and to deprive them of their autonomy. Today it deals with rabbis; tomorrow it may deal with the control of the choir and the ritual. The day after we may be dealing with a code of practice in the congregations, and someone may suggest that unless a Jew does so and so, he cannot be a member of a congregation.

Since when in Reform Judaism or in Conservative Judaism or in Orthodox Judaism has there been a recognition for any need of ecclesiastical authority? Our congregations, since their introduction in America, have been entirely independent and autonomous—free from all ecclesiastical control—and yet the admission is made that there must be surrender of some of this autonomy. It is manifest that if such regimentation of the separate congregations is adopted, it would necessarily be authoritarian. Each congregation under this plan would be given rules to live by. To some extent each would be deprived of some of its present initiative and would be a subordinate element in our present social and religious mechanism. Such control necessarily involves regimentation, for if there were any relaxation in control or anything less than complete regimentation in the selection or placement of rabbis, there would be the certainty of a letdown in the control here sought to be established.

There are young, aspiring rabbis in the rabbinate who have a right to look for better places; there are congregations that have the unrestricted right to look for the type of rabbi that they desire and not the one that the Bureau or its director will recommend. Is this Placement Bureau going to say to a congregation, "You may not have Rabbi A or Rabbi B, they are too young for your pulpit"? That is the very kind of rabbi that we would want to come into our congregation if we were trying to build it on a firm, strong and lasting foundation. It is on that basis that our own congregations have grown strong. We wonder if a Placement Bureau would have granted to many of the congregations the right to call the rabbis

who were called, whom they now have, when older men were waiting in their places to improve themselves. Human nature is the same the world over—whether it is among rabbis or bankers, engineers or lawyers. The young men of the rabbinate have the right to aspire to the foremost pulpits in America and no one has the right to say to our congregations that they may not have them.

The Placement Bureau has now bowed to the inevitable. Nobody will stand for the sanctions which their plan sets forth and, in the hope that they can save the plan from complete defeat, they have eliminated the sanctions. They tell us that we now have a voluntary plan when the sanctions are taken out. The Placement Bureau has opposed a voluntary plan, as its Chairman stated in the article above quoted. The emasculated plan—with the sanctions omitted—will not work, and it is not less palatable because the *in terrorem* of the penalties is eliminated. It's the obligation which the congregations are required to undertake, whether that obligation be punishable by the lash, by fine, by sanctions, by Gehenna, or by moral degradation resulting from breach of an obligation. The moral obligation for us, to accept the choice by a Placement Bureau of a rabbi or to be subjected to the veto which the Placement Bureau can impose, is just as great whether there be sanctions or not. Righteous persons do not accept obligations which they believe should not be imposed upon them, whether sanctions will accompany the breach of the obligations or condemnation in the public opinion is to follow. It is the obligation which one is asked to accept, not the penalties alone which condemn this plan.

Without sanctions the plan won't work. With sanctions nobody wants it.

We stand for a voluntary plan, but a voluntary plan which is really voluntary. There should be a Placement Bureau. It should serve the congregations when they seek its advice and be ready to be helpful when called upon. If the Placement Bureau is a good Bureau, if it serves the constituent congregations well, it will thrive and prosper. If it does not do a good job, it will be neglected. But what branch of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations is any different? We are essentially a service organization. We perform the services which our constituent congregations request. If we

perform our services well, we receive financial support. If we do not perform our services well, we do not receive financial support, and we deserve none.

So with the Placement Bureau. If it serves its purposes and it promotes the welfare of the constituent congregations, it will be continued. Yes, let's have a Placement Bureau, one that will help rabbis and congregations to fill vacancies, but which will act because the congregations want it to act and not merely because the Bureau is injecting itself into the internal affairs of a congregation and shattering its independence and autonomy.

Respectfully submitted,

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPRESENTING CONGREGATIONS
IN METROPOLITAN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK



H. M. STEIN

Chairman

76 Ninth Avenue

New York 11, N. Y.

HENRY FRUHAUF

Executive Secretary

1 East 65th Street

New York 21, N. Y.

EXHIBIT 1

Silver-Freehof Statement

The proposed plan for a Placement Commission is undesirable from nearly every point of view. It is a radical and unwarranted departure from the tradition of synagogue organization and autonomy, and is an impairment of the independent status of the Rabbi. Although the plan presumes to obviate certain difficulties which have arisen in the matter of engaging rabbis and securing pulpits, it will create even more serious difficulties both for the congregations and the rabbis; in fact, it may do irreparable hurt to congregational life and to the American rabbinate.

The Placement Commission proposes a complete control over Rabbi and congregation in the matter of pulpit placement. No matter how much the statement of the plan may be softened in its phraseology, the control which it proposes is a complete one. If the plan is adopted, no rabbi will be able to accept a congregation except through the Placement Commission, and no congregation will be able to accept except through the Placement Commission. Of course, neither the Rabbi nor the congregation need accept the first or the second offer of the Commission, but after refusing once or twice the Rabbi or the congregation will simply have to do without pulpit or Rabbi. No pulpit will be obtained and no Rabbi will be accepted except through the Commission. This is the core of the proposal; and anticipating beforehand the inevitable incidents of non-compliance with it, the plan proposes strict sanctions and penalties in the hope of enforcing a basically unworkable plan.

The principal argument in favor of such a revolutionary step in American congregational life and in the rabbinate is the fact that from time to time seeming injustice is done by congregations in the selection of rabbis, i.e., that men of lesser ability or experience are given preference over more able and better equipped men. Furthermore, an undignified situation develops when many rabbis offer themselves as candidates for an available pulpit. While such incidents of unfairness and undignified conduct undoubtedly occur, it does not follow that under the plan such injustice will be obviated or that dissatisfaction will not be as widespread with the recom-

mendations of Placement Commission as with the independent selection of a congregation. There is no guarantee that "undignified" pressures will not be resorted to on the part of applicants for pulpits which will be directed towards the Placement Commission. *+ Union*

There is much discontent in the Methodist Church where ministers are assigned, and in those churches in which the Bishop makes the assignment. Injustice is not absent from any plan which is executed by fallible human beings.

X The proposed new plan which is hostile to the very genius of the autonomous synagogue and the independent rabbi will inevitably tend to suppress the career of young and promising men. A Commission such as is proposed is bound to give undue weight in its considerations to seniority and length of service. Younger men will be told to "wait their turn". No such Commission will have the courage to appoint a promising man "out of turn" without invoking the same widespread criticism which is invoked today when a congregation prefers a younger man. A congregation acting independently may occasionally make a bold decision of this kind, but a Commission cannot. *again*

No profession would dream of constricting itself within such a framework. Colleges and universities, professional schools of all kinds, art institutions, not to speak of business management would regard such a scheme as abhorrent and as distinctly harmful to the progress of their professions and colleges. Decidedly, they insist upon a maximum of freedom and flexibility, in selecting their key people. Certainly the rabbinate and the congregations ought not to stultify themselves by submitting to what must, in the final analysis, come to be a mechanical system of appointment and advancement of seniority. Young men of unusual ability who would be discouraged from entering other professions where such a procedure prevailed would certainly be discouraged from entering the rabbinate.

The present informal method undoubtedly encourages at times unseemly competition and intervention on the part of individuals whenever there is a congregation vacancy, but the proposed new method would be infinitely worse. All the pressuring and intervention will be directed against half a dozen men who will have the fate of the rabbinate and the congregations in their hands. The

pressure on these men will be continuous, and their decisions will in all probability meet with as little general satisfaction on the part of those whom the Commission will fail to recommend as is the case today.

Under the plan there will be a Commission which will be increasingly entrenched with growing power over Rabbi and congregation. The Commission will gradually shake down and come under the control of one or two of its members. Perhaps the executive director of the Commission, because he is the permanent member while the term of offices of the other members may be temporary, will become the actual controlling force in the Commission, and, therefore, in the congregational life of American Jewry and of its rabbinate. The whole tone of the rabbinate will change. A dictatorship which nobody wants, neither the proponents nor opponents of the Placement Plan, may develop, which would be disastrous to the freedom and independence of American Judaism. Whatever little benefit the plan might bring is surely outweighed by the danger which it entails.

Some years ago a Code of Rabbinic and Congregational Ethics was adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. It is in the direction of urging upon rabbi and congregation full and loyal adherence to the sound principles enunciated there that the prospect of any improvement in the unsatisfactory condition lies, not in the desperate experiment such as is contemplated in the proposed new plan which is both inimical and alien to the spirit of the synagogue and the rabbinate.

STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION
TO THE
PLAN OF THE JOINT PLACEMENT COMMISSION
FOR A RABBINICAL PLACEMENT BUREAU

Dated: October 30, 1950

To All Member Congregations of the
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

There have been many Placement Plans and the documents have been changed with such frequency that a lay person would have great difficulty finding his way through them. It is best to discuss it as a matter of principle. The heart of the plan - and both proponents and opponents agree upon this - is to be found in the following paragraph:

"All contacts, negotiations and recommendations involving the placement of rabbis shall be directed by both congregations and rabbis solely through the Placement Bureau" (Italics ours.)

What does this mean?

Some of the proponents have said it means that we shall have a "channel for communication between a congregation seeking a rabbi and a rabbi." These are honeyed words. It is not a channel which is being created but a control. The Chairman of the Placement Commission, in an article which appeared in the December, 1949 issue of Liberal Judaism (p. 34) entitled "Wanted the Rabbi," frankly stated "up to the present time we have had neither system nor control in the filling of our liberal pulpits." (The emphasis is ours; note the word "control.")

The Chairman was asked whether a communication from congregation X to rabbi Y would have to be forwarded to rabbi Y. The answer has been uniform - "only if the Placement Bureau approved." What would be the standard for approval? We are asked to place our faith in the Placement Bureau, and we are told that only in rare cases would the Placement Bureau disapprove. In the plan, however, the congregations are asked to surrender their rights in unqualified language which leaves the Placement Bureau in such position that for any reason whatever it might decline to allow Congregation X to communicate with Rabbi Y. And the subject of such communications which it could prevent from reaching their goal would be "all contacts, negotiations and recommendations, involving the placement of rabbis." The Placement Bureau which the plan would create would be manned principally by professional personnel devoting twenty-four hours a day and costing about \$27,000 a year. We know as a matter of experience that such bureau would be controlled by the professional director. The laymen would not be able to give the time necessary for its proper functioning. This is the result in almost every national organization. The director really directs; the board of directors and members of commissions are in a large measure guided by the director.

In practice we believe that such a bureau would ultimately control the selection of the rabbi for any congregation having a vacancy. In any event, the plan provides a veto by the Bureau of the selection by the congregation, because, if the Bureau does not approve the choice which the congregation makes, all it needs to do is to refuse to allow communication between the congregation and the selected rabbi.

The proponents of the plan frankly stated that the plan would not work without sanctions, and we agree with them. Such a plan could only succeed if the dictatorial powers involved in the imposition of sanctions could be exercised. Time and time again the proponents have said "without sanctions the plan will not work."

In a communication, dated August 22, 1950, we opposed the plan on the following three grounds:

1. The Plan would create a hierarchy (possibly under the control of one individual) that would be destructive of the autonomy of Congregations and of the freedom of Rabbis.
2. The Plan provides for sanctions "in ascending order of severity."
3. The Plan would put both the Congregation and the Rabbi in a strait-jacket, since a Congregation could not interview or consider a Rabbi for its pulpit, nor a Rabbi consider or accept any offer from a Congregation, except through the Placement Commission.

These grounds were elaborated in a statement of Rabbis Silver and Freehof, a copy of which is annexed hereto, marked Exhibit 1.

Both proponents and opponents of the plan agree that it involved a breach of the autonomy of the congregations. Article VIII of the Constitution of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations provides as follows:

"Nothing contained in this Constitution or the By-Laws shall be construed so as to interfere in any manner whatsoever with the mode of worship, the school, the freedom of expression and opinion, or any of the other congregational activities of the constituent congregations of the Union."

No congregational activity of a constituent congregation is superior to the selection of a rabbi. Independence and autonomy in the selection of a rabbi is the first and foremost right of a congregation in Judaism. In fact, under the law of the State of New York, where at least sixty of the congregations affiliated with the Union are located, the congregation, and the congregation alone has the power to choose its rabbi. The power cannot be delegated to a board of trustees, nor may it even be subject to an affirmative recommendation of a board of trustees. The board may or may not recommend, but it can exercise no veto of the congregation's choice. This accords with the traditional Jewish practice. No outside power may override the very expression by a congregation of its choice of a rabbi. Are we now to give to a placement bureau power to veto or dictate a congregation's choice when such a power could not even be conferred upon a board of trustees?

Some of the proponents of the plan have tried to say that the plan would be obligatory only upon those who consent to it. The Chairman of the Commission, however, frankly, and with reason, has taken the position that it must be all or none. In the course of the article referred to, the author asked himself a question and proceeds to answer it. He asks:

"Would it not be wise to begin with a looser plan or perhaps just a voluntary code of ethics to be followed only by those who wish to?"

And to this question he makes the following emphatic answer:

"Definitely not. A placement plan must be on the basis of 'all or none.' To adopt a purely voluntary plan would be perhaps to countenance and perhaps even confound our present confusion."

The Chairman of the Commission is opposed to a voluntary plan, and he has every reason to oppose it. He is, frankly, for a compulsory plan - one which will enable the Placement Bureau to see that each congregation gets the kind of a rabbi that the Bureau believes it should have.

This view is all a part of the pattern which seeks to impose greater obligations upon the individual congregations and to deprive them of their autonomy. Today it deals with rabbis; tomorrow it may deal with the control of the choir and the ritual. The day after we may be dealing with a code of practice in the congregations, and someone may suggest that unless a Jew does so and so, he cannot be a member of a congregation.

Since when in Reform Judaism or in Conservative Judaism or in Orthodox Judaism has there been a recognition for any need of ecclesiastical authority? Our congregations, since their introduction in America, have been entirely independent and autonomous - free from all ecclesiastical control - and yet the admission is made that there must be surrender of some of this autonomy. It is manifest that if such regimentation of the separate congregations is adopted, it would necessarily be authoritarian. Each congregation under this Plan would be given rules to live by. To some extent each would be deprived of some of its present initiative and would be a subordinate element in our present social and religious mechanism. Such control necessarily involves regimentation, for if there were any relaxation in control or anything less than complete regimentation in the selection or placement of rabbis, there would be the certainty of a let-down in the control here sought to be established.

There are young, aspiring rabbis in the rabbinate who have a right to look for better places; there are congregations that have the unrestricted right to look for the type of rabbi that they desire and not the one that the Bureau or its director will recommend. Is this Placement Bureau going to say to a congregation, "You may not have Rabbi A or Rabbi B, they are too young for your pulpit"? That is the very kind of rabbi that we would want to come into our congregation if we were trying to build it on a firm, strong and lasting foundation. It is on that basis that our own congregations have grown strong. We wonder if a Placement Bureau would have granted to many of the congregations the right to call the rabbis who were called, whom they now have, when older men were waiting in their places to improve themselves. Human nature is the same the world over - whether it is among rabbis or bankers, engineers or lawyers. The young men of the rabbinate have the right to aspire to the foremost pulpits in America and no one has the right to say to our congregations that they may not have them.

The Placement Bureau has now bowed to the inevitable. Nobody will stand for the sanctions which their plan sets forth and, in the hope that they can save the plan from complete defeat, they have eliminated the sanctions. They tell us that we now have a voluntary plan when the sanctions are taken out. The Placement Bureau has opposed a voluntary plan, as its Chairman stated in the article above quoted. The emasculated plan - with the sanctions omitted - will not work, and it is not less palatable because the in terrorem of the penalties

is eliminated. It's the obligation which the congregations are required to undertake, whether that obligation be punishable by the lash, by fine, by sanctions, by Gehenna, or by moral degradation resulting from breach of an obligation. The moral obligation for us, to accept the choice by a Placement Bureau of a rabbi or to be subjected to the veto which the Placement Bureau can impose, is just as great whether there be sanctions or not. Righteous persons do not accept obligations which they believe should not be imposed upon them, whether sanctions will accompany the breach of the obligations or condemnation in the public opinion is to follow. It is the obligation which one is asked to accept, not the penalties alone which condemn this plan.

Without sanctions the plan won't work. With sanctions nobody wants it.

We stand for a voluntary plan, but a voluntary plan which is really voluntary. There should be a placement bureau. It should serve the congregations when they seek its advice and be ready to be helpful when called upon. If the Placement Bureau is a good bureau, if it serves the constituent congregations well, it will thrive and prosper. If it does not do a good job, it will be neglected. But what branch of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations is any different? We are essentially a service organization. We perform the services which our constituent congregations request. If we perform our services well, we receive financial support. If we do not perform our services well, we do not receive financial support, and we deserve none. So with the Placement Bureau. If it serves its purposes and it promotes the welfare of the constituent congregations, it will be continued. Yes, let's have a Placement Bureau, one that will help rabbis and congregations to fill vacancies, but which will act because the congregations want it to act and not merely because the bureau is injecting itself into the internal affairs of a congregation and shattering its independence and autonomy.

Respectfully Submitted,

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPRESENTING CONGREGATIONS
IN METROPOLITAN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

H. M. STEIN
Chairman
76 Ninth Avenue
New York 11, N.Y.

HENRY FRUHAUF
Executive Secretary
1 East 65th Street
New York 21, N.Y.

EXHIBIT 1

Silver-Freehof Statement

The proposed plan for a Placement Commission is undesirable from nearly every point of view. It is a radical and unwarranted departure from the tradition of synagogue organization and autonomy, and is an impairment of the independent status of the Rabbi. Although the plan presumes to obviate certain difficulties which have arisen in the matter of engaging rabbis and securing pulpits, it will create even more serious difficulties both for the congregations and the rabbis; in fact, it may do irreparable hurt to congregational life and to the American rabbinate.

The Placement Commission proposes a complete control over Rabbi and congregation in the matter of pulpit placement. No matter how much the statement of the plan may be softened in its phraseology, the control which it proposes is a complete one. If the plan is adopted, no rabbi will be able to accept a congregation except through the Placement Commission, and no congregation will be able to accept except through the Placement Commission. Of course, neither the Rabbi nor the congregation need accept the first or the second offer of the Commission, but after refusing once or twice the Rabbi or the congregation will simply have to do without pulpit or Rabbi. No pulpit will be obtained and no Rabbi will be accepted except through the Commission. This is the core of the proposal; and anticipating beforehand the inevitable incidents of non-compliance with it, the plan proposes strict sanctions and penalties in the hope of enforcing a basically unworkable plan.

The principal argument in favor of such a revolutionary step in American congregational life and in the rabbinate is the fact that from time to time seeming injustice is done by congregations in the selection of rabbis, i.e., that men of lesser ability or experience are given preference over more able and better equipped men. Furthermore, an undignified situation develops when many rabbis offer themselves as candidates for an available pulpit. While such incidents of unfairness and undignified conduct undoubtedly occur, it does not follow that under the plan such injustice will be obviated or that dissatisfaction will not be as widespread with the recommendations of Placement Commission as with the independent selection of a congregation. There is no guarantee that "undignified" pressures will not be resorted to on the part of applicants for pulpits which will be directed towards the Placement Commission.

There is much discontent in the Methodist Church where ministers are assigned, and in those churches in which the Bishop makes the assignment. Injustice is not absent from any plan which is executed by fallible human beings.

The proposed new plan which is hostile to the very genius of the autonomous synagogue and the independent rabbi will inevitably tend to suppress the career of young and promising men. A Commission such as is proposed is bound to give undue weight in its considerations to seniority and length of service. Younger men will be told to "wait their turn". No such Commission will have the courage to appoint a promising man "out of turn" without invoking the same widespread criticism which is invoked today when a congregation prefers a younger man. A

congregation acting independently may occasionally make a bold decision of this kind, but a Commission cannot.

No profession would dream of constricting itself within such a framework. Colleges and universities, professional schools of all kinds, art institutions, not to speak of business management would regard such a scheme as abhorrent and as distinctly harmful to the progress of their professions and colleges. Decidedly, they insist upon a maximum of freedom and flexibility, in selecting their key people. Certainly the rabbinate and the congregations ought not to stultify themselves by submitting to what must, in the final analysis, come to be a mechanical system of appointment and advancement of seniority. Young men of unusual ability who would be discouraged from entering other professions where such a procedure prevailed would certainly be discouraged from entering the rabbinate.

The present informal method undoubtedly encourages at times unseemly competition and intervention on the part of individuals whenever there is a congregation vacancy, but the proposed new method would be infinitely worse. All the pressuring and intervention will be directed against half a dozen men who will have the fate of the rabbinate and the congregations in their hands. The pressure on these men will be continuous, and their decisions will in all probability meet with as little general satisfaction on the part of those whom the Commission will fail to recommend as is the case today.

Under the plan there will be a Commission which will be increasingly entrenched with growing power over Rabbi and congregation. The Commission will gradually shake down and come under the control of one or two of its members. Perhaps the executive director of the Commission, because he is the permanent member while the term of offices of the other members may be temporary, will become the actual controlling force in the Commission, and, therefore, in the congregational life of American Jewry and of its rabbinate. The whole tone of the rabbinate will change. A dictatorship which nobody wants, neither the proponents nor opponents of the Placement Plan, may develop, which would be disastrous to the freedom and independence of American Judaism. Whatever little benefit the plan might bring is surely outweighed by the danger which it entails.

Some years ago a Code of Rabbinic and Congregational Ethics was adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. It is in the direction of urging upon rabbi and congregation full and loyal adherence to the sound principles enunciated there that the prospect of any improvement in the unsatisfactory condition lies, not in the desperate experiment such as is contemplated in the proposed new plan which is both inimical and alien to the spirit of the synagogue and the rabbinate.

THE UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

34 W. SIXTH STREET, CINCINNATI 2, OHIO

1442

October 31, 1950

(Dictated October 29, 1950)

Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein
Temple B'rith Kodesh
117 Gibbs Street
Rochester 5, New York

Dear Phil:

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver sent me a copy of his letter to you.

You were present at the meeting of the Joint Placement Commission on Sunday, October 22, in New York. At that meeting, we decided to modify the Placement Plan by omitting sanctions and all references thereto. A copy of the revised plan, together with a letter from Rabbi Gittelsohn, has already been sent to the rabbis and presidents of all congregations.

We are preparing to send out the revised plan to all the delegates too, but we are waiting to hear whether there will be an opposition statement, in view of the fact that the plan has been so drastically revised.

With kind greetings, I am,

Cordially yours,

LE:SG

Louis Y. Egelson

CC to Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver ✓

P.S. Since dictating the above, I received yesterday an opposition statement. Now I am waiting to receive from Rabbi Gittelsohn a pro statement. This should reach me Wednesday or Thursday, and the material will then go forth to our congregations and delegates.

L.E.

Chairman, Executive Board:
JACOB ARONSON
President:
RABBI MAURICE N. EISENDRATH
Vice-Chairmen: IRVIN FANE
FREDERICK F. GREENMAN
DR. S. S. HOLLENDER
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RABBI GEORGE ZEPIN
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RABBI LOUIS I. EGELSON
Comptroller: HYMAN KANTER

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

34 WEST SIXTH STREET • CINCINNATI 2, OHIO • PHONE PARKWAY 7345

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE BROTHERHOODS • THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE YOUTH

November 3, 1950

To All Presidents of Union Congregations and Rabbis
Gentlemen:

The Joint Commission on Rabbinical Placement met in New York City on October 22 and revised the Rabbinical Placement Plan.

Since the section on Sanctions was removed from the plan we did not know that there would be an opposition statement.

On October 30 we received a statement in opposition to the plan as newly revised. I at once asked for the arguments in favor of the plan. The latter statement reached me Wednesday, November 1.

I am enclosing herewith the following two documents

- 1 - The opposition statement
- 2 - The statement in favor

You have already received a copy of the revised plan in an earlier mailing.

With kind greetings and looking forward to seeing you and hearing you at the convention, I am

Cordially yours,

Louis I. Egelson
Secretary



MEIER STEINBRINK
JUSTICE

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
JUSTICES' CHAMBERS
BROOKLYN, N.Y.

UNOFFICIAL

November 6, 1950

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
Temple on the Heights
Cleveland 6, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

You probably have received or at least know of the last (which is either the 4th or 5th) Joint Placement Commission Plan. This has been answered by the enclosed. You will observe in the plan the little pitfall that amendments may be made to the plan by the members of the Placement Commission, which of course still leaves the door open to all of those objectionable sanctions. Also, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the plan still embody the features which were so objectionable. The whole thing should be placed on a voluntary basis.

We all count on you to present the closing argument of the debate. We are going to propose to those sponsoring the plan that so far as possible debate be limited to five speakers on each side, the opening argument to be made within a period of 10-12 minutes, then three of about 3-5 minutes each, then a closing argument of about 10 minutes. Further detail will be arranged when we reach Cleveland.

With kindest regards,

Always Sincerely,

HOW THE BUREAU IS TO OPERATE

1. This plan for Rabbinical Placement is a voluntary plan. The services of the Bureau created to administer the plan shall be available to congregations desiring to fill a pulpit and to rabbis who desire to fill a pulpit. *without being obligated to do so* Such congregations and rabbis are encouraged in their unrestricted judgment to seek the advice and the services of the Bureau whenever there is a vacancy in any pulpit. The Bureau shall assist such congregations and rabbis, make available to them such information as it has and make recommendations for the filling of a vacancy.

2. The Bureau may recommend either one or several men. If the congregation requests the recommendation of several men, the Bureau shall comply with such request. If multiple recommendations are requested, they are to be kept to a minimum. Each rabbi shall be given by the Bureau full, fair and equal consideration in the making of recommendations.

3. In requesting the recommendation of the Bureau, the congregation may describe the kind of a rabbi they believe to be best qualified to fill their pulpit and may describe the various qualifications they have in mind. The Bureau in making its recommendations shall give due consideration

to the request of the Congregation and to such requirements as age, character, capacity, experience, etc. In making its recommendations, the Bureau may be guided by a purpose to provide advancement for those who by their accomplishment and experience have merited promotion, but seniority shall not be the sole criterion.

4. In all of its action, the Bureau shall strive to operate within the framework and in the spirit of the Code of Ethics adopted by the Central Conference of American rabbis of 1940.

5. The Bureau may obtain a definite commitment from a rabbi whom it recommends for a pulpit to the effect that if elected he will serve and may also obtain the approval of his congregation that he is available for the pulpit for which he is recommended.

6. The Bureau may submit to congregations its views on the subject of adequate notice to be given (a) to a congregation by a rabbi who intends to leave his pulpit and (b) to a rabbi by a congregation desiring to terminate its relationship with a rabbi. The Bureau may also submit to a rabbi or rabbis its views on the subject of when a congregation should be advised that a rabbi intends to sever his connection with that congregation. Rabbis and congregations are urged

to be guided by such views of the Bureau.

7. The Bureau shall keep such records as it may require.



**CLEVELAND COMMITTEE
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Rabbi Myron Silverman
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CONVENTION CORRESPONDENCE

41st GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

18th ASSEMBLY OF NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE SISTERHOODS

5th CONVENTION OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEMPLE SECRETARIES

NOVEMBER 12-15, 1950 • CLEVELAND, OHIO

CONVENTION OFFICE: THE TEMPLE, ANSEL ROAD AND 105th STREET, CLEVELAND 6, OHIO

Nov. 15, 1950

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

I am sending you herewith
the copy of your address. Thank you so much
for your cooperation.



AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

Sincerely,

Murray Kass
Publicity Dep't.



MEIER STEINBRINK
JUSTICE

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
JUSTICES' CHAMBERS
BROOKLYN, N.Y.

UNOFFICIAL

November 20, 1950

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
Temple on the Heights
Cleveland 6, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

First let me express to you my personal gratitude for the aid that you gave in opposing all pressures relating to the Rabbinical Placement Plan. I am completely satisfied that we have saved the Union of American Hebrew Congregations from a serious split. Even had it been carried by a close vote, the division would have been created. I hope now it has been laid to rest, but in the light of past performances I am not too confident of this.

Your summation was masterly. Around me sat some really outstanding lawyers and we all agreed that had you studied law, you today would be the leader of the American Bar as you are the leader in the Rabbinate, and this is not idle flattery.

Under separate cover I have sent to you in keeping with my promise a copy of my opinion in the now famous Melish case which was affirmed without opinion by our Appellate Division and the further appeal in the Court of Appeals was dismissed without opinion, and also a copy of my decision in the Congregational Church case. I am passing these on to you because I know that you are interested in everything in the field of theology.

me Again, my thanks and all good wishes. Believe

Faithfully and gratefully,

UAMC

November 30, 1950

Judge Meier Steinbrink
Supreme Court of New York
Brooklyn, New York

My dear Judge Steinbrink:

Thank you for your kind letter of November 20th and for all the lovely things which you say about my participation in the debate at the Convention of the Union. I, too, believe that we have rendered the cause of the Union and of American Judaism a distinctive service in defeating a measure which was so alien to the spirit of the synagogue and the rabbinate.

I am very grateful to you for sending me a copy of your opinion in the Melish case and of your decision in the Congregational Church case. At the first opportunity I shall give myself the pleasure of reading your opinions carefully for I have always valued them greatly.

With warmest regards, I remain

Very cordially yours,

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

AHS:er

① Address to Rabblis
② will answer hostility to U.S.A.
③

W. Frank
[1950?]
Let my letter to L. Bernstein

MEMORANDUM IN FAVOR
OF THE
PROPOSED RABBINIC PLACEMENT PLAN

Issued by the Joint Placement Commission
of the
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
and the
Central Conference of American Rabbis

I.

This statement has been prepared by the chairman and co-chairman of the Joint Placement Commission, and is addressed on behalf of the Commission as such to the congregations comprising the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

On December 3, 1949 the Executive Board of the Union, after lengthy consideration of the plan proposed by the Joint Commission, approved the plan in principle by a vote of twenty-eight to five. At a later meeting held on June 24 & 25, 1950, this time with only one recorded negative vote, the Union Board supported this plan including the section on sanctions, and agreed to recommend it to the General Assembly, meeting in Cleveland during the month of November, 1950.

Because the Executive Board recognized the very great importance of this matter, and because it desired the congregations of the Union to accept the plan only after the fullest and freest consideration of all pertinent facts and opinions, it was agreed that prior to the General Assembly each congregation would receive from the Union:

- a. A copy of the revised version of the plan itself
- b. A statement of the arguments in favor of the plan
- c. A statement of the arguments in opposition

① Subsequently the Joint Placement Commission amended the Plan further at its meeting in New York City on October 22, 1950. Although a substantial majority of the Commission members were still of the opinion that sanctions, however distasteful, are essential to the most successful implementation of the Plan, it was recognized that a great deal of opposition had been expressed to the inclusion of sanctions. In order to eliminate as much acrimony and partisanship as possible from our consideration of this issue, and in the hope that a voluntary plan could now be adopted as it was a beginning, the Joint Placement Commission at its meeting of October 22 eliminated from the Plan all reference to sanctions and made other appropriate changes attendant upon this majority amendment. The Plan now to be discussed in Cleveland is the latest revision dated October 22, 1950 and mimeographed on green paper.

This memorandum has been prepared at the request of the Union, to be distributed as item (b) above. In order to keep it within the proper proportions of length, it will be assumed that the proposed plan itself will have been read before either of the accompanying statements, so that the intelligent reader may know first-hand the exact proposal under consideration.

II. THE NEED

Why is a plan of any kind needed for the placement of rabbis in the pulpits of our Liberal Jewish congregations? Why did the Union and the Conference feel an urgent need, two and a half years ago, to appoint this Joint Commission?

The answer is to be found in the deplorable fact that today we have no system whatsoever for the orderly filling of our pulpits. The usual procedure when a congregation finds its pulpit about to be vacated is for its officers and members to fan out in every conceivable direction, and by every possible method to inquire concerning available candidates. Former rabbis who have served the congregation, the presidents of the Union, the Conference and the College-Institute, prominent rabbis in other pulpits -- indeed even business and professional associates in other communities are contacted for leads. This procedure -- or lack of procedure -- would have its aspect of comedy were it not for the dread seriousness of the matters involved. On one occasion the chairman of this Commission was actually approached by the chairman of a nearby Knights of Columbus chapter on behalf of a neighboring Jewish congregation in search of a rabbi!

On the rabbinic side, when a desirable pulpit vacancy develops it is not unusual for as many as fifty rabbis to move tentatively in that direction, and, directly or indirectly, to employ methods similar to those which the congregation itself has utilized.

There has been some objection to the use of the word "chaos" in describing the present status of pulpit placement in our movement. We have no desire to enter into a fruitless debate in semantics. We desire merely to place before you some of the actual situations which have been brought to our Commission's attention in the course of its deliberations by whatever name they deserve to be called.

- a. There have been cases where officers of congregations have been contacted by telephone and/or telegraph literally within hours of the death of their rabbi, whose pulpit was thereby vacated.
- b. It is by no means unusual for a dozen rabbis to apply for a position directly. There are not a few instances where as many as fifty candidates asked to be considered.
- c. Pulpits of large, influential congregations have been offered to rabbis at once on the strength of no more than a quarter-hour address before a local community organization not even related to the synagogue, or because of a secular lecture heard by a member of the congregation in another community.
- d. Attempts on behalf of a given rabbi "candidating" for a pulpit have been made via the most unbelievable kinds of pressure through business and professional associations, through friends and relatives.

- e. To an alarming degree, the selection of rabbis for desirable pulpits has frequently been made on a basis of such superficial standards as personal appearance, social "polish," eloquence and charm. Without denying the relative importance of such qualifications, it should be clear to all that they should not be given precedence over character, scholarship, religious consecration and moral leadership. Many a congregation has discovered only after it was too late that a choice made by such superficial criteria was the wrong choice. who is
to
judge
- f. Some of the ablest, most consecrated men in the Liberal rabbinate have been overlooked in the filling of important pulpits because they have done their work quietly and without the opportunity to acquire a national reputation. The failure to consider these men for desirable pulpits results in as great a loss to the congregations in question as it is to the rabbis themselves.
- g. There is, too, the phenomenon sometimes called "rabbinic leap-frogging," that is, the manner in which rabbis have sometimes been known to leave a pulpit which they have but recently come to occupy in favor of larger and apparently greener pastures. Short of an acceptable system of placement, there is no way to guarantee the interests of a congregation which believes it has a right to the services of its new rabbi until he has at least reasonably discharged his responsibilities to them. Even as rabbis have at times been guilty in this respect, so congregations have overlooked the legitimate interests of other congregations in their zeal to tempt a particular rabbi.

We list these instances with both pain and reluctance. Only the tendency on the part of some to belittle the extent to which the matter has gone forces us to be more specific than good taste might otherwise dictate. We who in the course of more than two years of concentrated work with this problem have learned to our deep regret and sorrow of the many abuses prevalent, owe an obligation to our colleagues and associates not to allow them to rest on a false confidence that the situation is not serious. Unfortunately every one of the examples listed above can be documented, -- most of them more than a few times.

We do not believe that either our congregations or rabbis are inherently "wicked." The abuses to which your attention has been called in this section indicate that congregations and rabbis alike have been caught as victims in a confused situation which permits and sometimes even encourages conduct that would otherwise be avoided. If there were no traffic regulations or enforcement officers in Times Square, the responsibility for the resultant confusion and loss of life would not be ascribed to the individual drivers alone. In much the same way, we cannot expect order, dignity or self-respect in our placement situation unless or until we establish a proper and definite procedure as well as means for implementing that procedure.

III. WHAT DO WE WANT?

WE is meant to include the rabbis of the Conference and the laymen of their congregations together. In the long-run what will be good for either will be good for both. There has been a most unfortunate assumption in some quarters that this is a rabbis' placement plan, which is being urged upon our laymen against their own best interest. Our basic premise, to the contrary, has been throughout that even as rabbis and laymen alike suffer from the present confusion, so both want the same things and both will benefit from their attainment.

What is it, then, that WE want? Briefly and simply:-- the elimination of the evils portrayed above, and the substitution in their place of fitting objectives and meritorious selection with dignity and self-respect! What WE most assuredly do not want is either a hierarchy or "ecclesiastical authority." Both these terms have been bandied about with irresponsible looseness. We believe that a close examination of the proposed plan will indicate that it can achieve our common objective without subjecting us to any such risk.

In this connection it is to be taken for granted that no joint endeavor has ever been instituted without the voluntary acceptance of a measure of mutual recognition and discipline. The individual or unit must limit his or its absolute right to do as he or it pleases. Even nations are happily beginning to circumscribe their absolute autonomy in the cause of world organization.

The premise behind all such voluntary associations is that the individual or local unit gains more through the advantage of a larger order than it loses through any diminution of power. And be it noted, under the proposed plan our rabbis too will have to accept a measure of regulation. We use the term "regulation" rather than "sacrifice of autonomy" since, in the last analysis both rabbi and congregation will retain the absolute right of selection. The rabbi will not be under any compulsion to accept any pulpit, nor will the congregation be compelled to accept any rabbi it does not desire. #

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The members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis would not lightly or thoughtlessly relinquish, even in part, control over their own destinies and careers if they did not profoundly believe that in the long run both they personally and the cause of Jewish religious life in America would gain thereby. Notwithstanding their own historic misgivings, the rabbis of the Conference at their last two annual conventions have gone on record overwhelmingly in favor of this plan -- even in its original form, with sanctions! They have done so in the conviction that the laymen of the Union would be not less zealous for the best interests of our cause, and not less willing to make a minor sacrifice for the sake of a very major gain.

IV. HOW DO WE GET WHAT WE WANT?

It would be foolish to repeat here the major provisions of the plan, since we have assumed from the beginning that the reader of this

statement will already have studied the plan itself. It might be helpful, however, to describe a typical instance of exactly how the plan would work.

Congregation A is in need of a rabbi. Instead of resorting to the questionable procedures described above, the officers of the congregation establish contact with the Placement Bureau. They describe their needs, their problems, the emphasis in which they are interested, the type of rabbi they would like, -- if they wish, even the name of a specific rabbi in whom they are interested.

At that point, the Bureau could conceivably do any of the following: --

- a. After careful examination of its files, which would cover the entire Liberal rabbinate, it would suggest to the congregation the man or men who seem most likely to meet its requirements. Whether there would be one such recommendation or more than one would depend solely on the desire of the congregation?
- b. The merits of the men being considered would be discussed by the Bureau objectively, on the basis of their accomplishments and records in their present and past positions. A Bureau would obviously be in a very much better position to give the congregation sound information concerning a great many men than could any individual person or even group of persons who might be approached under our present procedure. (2)
- c. If the congregation had come with the name of a specific rabbi it wished to contact, the Bureau might, after thorough examination of the facts, say: "We honestly believe that Rabbi L. is much better qualified to fill your requirements than the man you have mentioned. We would therefore urge, in your own best interest, that you consider Rabbi L. also." While the Bureau would have the right to mention any other names it believed the congregation ought to consider, it would not have the right to prescribe the selection of any person that the congregation might choose except that it could register its disapproval if--

(1) It knew some compelling moral deficiency which should disqualify that man from consideration, or -

(2) It knew the man who had but recently undertaken a commitment to his present congregation and could not in good faith leave before that responsibility had been fulfilled.

- d. It will be apparent, therefore, that the only compulsory feature of the entire plan is that both congregations and rabbis would have to contact each other through the Bureau as a channel, thus eliminating the unsavory and distasteful kinds of direct pressure on both sides of the picture which we believe to be a discredit to American Liberal Judaism. why

a self defeating
plan

- most recent changes
- e. At no point could the Bureau insist by way of ultimatum that a congregation must accept a particular recommendation or go without a rabbi. The plan specifically provides that the congregation may return to the Bureau as often as it likes until it receives a recommendation entirely satisfactory to itself and to the rabbi concerned.
 - f. It should be clearly understood, however, that once a congregation had been given clearance on contacting the man it desired as its rabbi, the Bureau would have no authority to enter the negotiations regarding salary or other terms of employment. These would continue to be, as they always have been, the private affair of the congregation and rabbi concerned.

V. THE OPPOSITION

As has already been indicated in the foregoing, it has been the announced intention of the Union's Executive Board since June, 1950 to send each congregation a statement in favor and another in opposition to the proposed plan. Notwithstanding their knowledge of this, however, a group within the Union has apparently not been willing to trust the leadership of the Union to draw up a fair statement in opposition, and has in the meantime unilaterally circulated its own printed memorandum against the plan.

When it became known that a small group of laymen in and around New York City were convening a meeting to crystalize opposition to the plan, on the 27th of June, 1950, the day their meeting was to be held, the Chairman and Co-Chairman of the Commission sent the following telegram to Mr. Saul F. Dribben, President of Temple Emanuel of the City of New York, in whose name the meeting was being convened:

"Respectfully but firmly urge in name fairness and democracy no commitment on placement plan without hearing representative of placement commission which has worked on plan now two years."

Not only was no invitation issued at any time to the Placement Commission to attend such meetings, there was not even the simple, elementary courtesy of acknowledging receipt of this wire!

Furthermore, it could scarcely be a coincidence that neither in the title nor elsewhere in the opposition memorandum is there any evidence that this plan is the product of a Joint Commission, participated in equally by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis. We submit that this could well be more than just a simple lack of courtesy toward the rabbis.

Most of the arguments included in the opposition statement (the printed memorandum sent out in September, 1950) can be answered by the intelligent reader for himself upon careful examination of this statement and especially of the report itself. One emphasis which is repeated again and again, however, deserves special rejoinder before we conclude.

The impression is deliberately created in the opposition statement that an effort is being made, in presenting the plan to our congregations, to have it "forced down their throats." (This is an actual quotation from page 3 of the original memorandum issued by the opposition, and represents a sentiment which is repeated frequently in varying terminology.)

Nothing could be farther from either truth or fairness than to give such an impression. May we respectfully remind our people, therefore, that in the beginning both the Union and the Conference went on record as favoring in principle some sort of placement plan. Pursuant to this common intention, a Joint Placement Commission was appointed, representing, we believe fairly and intelligently, both organizations. This Commission has held numerous lengthy meetings over a period of more than two years, has studied the problem intensively, and has made frequent changes and revisions in an effort to eliminate all possible dangers and to safeguard both congregations and rabbis. We might add, immodestly, that on this Commission were included some of the finest and keenest minds in both the Conference and the Union, that the meetings were on the whole very well attended, and that the report as you now have it represents on practically every point the nearly unanimous view of the Commission members in attendance.

Twice the report has been thoroughly aired by the large Executive Board of the Union. On both occasions, -- once in principle and once in detail -- the plan was accepted and approved by the Executive Board. Twice it was presented for discussion to the annual conventions of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, who would not lightly endorse a plan with anywhere near the dread dangers the opposition seems to find in this one. On both occasions and by overwhelmingly favorable votes, the Conference democratically said "aye."

Several times during the past year the plan has been included on the agenda of regional UAHC meetings. The opposition memorandum refers to one such meeting where admittedly the sentiment was largely unfavorable, without even mentioning that at other meetings the prevalent sentiment was greatly in favor of the plan.

In the early spring of 1950, when the plan was distributed to all congregations in the Union, our people were asked to send in any and all suggestions they might wish to make by way of improving the plan. A number of these suggestions have, not incidentally, already been incorporated in the plan as it now reads. Although the congregations were not at that time asked to express themselves either for or against the plan as such, up to the 1st of June sixty-two congregations of varying size chose to do so. Of this number, fifty-one (82%) approved the plan, with eleven (18%) rejecting it. If it be further considered that one of the congregations expressing itself in the negative indicated that upon the incorporation of certain changes, which have already been written into the plan, it would reverse its decision, then a more accurate representation would be that fifty-two congregations were in favor, with only ten opposed. We do not profess to know whether or not the same pattern or proportion will be

followed by all the congregations of the Union. But we humbly submit that neither does anyone else know that at the present moment, and that only the General Assembly presently to be held in Cleveland can give the correct answer.

How, in the name of a decent regard for truth and fact, it can be said of this record that it constitutes "forcing" the plan down anyone's throat is quite beyond us. If, upon a sound and sober consideration of all the facts, the congregations of the Union decide in November that they do not want the placement plan, no one desires to force it upon them. The decision will be made by the congregations themselves in convention assembled, not by this Commission,--and certainly not by any little group of men who seem bent upon deliberately building straw men in order to have the pleasure of knocking them down.

Throughout much of the opposition there seems to be an unreasonable -- one is almost tempted to say irrational -- strain of suspicion, a nearly hysterical fear of some distant personal bureaucracy which can play havoc with the destinies of the congregations and rabbis. Just who or what is this Placement Bureau which is being proposed? It is to consist of human beings like yourself, chosen to represent the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. It means that the Bureau will be YOU! It will consist of you; it will be operated by you, for your best interests!

To say that you would not be willing to trust such a Bureau means you would not be willing to trust yourself. To say furthermore that twelve men, rabbis and laymen in equal number, chosen by our three great Reform Jewish bodies to represent you officially, could not be trusted to be scrupulously fair and to act only in the larger and greater interest of our movement as a whole, is to place the stigma of bankruptcy on the leadership of Reform Jewish life in America. If these men are not to be trusted to implement the machinery of Placement with utmost care, with integrity and faithfulness, then the crisis in our movement goes much deeper than the matter of placement.

There is another matter involved here too, one of relatively recent date. The Central Conference of American Rabbis is setting up machinery during this forthcoming Biennial to recruit the necessary number of chaplains for our armed service forces. Those of us who are serving on the Conference Chaplaincy Committee have been asked time and again by the men we have approached whether, in agreeing to perform their patriotic duty as chaplains they would have the assurance upon returning of an orderly placement procedure which would (a) protect their pulpits during their absence and (b) take into consideration the years of military service in making recommendations for later pulpit placements. We question the moral right of the Conference and the Union to take men from their pulpits to serve as chaplains without affording them the kind of pulpit protection and advancement which can come only through an organized system of placement. There were men -- admittedly and fortunately few in number -- whose pulpit rights were not adequate while they were in uniform during World War II. Our younger rabbis will understandably be reluctant

to volunteer in the present emergency as chaplains if they do not have assurance that the same thing cannot happen and that, after their return to civilian life, when subsequent pulpits are to be filled they will receive moral credit for time spent in the service of their country.

We who have lived conscientiously with this problem for more than two years honestly believe that we have produced a plan which will greatly increase the serviceability, dignity and self-respect of our rabbinate, of our laity, and thereby of the Liberal Judaism so precious to both. We earnestly desire that this plan be discussed fully and freely, -- in the light of all the available facts. If there are still dangers in it, and they can be eliminated without vitiating the very heart of any workable plan, we invite the cooperation of all -- rabbis and laymen alike -- toward that end.

We have no vested interest in this or any other plan. Our only vested interest is in the welfare of American Liberal Judaism. We believe that an honest, unprejudiced approach to the plan itself, and to both the statements accompanying it herewith, will show that larger welfare to be our greatest concern.

FOR THE JOINT PLACEMENT COMMISSION

Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn
Chairman



Mr. Israel N. Thurman
Co-Chairman

HOW THE BUREAU IS TO OPERATE

1. This plan for Rabbinical Placement is a voluntary plan. The services of the Bureau created to administer the plan shall be available to congregations desiring to fill a pulpit and to rabbis who desire to fill a pulpit. Without being obligated to do so, such congregations and rabbis are encouraged in their unrestricted judgment to seek the advice and the services of the Bureau whenever there is a vacancy in any pulpit. The Bureau shall assist such congregations and rabbis, make available to them such information as it has and make recommendations for the filling of a vacancy.

2. The Bureau may recommend either one or several men. If the congregation requests the recommendation of several men, the Bureau shall comply with such request. If multiple recommendations are requested, they are to be kept to a minimum. Each rabbi shall be given by the Bureau full, fair and equal consideration in the making of recommendations.

3. In requesting the recommendation of the Bureau, the congregation may describe the kind of a rabbi they believe to be best qualified to fill their pulpit and may describe the various qualifications they have in mind. The Bureau in making its recommendations shall give due consideration to the request of the Congregation and to such requirements as age, character, capacity, experience, etc. In making its recommendations, the Bureau may be guided by a purpose to provide advancement for those who by their accomplishment and experience have merited promotion, but seniority shall not be the sole criterion.

4. In all of its action, the Bureau shall strive to operate within the framework and in the spirit of the Code of Ethics adopted by the Central Conference of American rabbis in 1940.

5. The Bureau may obtain a definite commitment from a rabbi whom it recommends for a pulpit to the effect that if elected he will serve and may also obtain the approval of his congregation that he is available for the pulpit for which he is recommended.

6. The Bureau may submit to congregations its views on the subject of adequate notice to be given (a) to a congregation by a rabbi who intends to leave his pulpit and (b) to a rabbi by a congregation desiring to terminate its relationship with a rabbi. The Bureau may also submit to a rabbi or rabbis its views on the subject of when a congregation should be advised that a rabbi intends to sever his connection with that congregation. Rabbis and congregations are urged to be guided by such views of the Bureau.

7. The Bureau shall keep such records as it may require.

[19503]

Keep

MEMORANDUM IN OPPOSITION

TO THE

PLACEMENT COMMISSION PLAN

OF THE

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

TO ALL MEMBER CONGREGATIONS
of the
UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

This memorandum is submitted with the hope and expectation that it will clarify the opposition which has developed to the last report of the Joint Placement Commission which was first made available to congregations on May 26, 1950, some time after its revision.

Prior to that time there was a report known as Document A. (All documents hereafter referred to may undoubtedly be obtained on request from the office of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations either in Cincinnati or in New York.) According to the plan projected in Document A, there would have been the possibility, yes probability, that the Commission of twelve would have been made up of eight rabbis and four laymen. When this aroused opposition among the laymen and congregations, this was changed so that the Placement Commission would constitute six laymen and six rabbis. At about this time, to gain publicity for the plan and *without setting forth any of the objections to it*, there appeared in the December 1949 issue of Liberal Judaism (p. 34) an article entitled, "Wanted the Rabbi", the author of which was the Chairman of the Joint Placement Commission. In the course of this article, the author, perhaps unintentionally, "let the cat out of the bag", for at its very beginning he said, "Up to the present time we have had neither system nor *control* in the filling of our liberal pulpits." (The emphasis is ours. Note the word "control".) This proposal is based on the conception of the supremacy of the placement commission over the rabbis and the congregation. There was then the naive statement that "To safeguard the interests of laymen the plan stipulates that in the case of the union and the college institute not less than two representatives of each must be laymen." This has been discarded for there has been recognition that a plan which would make possible a Commission of eight rabbis and four laymen would be unacceptable to liberal congregations. There is, however, provision for "a full-time director of placement * * * who is to be selected by the bureau after it has been established". We know perfectly well that no twelve members of the Commission, however well intentioned, can give to this work the

time necessary for its proper functioning but that this will rest largely in the hands and on the shoulders of the director. It is so in almost every national organization. The director really directs, and boards of trustees, boards of directors and members of commissions are in large measure guided by the director.

In the course of the article referred to, the author asks himself a question and proceeds to answer it: "Would it not be wise to begin with a looser plan or perhaps just a voluntary code of ethics to be followed only by those who wish to?" "A. Definitely not. A placement plan must be on the basis of '*all or none*'. To adopt a purely voluntary plan would be perhaps to countenance and perhaps even confound our present confusion." Further in the article at its continuance on page 42, there appears at least a frank confession: "Q. Would congregations have to yield some of their sovereignty to accept a placement plan?" "A. There is a price to be paid whenever chaos is fashioned into order. Each of the three major participants would have to surrender part of its own precious autonomy." (Please note the play on words and the characterization of what is termed "chaos" and also note the confession that our liberal congregations "would have to surrender part of its own precious autonomy".)

Following this publication and before its revision, Dr. Abba Hillel Silver of Cleveland, Ohio, and Dr. Solomon B. Freehof of Pittsburgh, Pa., issued a strong statement in opposition to the establishment of a Joint Placement Commission as proposed in the original plan. A copy of this statement is appended as Exhibit 1. Here it might be well to note that the authors of this plan have made the statement under paragraph IV, sub-paragraph (a) that what they suggest is "such a system must be exclusive or it will prove to be useless". At page 5 of Document A, the utterly unfounded statement is embodied that "In passing it should be noted that this proposal of a scale of penalties follows similar procedures long in practice by the medical and legal professions." There is not the slightest foundation for this statement. The legal profession, through its Bar Associations, cooperating with the courts, cleans its own house. The medical profession, in almost every state in the union, through its State Medical Boards, acts likewise. *The Central Conference of American Rabbis may well follow their example without impugning either the integrity or the autonomy of the congregations.*

This is the first time in the history of Liberal Judaism, beginning with the time of its founder, Isaac Mayer Wise, to the present time, that there has even been the slightest suggestion of imposing sanctions on congregations.

After the original plan was projected, footnotes to the report were issued and then later Document C with explanatory material was also issued. This last was in large measure the same as the article "Wanted the Rabbi" which appeared in the December 1949 publication—*Liberal Judaism*. The statement has likewise been publicly made that a similar system is in use by the "Joint Commission on Rabbinic Placement under the auspices of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the Rabbinical Assembly of America and United Synagogue of America". This statement is likewise without foundation. (A copy of the Code of Procedure in Placement of Rabbis may be obtained by anyone desiring it and by writing to the Joint Commission on Rabbinic Placement at 3080 Broadway, New York 27, New York.) Nowhere in that plan is there the slightest hint or suggestion of any sanctions to be imposed on congregations. We are among those who believe that if the Central Conference of American Rabbis sets up a code of procedure to govern the rabbis that the Reform Congregations of America will cooperate in its observance and enforcement. They will not tolerate having this plan forced down their throats. It is a danger to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations which no one should invite.

At the annual meeting of the Assembly of Delegates of the New York Federation of Reform Congregations, which was largely attended by representatives of the 52 member congregations, this plan was debated for almost two-and-a-half hours. The sentiment was overwhelmingly in opposition to it. The Assembly of Delegates could take no action which would be binding on the congregations, and then very wisely the whole matter was tabled. We have not the slightest hesitation in asserting that had it been permitted to come to a vote, the vast majority of our associates in that Assembly of Delegates would have turned down the proposal even though their action would only be advisory. But we must look forward to the biennial convention which is to be held in Cleveland November 10th, 11th, and 12th, 1950.

It is respectfully submitted that "The history of denominational organizations abounds in warnings. The love of power grows easily among those who come to possess it and some organizations,

very innocent in their inception, have developed large and insidious powers of usurpation." The question is posed, How long will it be before someone will also foster the same Joint Placement Commission Plan for cantors in the congregations? And then it is only another step to reach out for control of the choir and the ritual. Since when in Reform Judaism or in Conservative Judaism or in Orthodox Judaism has there been a recognition for any need of ecclesiastical authority? Our congregations, since their introduction in America, have been entirely independent and autonomous—free from all ecclesiastical control—and yet the admission is made that not only must there be surrender of some of this autonomy but this Placement Commission will have the power to impose sanctions on rabbis and on congregations. It is manifest that if such regimentation of the separate congregations is adopted, it would necessarily be authoritarian. Each congregation under this plan would be given rules to live by. To some extent each would be deprived of some of its present initiative and would be a subordinate element in our present social and religious mechanism. Such control necessarily involves regimentation, for if there were any relaxation in control or anything less than complete regimentation in the selection or placement of rabbis, there would be the certainty of a letdown in the control here sought to be established. There are young, aspiring rabbis in the rabbinate who have a right to look for better places; there are congregations that have the unrestricted right to look for the type of rabbi that they desire and not the one that the Commission or its director will recommend. Is this Placement Commission going to say to a congregation, "You may not have Rabbi A or Rabbi B, they are too young for your pulpit"? That is the very kind of rabbi that we would want to come into our congregation if we were trying to build it on a firm, strong and lasting foundation. It is on that basis that our own congregations have grown strong. We wonder if a Placement Commission, empowered to impose sanctions, would have granted to many of the congregations the right to call the rabbis who were called, whom they now have, when older men were waiting in their places to improve themselves. Human nature is the same the world over—whether it is among rabbis or bankers, engineers or lawyers. The young men of the rabbinate have the right to aspire to the foremost pulpits in America and no one has the right to say to our congregations that they may not have them and if they take them we will impose sanctions. That is the most perfect way in the world

to wreck the UAHC. Go out and tell the congregations that the Placement Commission is going to dictate to them and see how long you will hold the 415 member congregations.

During the course of the debate before the Assembly of Delegates of the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, the Chairman of the Placement Commission said, "No rabbi will be allowed to take a pulpit without the consent of the Placement Commission, and *no congregation will be allowed* to take a rabbi without its consent, and if they do then the sanctions which appear in the Revised Report under paragraph IV—'Sanctions' will be imposed." Referring to a few limited instances where there probably was conduct on the part of a rabbi or congregation which would readily subject them to criticism, there has been repeated use of the phrase "chaos and anarchy" as applied to this condition. We resent the use of that kind of language as applied to laymen seriously engaged as volunteers in religious work. We have greater respect for the rabbinate and all of its members than that, and we have greater respect, too, for the separate congregations. And what if there are a few offenders? Is that any reason to put a halter around the necks of the individual congregations and rabbis?

At this meeting of the Assembly of Delegates in New York, the question was asked "Where is the chaos? Let someone here stand up and say that he has had any difficulty that approached chaos. We know of no chaos in Judaism excepting that which unfortunately sometimes appears between those of Reform Judaism, those of Conservative Judaism and those of Orthodox Judaism." Let us iron out those greater difficulties before we begin imposing sanctions and establishing something that will eventually fashion itself into a Frankenstein. It will come back to haunt us for a long time. We should not disturb the independence or autonomy of each congregation because there are many—and we say this advisedly—that will not accept this, and then would you throw them out of the Union? What would then become of your UAHC?

There is recognition in this last Revised Plan, to quote from its own words, that "sanctions are distasteful". That's under section "V" paragraph A. Then in paragraph B, the proposed sanctions are "listed in ascending order of severity". Those sanctions are, briefly stated:

- (1) an official reprimand;
- (2) refusal by members of the CCAR to visit or speak before an offending congregation;

- (3) removal of the offending rabbi from all committees of the CCAR and of the UAHC; similar removal of representatives of offending congregations;
- (4) decision of the Placement Bureau to set aside for a specified time consideration of a rabbi who has not abided by the placement procedure;
- (5) refusal of the Placement Bureau to deal further with particular congregational committees or officers who, in the judgment of the Commission, have offended;
- (6) withdrawal by the UAHC from an offending congregation of its services and assistance;
- (7) expulsion of the rabbi from the CCAR or of the congregation from the UAHC.

And then comes the bold confession "without this possibility however rabbis or congregations may feel that they can disregard lesser penalties or sanctions". It is in this latter respect that there is most marked and violent differences of opinion, which can result only in a split which could invite the eventual doom of a heretofore genuine Union. In the sense that someone asserts the omnipotence of this scheme of sanctions and the denial of the natural rights of congregations, it is totalitarian.

It is urged that your congregation seriously consider, paragraph by paragraph, this last revision of the report of the Joint Placement Commission and that we keep in mind "United we stand, divided we fall". This is as true today as when these immortal words were spoken. "In union there is strength." What is proposed will make for disunion.

Ah, we are told this plan merely provides a "channel for communication between a congregation seeking a rabbi and a rabbi". Let us not be misled by honeyed words. The plan provides *control* not the channel. Here is the heart of the plan:

"All contacts, negotiations and recommendations involving the placement of rabbis shall be directed by both congregations and rabbis *solely* through the Placement Bureau." (Italics ours.)

This means that if the Placement Bureau decides that the rabbi desired by a congregation does not meet its needs or that another rabbi would better meet those needs, the congregation may not even be permitted to communicate with the rabbi of its choice. In form,

at least, the Placement Bureau can exercise a veto over the congregation's choice. In practice the veto will result in the selection of rabbis by the Placement Bureau—in short a hierarchy.

Under the law of the State of New York, where at least 60 of the congregations affiliated with the Union are located, the congregation and the congregation *alone* has the power to choose its rabbi. The power cannot be delegated to a Board of Trustees, nor may it be made even subject to an affirmative recommendation of a Board of Trustees. The Board may or may not recommend but it can exercise no veto of the congregation's choice. This accords with the traditional Jewish practice. No outside power may override the very expression by the congregation of its choice for rabbi. Are we now to give to a Placement Bureau a power to veto or dictate the congregation's choice when such a power could not even be conferred on a Board of Trustees? And are we to suffer excommunication from the religious order if we fail to obey the dictates of this Bureau? By putting the rabbis and the congregation in a subordinate position there is expressed a disdain for both.

We respectfully ask your cooperation and will welcome from you, personally, or on behalf of your congregation any comment.



EXHIBIT 1

Silver-Freehof Statement

The proposed plan for a Placement Commission is undesirable from nearly every point of view. It is a radical and unwarranted departure from the tradition of synagogue organization and autonomy, and is an impairment of the independent status of the Rabbi. Although the plan presumes to obviate certain difficulties which have arisen in the matter of engaging rabbis and securing pulpits, it will create even more serious difficulties both for the congregations and the rabbis; in fact, it may do irreparable hurt to congregational life and to the American rabbinate.

The Placement Commission proposes a complete control over Rabbi and congregation in the matter of pulpit placement. No matter how much the statement of the plan may be softened in its phraseology, the control which it proposes is a complete one. If the plan is adopted, no rabbi will be able to accept a congregation except through the Placement Commission, and no congregation will be able to accept except through the Placement Commission. Of course, neither the Rabbi nor the congregation need accept the first or the second offer of the Commission, but after refusing once or twice the Rabbi or the congregation will simply have to do without pulpit or Rabbi. No pulpit will be obtained and no Rabbi will be accepted except through the Commission. This is the core of the proposal; and anticipating beforehand the inevitable incidents of non-compliance with it, the plan proposes strict sanctions and penalties in the hope of enforcing a basically unworkable plan.

The principal argument in favor of such a revolutionary step in American congregational life and in the rabbinate is the fact that from time to time seeming injustice is done by congregations in the selection of rabbis, i.e., that men of lesser ability or experience are given preference over more able and better equipped men. Furthermore, an undignified situation develops when many rabbis offer themselves as candidates for an available pulpit. While such incidents of unfairness and undignified conduct undoubtedly occur, it does not follow that under the plan such injustice will be obviated or that dissatisfaction will not be as widespread with the recommendations of Placement Commission as with the independent selection of a congregation. There is no guarantee that "undignified"

pressures will not be resorted to on the part of applicants for pulpits which will be directed towards the Placement Commission.

There is much discontent in the Methodist Church where ministers are assigned, and in those churches in which the Bishop makes the assignment. Injustice is not absent from any plan which is executed by fallible human beings.

The proposed new plan which is hostile to the very genius of the autonomous synagogue and the independent rabbi will inevitably tend to suppress the career of young and promising men. A Commission such as is proposed is bound to give undue weight in its considerations to seniority and length of service. Younger men will be told to "wait their turn". No such Commission will have the courage to appoint a promising man "out of turn" without invoking the same widespread criticism which is invoked today when a congregation prefers a younger man. A congregation acting independently may occasionally make a bold decision of this kind, but a Commission cannot.

No profession would dream of constricting itself within such a framework. Colleges and universities, professional schools of all kinds, art institutions, not to speak of business management would regard such a scheme as abhorrent and as distinctly harmful to the progress of their professions and colleges. Decidedly, they insist upon a maximum of freedom and flexibility, in selecting their key people. Certainly the rabbinate and the congregations ought not to stultify themselves by submitting to what must, in the final analysis, come to be a mechanical system of appointment and advancement of seniority. Young men of unusual ability who would be discouraged from entering other professions where such a procedure prevailed would certainly be discouraged from entering the rabbinate.

The present informal method undoubtedly encourages at times unseemly competition and intervention on the part of individuals whenever there is a congregation vacancy, but the proposed new method would be infinitely worse. All the pressuring and intervention will be directed against half a dozen men who will have the fate of the rabbinate and the congregations in their hands. The pressure on these men will be continuous, and their decisions will in all probability meet with as little general satisfaction on the part of those whom the Commission will fail to recommend as is the case today.

Under the plan there will be a Commission which will be increasingly entrenched with growing power over Rabbi and congregation.

The Commission will gradually shake down and come under the control of one or two of its members. Perhaps the executive director of the Commission, because he is the permanent member while the term of offices of the other members may be temporary, will become the actual controlling force in the Commission, and, therefore, in the congregational life of American Jewry and of its rabbinate. The whole tone of the rabbinate will change. A dictatorship which nobody wants, neither the proponents nor opponents of the Placement Plan, may develop, which would be disastrous to the freedom and independence of American Judaism. Whatever little benefit the plan might bring is surely outweighed by the danger which it entails.

Some years ago a Code of Rabbinic and Congregational Ethics was adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. It is in the direction of urging upon rabbi and congregation full and loyal adherence to the sound principles enunciated there that the prospect of any improvement in the unsatisfactory condition lies, not in the desperate experiment such as is contemplated in the proposed new plan which is both inimical and alien to the spirit of the synagogue and the rabbinate.

