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Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Commission on
Jewish Education, correspondence and report, 1962-1964.

RABBI ROLAND B. GITTELSON, D.D., Sc.D.

TEMPLE ISRAEL

BOSTON 15. MASSACHUSETTS

December

17th

1962

Rabbi Daniel Silver
The Temple
University Circle and Silver Park
Cleveland 6, Ohio

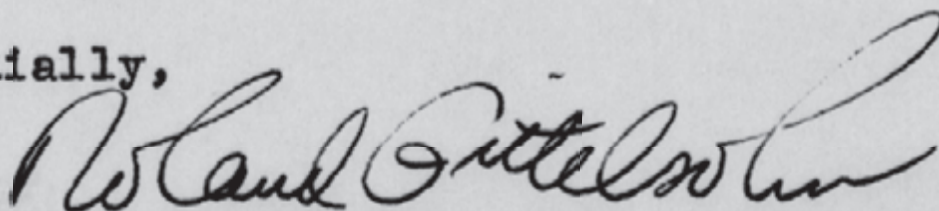
Dear Daniel:

This is my first opportunity to write for the purpose of welcoming you as a newly-elected member of the Commission on Jewish Education. I look forward eagerly to the pleasure of working with you over a period of the next few years.

The Commission on Jewish Education normally holds its annual meeting on the day immediately preceding the Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. For this year the meeting will probably be held in the City of Philadelphia on Monday 17 June 1963. I hope that you will place this date on your calendar now and will save it, awaiting more specific information from me in due time.

If there is any other information concerning the Commission that you would like to have now, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Cordially,



Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn

/n

RABBI ROLAND B. GITTELSON, D.D., Sc.D.

TEMPLE ISRAEL

BOSTON 15, MASSACHUSETTS

February
25
1963

Dear Colleague:

This letter, written to you as a member of the Commission on Jewish Education, would have been forthcoming some weeks ago were it not for the fact that I have been away from my desk preaching and speaking for the UAHC on the West Coast.

The Executive Committee of our Commission met in early fall in New York City to pursue further our search for a new Director of the Commission. It was our unanimous feeling then that, despite the fact of our intention to continue a survey of the entire educational program, we could not afford to wait for the completion of that survey to find the proper person to take over the professional leadership of the Commission.

At that meeting the Executive Committee listed in order of preference those members of the CCAR who, in our judgment, were best qualified to fill the position. I might add that there was unanimity among the members of the Executive Committee. The first choice on our list was Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, presently Director of the New England Regional Council of the UAHC.

I am delighted to report to you that after extended discussions Rabbi Schindler has agreed to accept this appointment. He will become Director of the Commission only upon official action at our forthcoming meeting in June and on condition

[Feb 25, 1963]

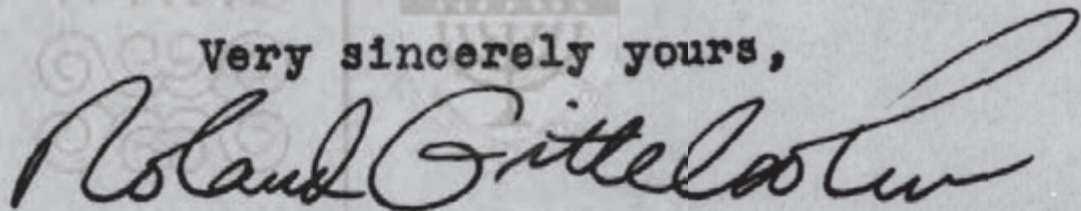
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that he fulfill as rapidly as possible the requirements for a doctorate degree in education.

Despite the fact that the agreement between the UAHC and the CCAR clearly stipulates that where the Director of a Commission is to serve as a staff member of the UAHC, his appointment is to be made by the President of that body in consultation with the President of the CCAR, I feel very strongly that members of the Commission on Jewish Education are entitled to have this information as promptly as possible.

If you have any views on this matter, do not hesitate to communicate them to me. I hope you will agree that we have been singularly fortunate in obtaining the consent of Rabbi Schindler to serve in this post.

Very sincerely yours,



Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn

CHMENT BOND

RAO CONTENT

February 27, 1963

Rabbi Roland B. Gittelson
Temple Israel
Longwood Avenue at Plymouth Street
Boston 15, Massachusetts

Dear Dr. Gittelson:

Although it's water over the dam, may I react to the appointment of Alex Schindler? Alex has been extremely successful with our adolescents, but this job is curricular and educational, and as your condition two indicates, he lacks the basic academic tools. In brief, sir, I am unhappy with the appointment. This is not a position designed to reward effective organizational activity but one designed to make available to all of us a broad number of important educational skills. I cannot understand on what academic or professional basis the Committee feels Alex Schindler to be its number one candidate. I am sorry that my first communication must be of a negative nature, but the matter is of crucial importance.

Cordially yours,

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

DJS:lg

Joan G. Sugarman

3141 CHADBOURNE ROAD
SHAKER HEIGHTS 20, OHIO

May 27, 1963

Rabbi Daniel Silver
The Temple
105th and Ansel Roads
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Rabbi Dan:

In accordance with our conversation earlier today, I am forwarding to you the name of the new editor of the Union of American Hebrew Congregation Educational Office:

Mrs. Edith Samuel
Commission on Jewish Education
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
and Central Conference of American Rabbis
838 Fifth Avenue
New York 21, New York.

Mrs. Julia Minor, her secretary, is currently receiving her mail, as Mrs. Samuel is now in Israel.

Thank you for your help, and all they seem to wish is a criticism or evaluation of the book's usefulness, contents and format.

Sincerely, one of your
pupils,

Joan Sugarman

June 3, 1963

→ Mrs. Edith Samuel
Commission on Jewish Education
838 Fifth Avenue
New York 21, N. Y.

Dear Mrs. Samuel:

I am writing this letter to you both as a member of the Commission on Education and as rabbi of the temple where Joan G. Sugarman is a member and teaches. It is my purpose to commend the publication of "Inside the Synagogue," which I have found to be well conceived and beautifully illustrated. It will, I am sure, dramatize effectively the meaning and the reverence which our people have always connected with the place of worship. Mrs. Sugarman is a teacher of competence and ability, and this is reflected in its pages.

Cordially yours,

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

DJS:lg

June 8, 1964

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Commission on Jewish Education
838 Fifth Avenue
New York 21, N. Y.

Dear Alex:

In reply to your note of May 29 on my half-promise to Jay to put together an article on our High School program, I'll get it out, hopefully, some time this month.

With all good wishes,

Cordially yours,

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

DJS:lg

June 12, 1964

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York 21, N. Y.

Dear Alex:

I am enclosing a copy of the report made by the Director of my religious school on the text, Understanding the Ten Commandments. Not knowing if this would reach you in New York, I am having a copy sent on to the Conference. I hope to have had a chance to read the manuscript myself before Monday.

With all good wishes,

Cordially yours,

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

DJS:lg

[June 12, 1964]

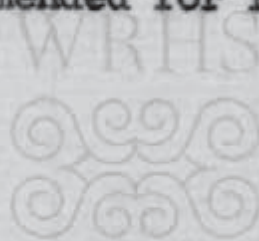
The Temple

I have read the enclosed manuscript, "Understanding the Ten Commandments." Basically the idea for the book is sound, the goals and concepts commendable.

However, under no circumstances would I present this material, in its present form, to any age group in my school.

Grammar and sentence structure are poor and in many areas form is amateurish. Some of the titles suggested are in poor taste for a religious school and would have an undesired effect on young children - i.e., "The Woman Who Spit in the Rabbi's Eye." In fact this entire story is one I would eliminate from the text.

While there is a need for this type of material, it would be my judgment that the author is not qualified to write for young children. All of the book need not be discarded, but much work is needed to make it one that could be recommended for religious school use.



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Commission on Jewish Education

Union of American Hebrew Congregations & Central Conference of American Rabbis

838 FIFTH AVENUE • NEW YORK 21, N. Y. • REGENT 7-8200

June 25, 1964

Rabbi Daniel J. Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland 6, Ohio

Dear Danny,

Just a note to thank you for your attendance at our recent Commission meeting and for your counsel toward the continuance of our work. As always, it was a pleasure to be with you.

Please don't forget to talk to Mrs. Adrian Fink concerning an article for THE JEWISH TEACHER which will describe in detail your program of teacher training. I was very much impressed with your oral report and I strongly suspect that it is something which others should hear about as well. I will have another article on teacher training in the first fall issue -- indicating a deadline of August 1 -- and I hope Mrs. Fink can meet this deadline -- and you too in your article on the high school.

Again, my thanks for your presence and my congratulations -- heard via the grapevine -- that you are to be the new editor of the CCAR Journal. I would very much like to discuss with you when you have the chance the Journal's policy concerning book reviews, one which I execute but to which I do not subscribe with a full heart, namely, that only books by colleagues be reviewed and that they should not be of too critical a nature. While there are some things which can be said for this policy, affirmed by the Journal Editorial Board, I feel that critical reviews of most important works would be much more helpful. I am sure we will have a chance to discuss this and attendant problems.

With warm good wishes, I am

Cordially,

Alexander M. Schindler
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Director of Education

Chairman
Roland B. Gittelsohn . . . Boston
Honorary Chairman
Solomon B. Freehof . . . Pittsburgh
Director of Education
Alexander M. Schindler
Director, Audio-Visual,
Experimental Education
Samuel Grand
Director, Adult Education
Chaim I. Estrog

UJHC HOUSE OF
LIVING JUDAISM



AMS:JM

July 15, 1964

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Commission on Jewish Education
838 Fifth Avenue
New York 21, N. Y.

Dear Alex:

I am enclosing an article on The Temple High School, as per our correspondence. I have tried to be practical and descriptive, and I trust that other schools may find a few suggestions scattered here and there.

On another matter, I tend to agree with you on CCAR book reviews, but I do not know the history of the matter. The whole policy will be taken up as soon as I take over responsibility for an upcoming issue.

Hoping that you are well, I remain

As always,

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

DJS:lg

THE TEMPLE HIGH SCHOOL

The High School of The Temple, Cleveland, Ohio, has been in being for some thirty-five years. For the greater part of that period it offered a program of specialized study for a small percentage of devoted youngsters who personally or familiarly had a special closeness to Judaism. There were classes in post-Biblical Jewish literature, history, theology, Hebrew, etc.; add a debating group and an occasional social, add a weekly Chapel service and a monthly visit to the main service in the sanctuary, and you have a picture of its program. During those years Confirmation classes averaged one hundred or so, the High School graduation classes fifteen to twenty. That numbers should not be taken as a critical criteria, however, is indicated by the fact that a dozen rabbis graduated from this curriculum. It emphasized intellectual excellence, and it produced it.

Our movement nationally began to emphasize the post-Confirmation years after the Second World War. We went after numbers, and the chosen technique was the loosely structured teen centered group. The National Federation of Temple Youth was born and grew, and many high teen agers were drawn into synagogue sponsored activities. Because of its educational pattern, The Temple held back. We were and are afraid of activity without substance. We were afraid to subordinate the systematic information of a body of knowledge to an identification through group activity, rather than to Torah. For a while we tried to ride both horses, but after a number of years we found ourselves with saddle sores. Young people returned enthused from leadership training institutes and regional conclaves and began to insist that creative worship, loosely jointed workshops, and student control of their Temple activity replace grades, the structured classroom, school

administration, and a prayerbook service. It is not easy to explain the virtue of being a student to one who already has been taught the skills of a leader. By the early 1950's we had decided that only those who were in attendance and passing in the High School could be members of NFTY. This more select group in turn began to complain of the repetitiveness of institute programming ("another bull session on lady rabbis or interdating") and remarked all too predictably on the ignorance of many of the most vociferous. By 1956 we were faced with the need for a clear cut decision. Should we continue to interest ourselves in a major way with the NFTY camp cum conclave orientation, or stick to our last and insist that interest grow out of and center in the school? We opted for the classroom. Congregational size, of course, made this option feasible. We could generate numbers from within our own family. But largely we based our decision on a philosophy that Jewish identification is not an end in itself--that it must be informed and understanding. Put bluntly, the youth group seemed too easy an answer.

Our first decision was a surprisingly simple and surprisingly basic one. For all of its academic virtue, the High School had been a rather easy going institution. Those who wished to slide along slid along --we trusted the interest of the self selected. There were few binding and firm rules. I was convinced: first, that adolescents, for all their rebelliousness, respond to and feel comfortable in a well defined structure; and secondly, that if we could communicate our own sense of the vitality of this material this would be the best motivation available. We must make the school realize that we cared about what we were doing. A rabbi came to every service. Rabbis took on individual class assignments. We insisted

that the teachers teach the courses we had planned, unit by unit, and not let the classroom hour follow the will o' the wisp of class volubility. We told the young people that after three unexcused absences they would be dropped from our rolls, and we stuck to our guns. Final examinations were required in each course. A thesis was required for graduation. Graduation parts and honors were awarded strictly on the basis of accumulated grades.

But structure is only a beginning. We broke the straightjacket of year-long courses and introduced semesters and in one year a trimester division. We tried to allot enough sessions to deal effectively with that information which we wanted to get across--no more and no less. The temptation in curriculum planning is to find a book and to build a course around its chapters. We tried to predetermine those areas which we wanted to explore, and then to find any materials that fit. Often none did. We taught, for a number of years, a course on the American Jewish community largely on the basis of mimeographed magazine articles which we picked up here and there.

Our course structure has varied, but essentially we have centered on the faith of the Jew, the Bible, post-Biblical Jewish literature, ethics, liturgy, and comparative religions. We made no pretense of relevancy for all our courses. There is no immediacy to a trimester on archaeology and the Bible, but it is exciting and it gives the young people a sense of history. Also, we hold to the truism that the success of a course lies in the skills of the instructor, and we try to take advantage of these. Thus for a number of years Charles Glueck was on our staff, bringing to life much of the lore and the learning in which he had been brought up. But our eye is generally peeled to the living faith and to the questions being asked. The Bible is accepted broadly as a literary classic. It will be taught as

such in English and Religion courses in college. But an appreciation of the King James version does not rationalize a decision to live a Jewish life. We seek to interpret the Bible philosophically and spiritually, and to establish its historical uniqueness, hence pride in the achievements of a unique people. Also, we seek out those areas which predictably will be misconstrued by most academics. Thus we find it wise to spend a good bit of time explaining halacha, showing the advance of Torah Law, and emphasizing the crucial importance of discipline in any religious enterprise. We teach a course in social ethic. Here we have found that there is little virtue in simply reminding the young people of prophetic preaching or in reading with them, say, the Sayings of the Fathers. What they need is guidance in the difficult art of decision making. We have found that though they mouth the conventional virtues they tend to find the balancing of practical issues and political realities difficult. So we insist with them that the virtue of Jewish ethic is not so much in its statement as in its institutionalization, and we try to help them to think through a social fabric which would be more responsive to our traditional mandates. The shetl, the Israeli experiment, and our own Welfare community help us point to evidence in being. We find the average student comes to us from a Jewishly barren home environment. It is not enough to make him feel the cogency of Jewish theology. Humanism, agnosticism, pragmatism can be made to seem equally cogent. He must feel pride in and a part of a Jewish world. So when we deal with faith we take the approach of Hallevi rather than of Maimonides, of Bernard Ramberger rather than Kaufman Kohler. We try to make philosophy come alive in time and in context, and we do not neglect the prayerbook or minimize ritual as sources of Jewish attitude.

Hebrew is taught on an elective and on a living language basis, and

each year we have a number of graduates who can and do write their theses in Hebrew.

Enthusiasm, assignment, pride in material became the order of the day. Those who could not be enthused dropped by the way. The staff was brought into curriculum planning and the granting of awards, and in time rather routine teaching was replaced by interested experimentation. Some of our best courses were first suggested and sketched by teachers. Typically, one spent a summer researching American literature about Jews to see if a unit could be developed on modern Jewish problems through such reading. It turned out that it could not be--but some of this material was useful at subsequent institutes. The school grew. We began to matriculate seventy percent and more of our Confirmation classes. In eight years the total enrollment tripled.

The classroom remained the focus, but it would have been foolish to have overlooked the meaning of NPTV success. In the old High School, debating was the single extracurricular activity besides an occasional dance. At the moment debating is out of style, although we continue an intercity meet or two a year. Dance programs are maternal favorites, but, in practice, institutionally painful. Many youngsters, for all of their seeming sophistication, are shy and embarrassed. Others have date attachments outside The Temple school family. A date dance quickly becomes a non-school affair, avoided by the shy, and one at which few have a particularly good time. We still hold socials, but they are non-date affairs and of an informal group and folk dancing nature. Today's young people want a newspaper, a literary magazine, choir, dramatics, camp, etc.

It is difficult for us to hold activity meetings outside regular school hours. The Temple is in the city. The congregation is suburban. We

hit on the idea of preceding the ten o'clock first bell with an activities cum coffee hour. From nine to ten, mothers of our High School Committee serve doughnuts, juice, milk, and an occasional cup of coffee. Those not extracurricularly involved sit and socialize. Those involved grab a quick bite and head for their respective tables, and when planning takes shape, they reach out and pull in others just sitting about. A recent graduate is hired to coordinate this work, and a teaching staff member is assigned responsibility for each activity.

By the way, much of our growth is to be traced to an enlarged role for our High School parents group. The High School Committee began as a maternal reservoir of bakers, pourers, and chaperones. Mothers still kitchen, but the major emphasis of this group is on adult education, and fathers now shoulder an equal role both as students and as bus boys. They meet on a series of Friday nights during the year for serious study--study which often parallels classroom materials.

Another valuable innovation has been the Welfare Cabinet. It began, typically, as a student council committee to divide funds raised from weekly charitable giving. Latterly, it took on the organization of an annual campaign for the United Jewish Appeal, with speakers, rallies, cards, etc.; and in the last few years it has become the center of a number of projects in the general community. Members of our High School tutor in racially and economically underprivileged areas. They have engaged in paint-up and clean-up campaigns in city settlements. In a lighter vein, the Welfare Cabinet sponsors a traveling High School variety show which entertains Golden Agers, shut-ins, crippled children, at the Veterans Hospital, etc.

Each year we hold a weekend camp at a site some eighty miles away. Here, too, planning and administration and enthusiasm are the key. Meetings

begin three to four months ahead of the camp session. Senior students help develop course syllabi and discussion outlines. Choir and service participants are briefed and rehearsed. Students are chosen to write and deliver their own sermons, and these are checked and trained. Athletic and ^{ACTIVITY} ~~participation~~ competition exists between various bunks, and each bunk has met well in advance to plan its attack on the silver trophy. We want at all costs to avoid a sense of improvisation. We also sponsor an in-town one day institute at a center which provides athletic as well as meeting and worship facilities--the extracurricular spicing a program which includes two lectures, smaller discussions, Sabbath morning service, Havdolah, etc. A complete program of activity is put into the young people's hands well in advance. On other evenings we bring small theater groups onto The Temple stage and sit down afterwards with the director and/or actors to discuss the play's meaning. Last year, as in previous years, we held an intercongregational exchange with a Christian church. We have met with both Catholic and Protestant neighbors, and we try to go beyond vague amiability. Last year, for instance, we met with a Presbyterian group, and each presented a ritual sacred to their faith. Each group was allotted an hour for its presentation, and then, after a social hour at which ritually significant food was served --charosis, matzo, hot cross buns, Easter eggs--the young people sat down to a dinner decorated with lilies, a seven-branched candelabra, etc., and, after dinner, a carefully devised ritual was presented in which both faiths could join. The two groups met singly and together on a baker's dozen of occasions before the actual day. A seven page explanatory brochure had been prepared by the two groups jointly, and gave a dimension of depth and learning to the afternoon and evening.

Classroom activity lasts from ten to eleven thirty. At eleven thirty the young people have an assembly service which they lead from the weekday service of the Union Prayer Book. Music is provided by a High School organist and choir. A rabbi is always present. Two or three times a month outside speakers are introduced. Last year we had speakers from the United Freedom Movement; a slide lecture on the Jews in the Soviet Union; an illustrated talk on the Falashas by a Kent State University sociologist who had lived among them; a discussion of Hannah Arendt by a French Jew, now professor at a local university, who had been interned during the war, etc. These assemblies are designed to be over at noon or five after. They are rarely over before twelve thirty.

Once a month, by student demand, the young people come into our main sanctuary and take part in our regular Sunday morning worship.

It's a rich and varied experience. It's expensive. We have had to double our High School budget. It requires flexibility. Among last year's theses were an original set of searching philosophic poems, a quite beautiful oil painting of Dr. Silver, and one or two "original" Lenski-type surveys of teen age attitudes. It requires flexibility and a sense of pride. The High School newspaper was a loosely edited, ungrammatical collection of trivia, until its advisor began to insist on quality and to censor adolescent humor and gossip.

Success with numbers brought certain problems with it. One is to keep ahead of the natural buoyancy of two hundred young people. They are always about. Some are now singing in our Saturday morning choir. Some ride our buses Saturday mornings as monitors. Others have jobs as assistants in our Library. The Student Council has taken to committee meetings on Saturday mornings before services. All in all, eleven professionals, besides

Rabbi Milton Matz, who capably directs all this energy, are responsible for one or another class or activity. More critically, we are drawing a new type of student. As the school grew we outgrew the pool of the academically facile, and we have become increasingly aware that a different curriculum is necessary for those who are taking business math and commercial English. Also, the best of our students are under terrific pressure, especially during their junior year. They must become National Merit Scholars--so says Father. They are taking two or three advanced placement courses. Among this brighter group we have had to allow a number to drop out during the junior year and take these courses in absentia. They return, and make up the missed work, but they are not in their seats. Our Junior High School is already on a two-track system, and I am certain that within a year some such division will have to be introduced at the High School level.

I can add little more, except to say that three of our graduates are now in Cincinnati, and that many of those whom we first introduced to this program have come back, early on in their marriages, to Temple activity.

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER