

THE ROLE OF THE REFORM RABBI IN  
PREMARITAL COUNSELING

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## DIGEST

This work investigates the role of the Reform Rabbi in premarital counseling. It begins with a clarification of the term "counseling" and outlines the areas to which the term may be applied. The purpose of this section is to point out some of the problems involved in defining the role of the rabbi and attempting to discover to what extent he is a force in preparing people for marriage.

In order to provide the necessary background for understanding how religion is involved in marital preparation a section is included that focuses on the manner in which various religions view marriage and family life. Specific programs and techniques of counseling are presented. It is emphasized that the minister is the person who usually institutes and administers programs for his congregation. It is his responsibility to determine what type of training is necessary before the marriage ceremony takes place.

The next section analyzes the Jewish attitude toward marriage, the family and marital preparation. It begins by presenting distinctive characteristics of the American Jewish family. These characteristics are of primary importance for determining the particular manner in which the Reform Rabbi will prepare people for marriage. It is pointed out that all rabbis will not approach marital preparation in the same manner. The goal of the Orthodox leader will differ from that of the Liberal Rabbi due to specific theological differences. These differences are

presented. This section ends with an analysis of the role of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in marital preparation and specific programs of premarital training currently in use in Reform Congregations.

The final chapter contains the results of a survey of practices, attitudes and trends in marital preparation. The object of the survey is to provide specific information not available in the literature. It deals mainly with the structure and content of premarital interviews. It also contains information about the rabbi's own interpretation of his role as premarital counselor.

The entire work ends with a presentation of general conclusions on the role of the rabbi and to what extent he is involved in premarital counseling situations.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION. . . . .	1
Statement of Purpose and Method. . . . .	1
Definitions and Clarification of Terms . . . . .	1
CHAPTER I: THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN MARITAL PREPARATION.4	
The Responsibility of the Minister in	
Premarital Counseling. . . . .	4
Religious Programs of Marital Preparation. . . . .	8
CHAPTER II: THE JEWISH ATTITUDE TOWARD MARRIAGE,	
THE FAMILY AND MARITAL PREPARATION. . . . .	15
Distinctive Characteristics of the American	
Jewish Family. . . . .	15
Traditional Jewish Approach to Marriage	
Preparation. . . . .	18
The Liberal Jewish Approach to Marriage	
Preparation. . . . .	20
The Role of the CCAR in Marital Preparation. . . . .	23
Reform Jewish Programs of Premarital	
Training Currently in Use. . . . .	29
CHAPTER III: RESULTS OF A SURVEY OF PRACTICES,	
ATTITUDES AND TRENDS IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION. . . . .	36
Purpose for conducting the Survey. . . . .	36
Content of questions asked of Reform Rabbis. . . . .	37
Response to Questions. . . . .	39
CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	54
APPENDIX A. . . . .	57
FOOTNOTES . . . . .	61
BIBLIOGRAPHY. . . . .	66



## INTRODUCTION

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND METHOD

The focus of this study will be on the role of the Reform rabbi in marital preparation. Our purpose is to discover how the Reform rabbi views his role and to what extent he is a force in preparing people for marriage.

Two methods were employed in obtaining information. First, articles and books were consulted in the area of marital preparation. These works were used to supply the necessary background for understanding (1) the role of religion in marital preparation, (2) types of programs utilized by various religious groups, and (3) the specific manner in which Jewish groups prepare couples for marriage.

The second method of obtaining information was by means of a survey of Reform rabbis presently engaged in congregational or Hillel work. The survey contained questions about premarital programs currently used in the United States. Of the 176 questionnaires mailed, 56.8 per-cent were returned. A complete list of the survey questions may be found in "Appendix A" at the end of this work.

### DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

The term "counseling" occurs in the title of this thesis. It is an ambiguous word and has been used to refer to everything from psychoanalysis to social casework.<sup>1</sup> Our use of the term "counseling" will be restricted to the field of religion. Religious counseling is a specific type of

counseling with characteristics peculiar to it.

The religious counselor is not a specialist among specialists. He is not in competition with psychiatrists or social workers. He is a person who possesses an insight into human behavior and social problems. Yet, the principles and methods used by the religious counselor are peculiarly his own. He functions within a moral and spiritual framework. His symbolic authority influences his role in priestly and pastoral duties. As a priest he is a teacher of a moral code and minister of various rites and rituals. The modern pastor "...stands as father to the lonely and physician to the wounded in spirit."<sup>2</sup>

The term "counseling" when applied specifically to the Reform rabbi will refer, first, to a person who is the solemnizer of the marriage service. The marriage counselor and psychologist do not form this relationship with the couple. The rabbi's role as solemnizer includes his stress on the importance of living together, raising a family and developing mutual trust. These concepts are not taught as broad sociological principles but as categorical imperatives of Jewish life.

The rabbinic counselor is also the friend, guide and sanctioner. His presence at the wedding ceremony may help transfer the love shared by the marriage partners into an acceptable satisfying way of life. Finally, the rabbi is a confidant and screener. This last area implies that "The 'tutored' rabbi may be able to detect in the pre-

marital counseling interview some abnormality that might make marriage unadvisable."<sup>3</sup>

The term "interview" is, at times, used interchangeably with "counseling". Yet, there are certain connotations of the term that separate it from counseling. An interview is generally typified as a situation where the counselor and the counselee engage in a direct question and answer session. It does not include group programs or preaching of sermons which could fall into the general category of counseling. Our use of the term "interview" will be restricted to those counseling situations where the counselor meets alone with the couple, either individually or separately, for purposes of preparing them for marriage. The term "counseling" will include the interview plus all other programs of roundtable discussions, forums and sermons used in marriage preparation.

Our objective, an attempt to probe and clarify the role of the Reform rabbi in premarital counseling, will be pursued under four main categories. First, we will offer a general introduction on "The Role of Religion in Marital Preparation". This will be followed by a chapter on "The Jewish Attitude Toward Marriage, the Family and Marital Preparation". The third chapter will present the "Results of a Survey of Practices, Attitudes and Trends in Marriage Preparation". The final chapter will contain general conclusions on the role of the Reform rabbi in premarital counseling.

## CHAPTER I

### THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN MARITAL PREPARATION

#### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MINISTER IN PREMARITAL COUNSELING

A great deal of material has been written delineating the role of religion in marital preparation. The central figure in this area is the clergyman. He is the one who institutes and administers marital preparation within the context of his religion. The minister has an important function in his capacity as religious counselor by virtue of his ordained status. Even if the pastor is not known to the couple he forms a symbolic relationship with them. He functions as the sanctioner by confirming the marriage according to state law and God's will.<sup>4</sup> Many people view the religious leader as a representative of some type of divine authority. He is a link with a tradition that speaks of our world and value system as stemming from a divine source.

There is also an educational element in marriage preparation. The couple who visits the minister wants to know about the value of marriage itself. Here is where the pastor tries to help the couple understand the situation, anxieties, and general psychological adjustment.

In certain difficult situations referral may be made for psychiatric treatment. This therapeutic relationship parallels the concern of the caseworker who also forms a supportive relationship, gives information and decides

on the eligibility of the client. Yet, the ordained person has a much more powerful, symbolic role.<sup>5</sup>

Premarital programs are more than individual or social education. They sanction the marriage and bind the couple with the eternal by being part of a particular religion.<sup>6</sup>

The actual program of each religious group is designed to place all matters of marital adjustment into proper perspective. Any religion that attempts to be a force in the lives of its individual members must discover how basic human needs, desires, expectations and emotions may be channelled in a manner that will allow people to function in modern society and cope with problems that arise. The specific needs and concerns of society must be interpreted in terms of religious values and ideas. Today, we increasingly center on two aspects of marriage: (1) sexual adjustment, and (2) achieving individual and social success. In these two areas religion can strive to meet the needs of individual congregants.<sup>7</sup>

A problem, however, may arise. The minister may not be adequately trained to function in the particular area of premarital counseling that deals with sex and individual and social success. Yet, since physicians have neither the time nor the inclination to counsel the minister must become involved. The Episcopal Church, which makes this training mandatory, is, so it seems, taking a realistic view of marriage preparation.<sup>8</sup>

One tool that any minister may use is the "Sex Information Inventory". It can provide useful information and focuses on an important factor in marriage preparation. This test measures individual knowledge, compatibility of the couple and attitudes toward sex.<sup>9</sup> In a 1952 survey of Protestant denominations it is reported that the "Sex Knowledge Inventory" was the most frequently used test in programs of marital preparation. Yet, testing itself was only used in ten per-cent of the 805 responses received in this survey.<sup>10</sup>

Even though we are emphasizing the distinctive role of the minister in marital preparation we must point out that religious counseling is still part of counseling in general. Both deal with people rather than problems. The goal of counseling is to change emotional conditions, develop growth and bring about mature love.<sup>11</sup> The counselor's job is not merely to educate the couple and provide them with broad concepts. Counseling must offer the kind of experiences which bring growth to the couple's personalities congruent with the reality to which these concepts point.

The problem is that ministers themselves receive a theological education that trains only their intellect in religious concepts. The next step, transferring these concepts to real situations, is the responsibility of the minister. By doing this the counselor may also impart some of his own understanding and insight at the counseling



sessions. The result may be that the concepts of a particular religion will be joined to the insights gained in practical problem-solving situations.

As we have stated, many premarital conferences focus on physical and psychological adjustment in marriage. This is done in an attempt to meet the needs of people who are products of a society oriented toward psychology and healthy physical growth.

Some ministers prefer to view their programs of marital preparation as teaching and not counseling. They contend that in the teaching situation there is no implication, as there is in counseling, that the sessions center around problems. Teaching is "person centered". Counseling is "problem centered". "The couple come to see the pastor oriented to an event- the wedding- and a relationship- their marriage- and not a problem. If one waits for them to bring up a problem, he may get nowhere with the couple."<sup>13</sup>

The counseling situation was viewed in exactly the opposite manner by Carroll Wise, a prominent figure in the area of counseling. He sees counseling as being "person centered". (see above..footnote #11). We must be careful when a distinction is drawn between counseling and teaching. The terms are almost interchangeable and any difference would tend to point to differences in procedure rather than the content of the programs.

Part of the problem in examining the role of the Reform rabbi in premarital counseling is that we must determine

what elements constitute premarital counseling, what is included in the rabbi's area of concern and how these elements fit in with the role of religion in general. Our present analysis is an attempt to uncover some of the problems involved in defining the rabbi's role. The term "counseling" does not, as we have pointed out, have one application. It is colored by connotative meanings that are included by many in its denotation. An adequate analysis must include the different applications of this term as it is employed in the phrase "premarital counseling".

#### RELIGIOUS PROGRAMS OF MARITAL PREPARATION

Up to this point the minister has been the focus of our attention since he administers premarital training programs for his religion. The pastor's job is to point out that "Religion brightens a person's thinking, gives him dignity and worth, and places primary emphasis on him as an individual."<sup>14</sup>

The minister, however, should ideally be one member of a team of counselors preparing people for marriage. The team of "experts" (physicians, lawyers, economists) offer instruction to groups rather than individuals. The advantage to group instruction is that it saves time, can be made available to large groups, covers more ground and may be instituted at a low cost. Also, when problems are discussed it is obvious to those present that they are everyday situations and not peculiar to any one couple. Group instruction may also elicit group response and more questions.



This program could be instituted with the cooperation of different religious organizations joining in a single group.

This type of program is suggested because churches and ministers may, at times, be limited in their vision. They don't want to try new programs. They are afraid to step into new areas. The particular manner in which this and other programs may be used is described by various religious groups in numerous journals and books. They emphasize all the aspects of counseling described in the above investigation of religion's role in marital preparation.

The most common religious program falls under the category of "individual counseling". A series of four individual sessions may be held. The first session could last for one hour and focus on the purpose of the entire interview program, details of the ceremony, clarification of state laws and distribution of literature. Many counseling programs end at this point. It is advisable, however, to see the couple for a second session that lasts one to one and one-half hours. During that time the meaning of marriage could be discussed and a sex knowledge inventory known as "Form X" administered. This test is reviewed during the third session. The last interview would cover the spiritual aspects of marriage and close with a prayer.<sup>15</sup>

A similar type of counseling may be structured in three sessions. The first interview is held with each member of the couple seeing the minister separately. Romance, common interests, relationships with the family, sex and seeing a physician are all discussed at this session. The purpose of this interview is to get acquainted. A personality test is also administered. During the second interview the couple is seen together and the subject of discussion is budgeting and planning a home. The last interview considers the religious and ritualistic side of marriage. Common interests and resolving conflicts also form a part of this session.<sup>16</sup>

A third variation of the personal counseling technique relies heavily on literature and testing. The Bernreuter Personality Inventory is administered and, at the same session, a book, "The Secret of a Happy Marriage", by R.A. Burkhardt, is distributed. There are also "five tests of love" that indicate whether or not there is a firm basis for marriage. Finally the minister suggests that planning the honeymoon and dedicating a new home are part of his responsibility since they are an experience of a communion of body and spirit.<sup>17</sup>

The techniques discussed in the above paragraphs tend to lead the couple and direct their thinking. However, the Rogerian or non-directive method is also widely used. Herbert D. Lamson of Boston University questions the use of this technique in the area of marriage. He states that

"When the contacts are short I do not believe that non-directive techniques are called for." The main object is to clear up misconceptions and provide useful information."<sup>18</sup>

A considerable amount of opposition has been raised by counselors against Lamson's view.<sup>19</sup>

In 1961 the Central Conference of American Rabbis' Committee on Marriage, Family and the Home investigated the area of premarital counseling and suggested that group programs, like those described above, "...deal realistically with this subject... and have relevancy for our work."<sup>20</sup>

Three programs were included in the Committee report that could be adapted in the context of Reform Judaism. The first program was instituted in 1961 by the Canadian Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. 530 men and women attended a five day meeting with seventeen experts in the fields of sociology, psychology, medicine, law and theology. The conference focused on sexual adjustment and pointed out that here is the area where most problems develop. There is a high level of teen marriages, premarital relations and illegitimate births. Adequate preparation for marriage by the church could be useful in this area. The C.C.A.R. stated that distinctive Jewish ways are disappearing and, therefore, the problems and issues raised in this meeting are our problems.<sup>21</sup>

The two other programs include utilization of material obtained through a correspondence course sponsored by the

Catholic Church and a youth leadership training institute guided by physicians and clergymen discussing ethics and sexual adjustment.<sup>22</sup>

The group program approach is directly related to community programs of premarital counseling. Some communities already sponsor roundtable groups that form one part of a total program.<sup>23</sup> These programs usually begin in the church or synagogue when actual wedding arrangements are made. The roundtable is the second step. This is followed by individual counseling, by the minister, and the distribution of reading material. The rehearsal and wedding completes the program.

The community program has many positive features. It attempts to deal with marriage by utilizing the talents of those best qualified in specific areas. The timing of the program may, however, weaken its effect. Waiting until the couple comes to set a wedding date is too late for premarital programs. The unconscious motives present in mate selection should be explored. The entire goal of marital preparation is to move from the illusion to a realistic understanding and reasonable expectation in marriage. If the minister thinks he can prepare people for marriage with a few leading questions or words of advice he is deceiving himself. Defenses learned throughout life must be sur-<sup>24</sup>rendered to love.

The defenses that cause tension in marriage are set forth by Erich Lindeman and Ina May Green. They point out

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that in marriage there is obligatory closeness and surrendering of a considerable area of individual privacy and freedom of motion. Conflict may arise from not enjoying the same activities, different family behavior patterns, interests, goals or desires. A simple act such as dressing fast or slow can cause stress.

Strain in marriage may be brought about by a person marrying for the social proximity inherent in the marriage. A partner may also be chosen on the basis of early experiences. The psychiatrist or counselor may retrace early experiences to relieve some of the strain. The point is that we do not live "happily ever after" and more places are needed to talk things over.<sup>25</sup>

Many other works have been written emphasizing every aspect of premarital training. The problem is that each "expert" tends to overemphasize his particular area of concern.<sup>26</sup> The modern Reform rabbi, functioning in a complex, multifaceted society, must select and refine those aspects of marital preparation that apply specifically to his situation.

The rest of this work will concern itself with those aspects of marital preparation peculiar to Judaism and the particular manner in which the rabbi can approach these problems. The counseling techniques and principles already outlined can furnish some of the insights necessary for dealing with these problems. Since Jews are increasingly

living in an open society it may be noted that many of the problems of marital adjustment encountered by Jews are common to all religious groups. They are derived from basic human emotions, drives, needs and wants. Literature and techniques used by religion in general are, therefore, indispensable for anyone attempting to understand the total human personality.

## CHAPTER II

### THE JEWISH ATTITUDE TOWARD MARRIAGE, THE FAMILY AND MARITAL PREPARATION

#### DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH FAMILY

The American Jewish family functions as part of American society and shares many characteristics in common with it. The contemporary American family is small, 3.38 persons per household (Based on 1960 U.S. Census). The Jewish family is also small. The general population shift is to urban areas. Jews, who make up only 3.2 per cent of the total population, represent eight per cent of the population in cities of over one-quarter million. Yet, while "The American Jewish family acculturates with the dominant American middle-class family...(it still) seeks to retain family patterns which are distinctively Jewish."<sup>27</sup> The Kinsey report indicated that these family patterns contributed to the stability of marital attitudes among people who were consciously Jewish.<sup>28</sup>

We may account for this stability by considering those areas where the Jewish family seems to remain distinctive. One area is the Jewish attitude toward sex. Ever since biblical times the positive aspect of sex has been emphasized in Judaism. Many people are pre-occupied with this subject and view it as the "cure-all" for marital difficulties. Judaism, by considering the normalcy of sex in marriage, does not overemphasize it to the point of causing difficulty or anxiety.



The Jewish child is never considered the mere product of the sex act. He is viewed as "...the living vehicle for the transmission and fulfillment of the entire religious-social culture of the Jewish people."<sup>29</sup>

Integrity in the exercise of sex functions remains dominant since all other satisfactions of marriage are corollaries of the primary goal of child rearing. Many social and private agencies in our culture are assigned the job of child rearing. Parental trusteeship is in danger. Parents are becoming police agents that make sure the child conforms to societal norms. Jewish values do not relieve a parent of responsibility.<sup>30</sup> The value placed on the integrity of family life has allowed Jews to survive physically in the face of social instability and hostile neighbors.

The integrity of the Jewish family leads to a particular view of the Jewish parent. In Judaism the family was always patriarchal. Yet, the husband and wife were considered equal partners. This concept is derived from the book of Genesis where the word "helpmeet" is used to refer to Adam's wife. This word implies "helper" or "equal".<sup>31</sup>

Jewish marriage partners, who assume the responsibility of child rearing as their primary goal in marriage, also occupy a unique position with regard to filial responsibility. The Jewish parent is viewed as a symbol of the continuity and relatedness of human experience. A child searches for truth and learns to respect the source from which he may obtain insight and understanding about it.



The parent has a responsibility to transmit truth. Our problem is not merely a revolt by children against parents. It is that parents revert to juvenile states and become "pals" with their children. They do not want to cause embarrassment to the child because of their maturity.<sup>32</sup> The organization of the Jewish family and its emphasis on positive, creative goals, preserves the position of the parent as the person who transmits truth to his children.

Financial considerations are also important in marriage and contribute to its stability. A sound marriage is usually built on a firm financial foundation. This does not mean that the couple must live in wealth and luxury. A firm financial foundation is one where there is enough money to provide the necessities of life and enough to save for some luxuries. Many marital problems arise over the subject of money. The couple strives to gain a certain status in the community. This striving is often incongruent with their economic level. These problems could be minimized by planning for economic security before the marriage. Since many children remain dependent upon their parents for long periods of time due to extensive educational requirements, dowrys are not uncommon. They help perpetuate early marriages that would otherwise be impossible.

Early marriage was always encouraged in Judaism. It practically eliminated prostitution among Jews in the middle ages. Only when the Jew began to assimilate into a non-Jewish environment did a double standard of living arise.<sup>34</sup>

The stability of Jewish marriage is due to certain distinctive Jewish values that have been retained even though Jews have acculturated into the larger American culture. What makes these values Jewish is "The historic fact that they are indigenous to a long evolution within Jewish civilization."<sup>35</sup> It may be pointed out that these values may disappear in our society unless the Jew is imbued with creative goals. These creative goals must not only produce satisfying roles for citizens of a democracy but for living as Jews as well.

#### TRADITIONAL JEWISH APPROACH TO MARRIAGE PREPARATION

The rabbi, in preparing people for marriage, utilizes some of the insights of counseling in general and considers the specific characteristics of the American Jewish family. Yet, all rabbis do not prepare people for marriage in the same manner. The traditional rabbi, for example, wants to achieve a goal that is different from that of the liberal rabbi. In Orthodox Judaism the object is to produce a "Torah-true Jew". This phrase refers to a person who is dedicated to the written commandments of Judaism. His actions are determined on the basis of the written law. When he is questioned about a particular ritual, symbol, or ceremony he answers by citing the written authority. He is judged by the degree to which he conforms to the 613 mitzvos.

An example of conforming to the written law may be cited with regard to prohibiting extramarital relations.

The reason for this prohibition is traced to Leviticus 19:29: "Profane not thy daughter, to make her a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry, and the land become full of lewdness." This biblical passage is interpreted as a prohibition against extramarital sex. Failure to follow the law constitutes a violation of God's commandments.<sup>36</sup>

If an individual begins on the premise that marital adjustment can best be made by conforming to biblical law then his view of marriage will be quite narrow. It will involve conforming rather than adjusting to a new situation.

The marriage manuals issued by the Rabbinical Council of America reflect an attitude of conforming to the law. They include an explanation of various rituals and ceremonies. Most of them emphasize the importance of the ritual bath.<sup>37</sup>

The United Synagogues of America, the Conservative movement, also presents a great deal of material on marriage to the prospective couple. In a manual for marriage published by the United Synagogues the religious aspect of marriage is again emphasized. The pamphlet does, however, consider other aspects of marital adjustment. Yet, the author suggests that for the physical aspects of marriage a physician be consulted. The main part of the manual includes an explanation of head coverings, rings, the chupa, benedictions, kesuva, and prayers for the home. The author ends with a plea to the couple to participate in Jewish

activities.<sup>38</sup> Again, the conservative movement emphasizes the religious aspect of marriage. This is reflected especially in their premarital training programs. Premarital interviews are a time for discussing the wedding date with the rabbi before making final plans. The reason for doing this is because the couple may be planning a wedding for a prohibited day. Various booklets on the laws and standards of the marriage service indicate that when a Conservative rabbi speaks of premarital counseling he is referring to transmitting to the couple a knowledge of the laws and customs of the wedding ceremony. The psychological and emotional aspects of marital adjustment are not discussed in most of these books.<sup>39</sup>

#### THE LIBERAL JEWISH APPROACH TO MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Liberal Jewish groups do not consider themselves legally bound to the Jewish tradition. This allows them to utilize the insights gained through a knowledge of modern psychology, sociology and personality traits. For example, even though couples visit physicians many of them are unhappy or unsatisfied with the guidance given to them by the medical authority. Several rabbis, therefore, distribute reading material on the subject of sex to the couple. Some of the couples are not able to make relevant use of the material. Therefore, the need for personal premarital discussions is vital. "In a sense, we may consider this pre-marital interview as a pre-counseling contract, which prepares the

way for real conseling when it is needed."<sup>40</sup>

Yet, it has been said, "If we are honest with ourselves we shall admit that we spend little time in preparing our young people for the career of marriage and even less time in serving and counseling families that are in distress."<sup>41</sup> Marriage and family life programs are rarely introduced into our school curriculum. There are few premarital conferences. Seminars on the subject of marital preparation are not properly preparing people for marriage. Today the rabbi as preacher, educator, community leader and pastor should continue his own studies in the field of marital preparation after his ordination. It is important to know something about psychology, psychiatry and psychoanalysis without becoming a psychologist, psychiatrist, or psychoanalyst. Many rabbis make the mistake of substituting psychiatry for religion. What we need is a balanced program. The rabbi should utilize the insights from pschology and psychiatry and add these to the insights gained by possessing a knowledge of Jewish tradition. We may disagree on the actual details of the premarital counseling program. Yet, we cannot argue about the vital need of programs for Jewish youth. It is suggested that programs be formulated for the synagogue either with a lecture series, roundtable discussion or distribution of library materials. A consultation center could be established in the synagogue as one of the major congregational activities. If the synagogue is large enough it may have one of the community institutions



cooperating with the congregation.

The Jewish people owe a great part of their survival to the synagogue, the school and family. Today we are not utilizing these institutions to their fullest extent. We cannot overemphasize the vital need for programs in the synagogue, school and home. This will determine the manner in which Judaism will continue to be a force in the daily lives of the Jewish people.

Rabbi Henry E. Kagan, as chairman of the Committee on psychiatry and religion of the Central Conference of American Rabbis speaks of the role of the modern rabbi. He emphasizes the need of having psychological understanding that may be utilized in pastoral work. This psychological understanding may also contribute to the establishment of rapport with the couple. We must never forget that counseling is two-way communication. It is not, however, a substitute for medical treatment. In short, the rabbi must fully accept the person who comes to him. Anxiety is, in our age, an element that the rabbi must investigate and recognize in individuals. Our main job is to help people have, as Tillich calls it, "The courage to be". People hesitate in coming to the rabbi because he does represent moral judgments. If he is, however, to be a successful counselor, he cannot be condemnatory. "Acceptance of self is the beginning of a reorientation of attitudes which will lead to an acceptance of value judgements which the counselee himself will eventually make."<sup>42</sup> It is suggested that large

congregations could employ one rabbi trained in the field of pastoral care. The idea of employing an expert in the field of counseling has become a vital element and function of the modern congregation.

The liberal rabbi has the freedom to function in a manner different from that of the traditional leader. This freedom accounts for the great divergence of opinion found among Reform rabbis. It also accounts for many advances in the technique and content of counseling by individual members of the Reform rabbinate.

#### THE ROLE OF THE CCAR IN MARITAL PREPARATION

Much of the work done by individual rabbis has come to the attention of the CCAR. In the past thirty years there has been an attempt to deal with the lack of programming for youth between confirmation age and marriage. Sidney Goldstein was one of the rabbis concerned with forming programs on the national level and combining the talents of individuals engaged in counseling work. In June of 1936 Rabbi Goldstein was instrumental in establishing a committee on marriage, the family and the home. By 1945 he had written a book entitled Marriage and Family Counseling - A Handbook for Ministers. Other works were also suggested for use in particular counseling situations. For the couple, the Committee issued a pamphlet - "Building a Jewish Home".

A few years later a rabbinic thesis was prepared on the subject of "preparation for marriage". Part of this thesis contained the results of a survey mailed to several

rabbis in the country. Although there were only 130 replies, some of the statistics do indicate how much time rabbis spend on premarital counseling and what aspects of marriage were stressed. A 43% return indicated that 77% of those rabbis who engaged in premarital counseling spent approximately 1.68 hours with the couple. The rabbis emphasized psychological and sociological aspects of marriage. On the basis of these statistics we may estimate that about one quarter of the total rabbinate takes counseling seriously.<sup>43</sup> The effort made by the small number of rabbis in the Conference was not having the anticipated result.

In 1950 the Conference issued an interesting report from its Committee on Marriage, Family and the Home. The report urged rabbis to familiarize themselves with the newest techniques in marriage and family work. Programs for pre-confirmation age people were urged in the area of preparation for marriage and sexual adjustment. The unmarried adolescent and young adult should receive, in the opinion of the Committee, serious consideration with respect to their peculiar problems. This is a very difficult time in the life of young people. It is about time that Reform rabbis recognize this fact and did something about it.<sup>44</sup> At the time this report was issued liberal groups had not instituted many programs for young Jewish people.

In 1957 an attempt was made to clarify and define the entire area of counseling. Rabbi Jerome Folkman, a pioneer in the field of Reform Jewish counseling, defined the area



as "...a method of sharing insights and understanding of human behavior on the conscious level and within the limits of common sense reality, so that persons whose problems are not complicated by profound psychopathology can discover ways of solving them and accepting responsibility for their decision."<sup>45</sup>

The rabbi may, through counseling, develop a relationship with his congregants that will allow him to be a positive force in general rabbinic counseling. Problems may be explored with them that will aid in the process of finding direction, insight and understanding. The rabbi is not a therapist or diagnostician but one who helps people find direction and solve problems on their own.<sup>46</sup>

The method and goal of counseling outlined in the above discussion is non-directive. Some rabbis oppose this technique. They believe that the rabbi is more than a counselor. He is a teacher and must of necessity judge. People come to the rabbi for specific answers to specific questions within the framework of Judaism. If they do not get the answers for which they are looking they will go elsewhere.<sup>47</sup>

Because of opposing views on the subject of counseling progress has been slow on the national level. If the Conference is to produce a work on marital preparation will it follow directive or non-directive techniques? How can we best prepare people for marriage? What can the Conference offer to individual rabbis?

In an attempt to answer these questions the Committee on Marriage, Family and the Home tried to resolve differences of opinion and present objectives and goals by proposing a "A Rabbi's Manual for Premarital Counseling". The manual has not yet been published.

At the 1960 convention the Committee reported "... correspondence is increasing with colleagues who would like specific directions for premarital counseling, with students who expect the CCAR to have literature about family-life education and with academicians who would like rabbinic participation in institutes on marriage counseling, religious counseling and the like."<sup>48</sup>

Three years after the Conference suggested stepped up programs in premarital counseling the report issued by the Committee on Marriage, Family and the Home presented some disappointing remarks. They said that little encouragement had been given to a source book on Jewish marriage. The pamphlet "Planning a Jewish Home" was out of print. The Committee was trying, in vain, to get it updated.<sup>49</sup>

A proposal was made to publish a new pamphlet for rabbis containing the following elements: 1) Introduction: to state the question and define elements of a Jewish home; 2) The marriage ceremony: spiritual goals and the meaning of ritual; (In this chapter various questions would be included on points of the ceremony); 3) Areas of adjustment: sex, birth control, attitude toward the physical aspects of marriage; 4) Making a Jewish home; 5) The role of the rabbi

and others; 6) Conclusion.<sup>50</sup>

Part of the reason for suggesting the publication of a new pamphlet is outlined in data collected by the Family Service Association. They report that the number one problem in human relations today is the breakdown of the American family. There is a rapid rise of illegitimacy. There is a tripling of the delinquency rate since 1940. In 1959 there were over 700,000 charges of juvenile delinquency. One in four marriages in 1962 or 400,000 couples ended their union with divorce. The CCAR reports that the Jewish incidence in these statistics is low but that Jews are not free from this breakdown. It will require more than a pamphlet to strengthen the Jewish home but a pamphlet would be a beginning.<sup>51</sup>

The rabbi as a friend and counselor must be brought closer to the members of the Jewish family. Our emphasis on ritual is much less important than our functioning as pastoral counselors. If this opinion is valid the entire character of the pamphlet proposed by the Conference must be changed. While the Committee attempts to provide for the lack of material on premarital counseling it suggests that the particular manner in which the Conference proposes to deal with the problem is inadequate. Previously pamphlets were given to the couple at the premarital counseling session or with the marriage certificate. At both of these times there is doubt that the pamphlet was ever read. It was further suggested that every congregational member receive the pamphlet. It is much better to have material

on marriage and the family before problems arise, before people prepare to marry. Both the scope of the pamphlet and the time in which it is to be presented is not the most advantageous to the couple. A work on the Jewish family should be more than just an outline on planning a Jewish home. It should include teenage marriages, divorce, birth control, eugenics, intermarriage, child adoption, emotionally disturbed children, the home environment, traumatic experiences due to illness and family crisis and death.

Some formal recommendations made by the CCAR Committee are: first, that the executive board should reconsider updating the pamphlet. Second, study guides and outlines should be available for courses in family life. A sound film should be produced to point out the hazards and problems of early dating. The film might also emphasize that there is a lack of counseling and preparation for marriage. In grades 9 through 12 there should be a study of family life. Material must be prepared in this area. Finally, radio and TV has a place in teaching family life.<sup>52</sup>

By analysing committee reports a rather dismal picture is drawn of activities in the rabbinate for preparing people for marriage. One may receive the impression that Reform rabbis are neglecting family life and personal counseling. Yet, many programs have already been set up to deal with problems that arise. The main task of the CCAR is now to define the problem that exists with counseling and then take

specific steps to provide material that will fill the gap from confirmation to marriage.

REFORM JEWISH PROGRAMS OF PREMARITAL TRAINING CURRENTLY IN USE

The type of program most frequently used by Reform rabbis is a combination of the directive and non-directive technique. The object of the counselor is to make people think that their problem is less difficult than they believe. It is the couple that must define the problem.

A typical interview may open with various friendly questions followed by the filling out of a form prepared by the CCAR. This form calls for factual information such as name, address, age, birth place, and parents' names. The interview is purposely begun by obtaining factual information in order to establish rapport with the couple and relieve tension. The importance of a medical examination is then noted. At this point it may be well for the rabbi to recommend certain books on the physical aspects of marriage. The CCAR Premarital Counseling Form continues, after obtaining factual information, by asking if the parents are informed of the marriage. It also inquires about previous marriages and medical examinations.<sup>53</sup> The object of the entire interview is to point out how problems may be solved by the couple. The counselor does not solve problems but rather points the way, gives insights and supplies necessary factual information.

Some rabbis take another approach. They begin by providing information about marriage in general. This infor-

mation is linked with Jewish concepts of marriage. It is pointed out that marriage in general has a biological, economic, and later, a legal basis. Recently, we have recognized the importance of the psychological basis of marriage. The rabbi may go on to say that in Judaism marriage is known as kiddushin. It sanctifies life and rests on morals as well as mores. "Marriage at its highest... is a spiritual relationship sanctioned by society and sanctified by religion."<sup>54</sup>

All of the material presented by the rabbi is set forth in order to indicate how important it is to adjust to the marital situation and solve, or at least attempt to point out, possible problems before they arise. The first step in the interview is to have the couple become acquainted with the legal aspects of marriage. Second, they should learn the economic basis of marriage. This includes housekeeping and homemaking. The third step of the interview is the emphasis on the biological elements of marriage. Fourth, psychological insights are provided. The last step is the presentation of various ethical principles and an appreciation of the spiritual ideals of marriage.

Literature is used to supplement rather than take the place of premarital counseling. Many rabbis have discovered that the available literature is not adequate to deal with some of the distinctive aspects of Jewish marriage. It is for this reason that several Reform rabbis have written their own works on counseling. One of the most successful



manuals, for example, is The Cup of Life by Jerome Folkman. This book is distributed by rabbis to the prospective couple when they begin their counseling sessions. It contains an outline of elements that help contribute to successful marriage. Rabbi Folkman observes that many judges and lawyers believe that sex and economics are two major causes of unhappy marriage. He contests these views and states that there is no relation between money, sex and happy marriage. The two attitudes which are fundamental are courageous realism and togetherness. "By courageous realism, I mean a view of marriage which is neither the blind optimism of the greeting card sentiments nor the stark pessimism of journalistic scare headlines."<sup>55</sup>

There are two problems with a book of this type. First, those who read it may set it up as a standard and become upset if their marriage does not conform to the principles outlined in the book. For example, if there is an economic problem in a family it may contribute to tension in the marital relationship. Yet, Rabbi Folkman denies that money is an obstacle to happy marriage. The result is that the couple may overlook this area as a possible problem. Second, even though books do not take the place of counseling, it is easier to consult a work in your home than make a visit to the rabbi's office. In a very real sense books do replace counseling.

Some rabbis have prepared works not available to the general public. They are distributed within single congregations and used in conjunction with the author's counseling

program. One such manual is entitled "Dream of Marriage - the rabbi speaks to the engaged couple about realities". This work by Rabbi Robert Jacobs of St. Louis is distributed to all couples married by Rabbi Jacobs. It deals with readiness for marriage, problem solving, physical aspects of marital adjustment, economic factors and the Jewish home. A discussion of family relations is also included. The manual begins with a letter addressed to the couple thanking them for inviting Rabbi Jacobs to share a precious moment with them, a moment when they stand before God and man and face the future as man and wife. The letter ends by stating "As a rabbi I am deeply interested in your welfare, your welfare in 'togetherness'. I think you will find this pamphlet helpful. It may suggest topics to discuss when you come to talk about your wedding plans."<sup>56</sup> Manuals of this type are not intended to take the place of premarital conferences. They are an outline of topics that are discussed by the rabbi and a guide for future reference. Most of them mention such subjects as music for the wedding, wedding processions, the wedding ring, photographs, wedding licenses, and the Jewish home.<sup>57</sup>

The interview method has many variations. Some rabbis distribute literature or outlines, others structure the session to individual situations. There is one technique employed whereby the rabbi begins by showing a picture to the couple and asks their reaction.<sup>58</sup> The important thing to note is that the interview method is the one most often



used by Reform rabbis in preparing people for marriage. Most of them feel that this is the best manner in which to establish rapport with the couple. They also view marriage as something personal, something between the couple and the rabbi. However, since the interview is used as one of the main sources of education it tends to become standardized or formalized by the rabbi. He begins using certain formulae, techniques and rules. After a while the premarital interview becomes mechanical and defeats its purpose of striving to be personal.

Various suggestions have come forth that propose the use of variety in the counseling situation. One successful counselor mentions that he used to think formal rules should be followed but now believe that he was in error. Also, he does not see the wisdom of testing by the rabbi. The interview should not be structured too soon or too much. There are certain guidelines, however, that may be followed, guidelines that can help structure the rabbi's thinking without making the interview too formal. One possible outline may include four topics: sex, in-laws, why the couple wants to get married, and the weather. This last topic may also be entitled, "establishing rabbiport". The rabbi should let the couple do most of the talking. It is their marriage, their problem.<sup>59</sup>

The rabbi should be guided by keeping in mind the value of the premarital interview itself. It may be, first of all, to assist the couple in investigating the potentiality for

success as well as difficulty. In this area the interview would focus on personalities, including maturity, how well the couple matches, mixed marriage, if this is part of the problem, and financial considerations. The new social situation in which the couple will be placed may also be part of this investigation. Another value of the premarital interview is the establishment of rapport with the couple. The rabbi may demonstrate that by talking over problems, later difficulties may be prevented. The talking over process is a good basis for solving marital problems. It is also noted that by structuring the interview as a college "pep-talk" the rabbi may be more successful. Finally, the clergyman can be trained to detect possible areas that need professional treatment and referral.

Reform Jewish programs in premarital training include many of the elements outlined as techniques of counseling in general. The modern Reform rabbi generally avails himself of pertinent material in the field of counseling. Most rabbis utilize the interview method exclusively. Other types of programs are the exception. Unfortunately, the amount of material written by Reform rabbis in the area of premarital counseling is quite small. It is, therefore, difficult to form any definite conclusions about programs currently being used. There is, however, an indication that more rabbis are concerned with training people for marriage.

The CCAR is also increasing its programs. It is now in the process of preparing a major work in the area of premarital counseling. The details of this project are not yet available. Yet, concrete measures are being taken by individuals as well as the CCAR to supply programs in family life education.<sup>60</sup>

CHAPTER III  
RESULTS OF A SURVEY OF PRACTICES, ATTITUDES  
AND TRENDS IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION

PURPOSE FOR CONDUCTING THE SURVEY

The literature available on premarital programs indicates that most Reform rabbis rely on personal interviews as their main tool of marital preparation. Specific information about these interviews is incomplete. For example: Does the rabbi consider the interviews as "counseling"? How much time does he spend with the couple? What does he discuss? How does the rabbi prepare himself for these sessions? The literature provides isolated examples from individual rabbis. It does not point to attitudes and trends.

In order to obtain specific information about programs of marital preparation a survey was conducted from a random sampling of Reform rabbis. The purpose of this survey was to provide information about practices, attitudes and trends in marital preparation. Also, an attempt was made to discover what correlation, if any, exists between literature in the field of premarital counseling and actual programs set up by our Reform Congregations. The survey was not conducted as a scientific study following statistical methods. It was a preliminary investigation designed to provide information not available in the literature.

CONTENT OF QUESTIONS ASKED OF REFORM RABBIS

Five areas were covered by the survey questions. The first category deals with the number and duration of the premarital conference meetings. In this category the object was to discover how many times the rabbi meets with the couple before the marriage ceremony and how much time he spends in preparing them for marriage. The second category has to do with the structure and content of the meeting. One question asks if the rabbi considers his session "premarital counseling". In this question the object was to ascertain whether or not most rabbis considered preparation for marriage and the supplying of information as counseling. The next question, the longest of the entire series, lists many possible topics of discussion. The rabbi was to check off the degree of frequency with which he discussed each category. The main sections of this question include 1) The Jewish concept of marriage, 2) The order of the marriage service, 3) Congregational participation, 4) the Jewish home, 5) The family, 6) Physical aspects of marriage, 7) Stresses in modern marriage, and 8) Economic factors. Within each category several subheadings are listed. After this question a check list of books is included. The object here was to discover first, what books, if any, the rabbi distributes to the couple, and if literature is an important element in preparation for marriage.

The third major category of questions has to do with the rabbi's training in pastoral work. The information in this section includes a check list of books that the rabbi may have consulted. It also contains a list of journals on pastoral work, religion and health, and family living. The next question inquires about other programs of premarital training in the temple. Finally, the rabbi is asked to evaluate his own image, his own idea of how he views the role of the rabbi in premarital counseling. A final question is included whereby the rabbi is asked to give suggestions or advice, to students who are newly ordained, concerning the wedding ceremony and meeting the couple before marriage. It was not possible to tabulate this question since each rabbi presented his own comments and no one standard exists by which we may measure the returns.

After all questionnaires were returned (56.8 per cent, or 100 of 176 sent) they were divided into five geographical areas. A further breakdown into states would not be practical since the number of returns from any one state is small and would probably not indicate or accurately point to a major trend. The first of our five geographical locations is the East, which includes the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and West Virginia. This area accounted for 34 per cent of the total number of returns. The second area, consisting of the New England



states of Connecticut, and Massachusetts, account for 10 per cent of the total return. The Midwest includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin. These states comprise 20 per cent of the total. The Southern states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia represent 23 per cent of all returns. Finally, the Southwestern states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Texas and Utah have a combined total of 13 per cent.

#### RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS \*

(The first two questions may be considered as a unit.)

1. How frequently do you meet with the couple before the ceremony? (As a general rule)

One meeting	<u>46</u>
One or two meetings	<u>5</u>
Two meetings	<u>34</u>
Three meetings	<u>8</u>
More (specify)	<u>1</u> (5 meetings)
Not answered	<u>6</u>

2. How much time do you usually spend in such a meeting?

Half-hour	<u>14</u>
Half or one hour	<u>6</u>
One hour	<u>70</u>
Two hours	<u>3</u>
More	<u>1</u>
Not answered	<u>6</u>

\* All numbers represent percentages

Forty-six per cent of the rabbis indicate that they generally hold one meeting with the couple. The only area that shows a greater percentage of rabbis meeting for more than one hour is the Southwest where two meetings account for 41 per cent of the total, and one meeting represents  $38\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. By considering the total number of responses we arrive at an average of 1.59 meetings.

The duration of these meetings is usually one hour. Yet, the number of rabbis who meet for less than one hour is large enough to pull down the average to 57.7 minutes. It is interesting to note that those who meet for one hour are usually the ones who hold one meeting with the couple.

Conclusions:

The tendency is to hold more than one meeting with the couple. The problem here is that there is no basis of comparison to indicate whether or not the 1.59 average is moving up or down. We may, however, compare the amount of time spent in counseling sessions with statistics gathered for a rabbinic thesis twelve years ago. At that time it was reported that the average amount of time spent in counseling was 1.68 hours. (based on 130 replies). Our figures indicate that this number has decreased to 57.7 minutes (based on 100 replies). Our main conclusion may be that even though rabbis tend to meet more than once with the couple they are spending less time in premarital counseling sessions than they did twelve years ago.

3. Would you describe your meeting with the couple as "premarital counseling"?

Yes	<u>62</u>
No	<u>25</u>
Yes and no	<u>6</u>
Not answered	<u>7</u>

The problems involved in defining the term "counseling" have already been considered. Yet, most rabbis have accepted the term as a proper word for referring to the premarital interview. In the Eastern states the ratio, out of a total of thirty-four replies, is two to one in favor of using the word "counseling". In the South, New England, Midwest and Southwest, the ratio is three to one.

#### Conclusions:

In the East the term "counseling" is used less frequently than in other areas of the country. We may account for this difference by noting that in the Eastern states "counseling" is, in many instances, an area reserved for people who have received special, formal training in the principles and techniques of counseling. Many church groups employ a minister who devotes all of his time to this area. This conclusion is reached through comments made by rabbis (in the margins or at the end of the survey) in the East who react negatively to the word "counseling". They emphasize that the term "counseling" is reserved for a "specialist". The rabbi is not a specialist who spends all of his time performing one function. In one instance a letter was attached

to the survey questions expressing negative opinions on the entire subject of counseling. Other letters from the South and West express the opposite view.

4. What topics do you touch on in the interview and with what degree of frequency?

	Often	Not Usually	Never	Not Answered
A. Jewish concept of marriage	61	27	4	8
B. Order of the marriage service	65	29	2	4
C. Congregational participation:				
1. Attendance at services	50	24	7	19
2. Adult Education	30	27	19	24
3. Membership in the congregation	47	29	7	17
D. The Jewish Home:				
1. Grace at meals	32	20	24	24
2. Lighting candles	44	27	12	17
3. Kiddush	41	28	12	19
4. Festival celebrations (such as Seder)	42	27	13	18
E. The Family:				
1. Relations with in-laws	57	22	9	12
2. Difference in family backgrounds	61	20	8	11

	Often	Not Usually	Never	Not Answered
3. <u>Adjustment to new role situations</u>	69	16	5	10
F. <u>Physical Aspects of Marriage:</u>				
1. <u>Visit to physician (aside from blood test)</u>	61	15	17	7
2. <u>Birth control</u>	38	28	21	13
3. <u>Family planning</u>	42	29	16	13
G. <u>Stresses in modern marriage</u>	58	10	8	24
H. <u>Economic factors:</u>				
1. <u>Budgeting</u>	23	37	23	17
2. <u>Wife working</u>	20	45	19	16
3. <u>Savings</u>	18	37	27	18

"The Jewish concept of marriage" is a topic of discussion often included in premarital interview. Only in the Southwest does the number of replies in the "Often" column equal the number in the "Not Usually" column. In New England and the South the ratio is the highest showing a three to one reply in the "Often" column over that of the "Not Usually".

In the "B" part of the question there is more disagreement within different areas of the country. In the East and Southwest we have approximately a two to one ratio in favor of discussing the order of the service "Often". This ratio changes to one to one in New England and jumps to

about three to one in the Midwest and South.

"Attendance at services" received the highest percentage of "Often" answers under "Congregational participation". "Membership in the congregation" was second. However, the area of adult studies fell behind the other categories. Attendance at services was stressed more in the South and less in the Midwest while the other areas of the country generally agree, two to one, that attendance at services is significant for inclusion in the interviews.

The statistics on adult education received the most number of "Never" answers in the South (eight out of twenty-three) and the greatest number of "Not Usually" in the Midwest (eight out of twenty). The question of membership was given a five to one ratio in New England between the "Often" and "Not Usually" columns. Yet, those who never discuss membership number almost as high as those who discuss it often.

Under "The Jewish Home" the lighting of candles frequently occurs in the "Often" column. This high percentage is due to replies from the East and New England. In the Midwest and South "Festival celebrations" are more significant. The Southwest emphasizes the Kiddush. In all areas grace at meals received the lowest percentage.

The various categories of "family" contain a high number of responses in the "Often" column. We may suggest that this topic is one of the most significant portions of the interview. There is generally less consideration



of the physical aspects of marriage and even less under "Economic factors". "Stresses in modern marriage" however is a frequently discussed topic. The ratios are generally the same throughout the country on questions 4E-H.

#### Conclusions:

Even though there are variations within certain areas of the country there is some general agreement on what topics are stressed in the premarital conference. Adjustment to new role situations within the family is the most frequently discussed area. Other aspects of family life also have high priority in the sessions.

Under the "Physical Aspects of Marriage" birth control and family planning are not as significant as suggesting a visit to the physician for reasons other than fulfilling state medical requirements.

It is interesting to note that although "Stress in modern marriage" is ranked high as a topic of discussion it was an area left unanswered on 28 per cent of the returns.

In the category of "congregational participation", attendance at services ranks highest. Adult education received a combined total of 70 per cent in the "Not Usually", "Never" and "Not answered" columns. This does not imply that congregations do not have adult study programs. It is merely that this area is not indicated as a significant part of premarital preparation.

The Jewish concept of marriage and the order of the service are included in a significant number of interviews. On the other hand, various types of economic factors received the lowest popularity.

The main conclusions that may be drawn are that rabbis attempt to emphasize those areas that are (1) significant to middle class congregants; (2) significant for the survival of Judaism; (3) significant for personal adjustment.

The first conclusion was inferred from the fact that Economic considerations are not significant aspects of marital preparation. The Jewish concept of marriage, attendance at services and membership in the congregation are areas that point to a concern for Jewish survival. Finally, adjustment to new role situations, stresses in modern marriage and a visit to the physician are aspects of personal adjustment. The "Order of the marriage service" is included in most instances as a procedural detail rather than a separate topic.

5. Which, if any, of the following books do you recommend to the couple?

Stanley Brav, <u>Marriage and the Jewish Tradition</u>	<u>17</u>
Oliver Butterfield, <u>Sexual Harmony in Marriage</u>	<u>4</u>
Duvall and Hill, <u>When You Marry</u>	<u>6</u>
E. M. Duvall, <u>Building Your Marriage</u>	<u>2</u>
Jerome Folkman, <u>The Cup of Life</u>	<u>28</u>
S. E. Goldstein, <u>The Meaning of Marriage</u>	<u>8</u>

Lewin and Gilmore, <u>Sex Without Fear</u>	<u>10</u>
Abraham and Hannah Stone, <u>A Marriage Manual</u>	<u>39</u>
Others - No one specific work	<u>23</u>

Reading material, according to the statistics, is not of primary importance in premarital counseling. It is significant, however, that the work most popular twelve years ago, Stone's A Marriage Manual, is still the most frequently recommended. In the South Rabbi Folkman's work was more popular than any other book. The rest of the geographical areas place Stone at the top of the list.

6. Check those of the following that you have available or have consulted:

Joseph Breuer, <u>The Jewish Marriage</u>	<u>16</u>
Sidney Goldstein, <u>Marriage and Family Counseling</u>	<u>58</u>
Seward Hiltner, <u>The Counselor in Counseling</u>	<u>26</u>
Robert Katz, <u>Empathy</u>	<u>22</u>
Theodore Lenn, <u>Some Aspects of Marriage and Family Counseling</u>	<u>13</u>
Carl Rogers, ...	<u>12</u>
Verne Steward, <u>Are They Qualified for Marriage?</u>	<u>5</u>
Charles Stewart, <u>The Minister As Marriage Counselor</u>	<u>15</u>
Carroll Wise, <u>Pastoral Counseling</u>	<u>29</u>
Others _____	<u>10</u>

The statistics obtained on utilization of literature by rabbis indicates that Sidney Goldstein's Marriage and Family Counseling is the most frequently used work. All areas of the country indicate the same preference. The other two books that received high preference are works that outline general counseling techniques and goals. Empathy is used by 26 per cent of the Eastern rabbis, and a bit less in other areas. Yet, in personal comments by the rabbis there is an indication that this type of book is becoming increasingly popular.

#### Conclusions:

In preparing himself for counseling the Reform rabbi relies mainly on works that emphasize the technique, procedure and goal of counseling. Carl Rogers, whose works were quite popular a few years ago, received a small percentage of the total vote. There is an indication that rabbis tend to favor a more directive approach. Also, there is an attempt to understand the relation of counselor to counselee in terms of empathic ability and sympathetic understanding. (Carroll Wise, Seward Hiltner and Robert Katz emphasize these areas).

7. Do you read any of the following regularly or occasionally?

"Pastoral Psychology"	<u>45</u>
"Journal of Pastoral Care"	<u>13</u>
"Religion and Health"	<u>21</u>
"Marriage and Family Living"	<u>10</u>

"American Journal of Sociology"	<u>8</u>
Others. _____	<u>6</u>

# Conclusions:

Journals emphasizing specific aspects of counseling, marriage and family life are not widely used by Reform rabbis. The journal of "Pastoral Psychology" is the one exception. It frequently contains articles by rabbis and attempts to outline problems of counseling in general. The other journals usually consider only one aspect of counseling and tend to be rather narrow in their interpretations. There is a correlation between counselors who utilize books and those who read "Pastoral Psychology". Generally, the rabbi who reads books on counseling will also include at least one journal in his study program.

## 8. Would you be interested in having the following?

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| A. Manual on the subject of premarital counseling                    | <u>59</u> |
| B. Anthology with sample form of the interview                       | <u>35</u> |
| C. Anthology with essays on the family                               | <u>27</u> |
| D. Anthology about the Jewish conception of marriage, family and sex | <u>46</u> |

This question attempts to consider what specific material the rabbi would desire as an aid in his premarital counseling work. In the East sections "A" and "D" received twice as many votes as sections "B" and "C". In New England section "A" was the only portion of the question to receive more than one vote. Also, only 50 per cent of the rabbis

in this area even answered the question. In the Midwest sections "A", "B", and "D" were checked in a ratio of three to one over section "C". The Southern states chose sections "A" and "D" but gave significant consideration to "B" and "C". In the Far West section "A" received the most votes.

Conclusions:

There is agreement throughout the country that a manual on the subject of premarital counseling is needed. In the East, Midwest and South the need for an anthology about the Jewish conception of marriage, family and sex received significant consideration. We may conclude that rabbis desire material on premarital counseling and the Jewish aspects of marriage and family life. Yet, there is no great desire to have works on the interview itself and essays on the family. The reason for this may be that such material is already available in great abundance. Works on premarital counseling are few in number. It is surprising that section "D" received a significant vote since a great deal has been written about the Jewish concept of marriage, family and sex. We may conclude that the rabbis consider these works inadequate.

9. What family life education programs are offered in your temple (Hillel group)?

- |                           |           |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| A. High school department | <u>45</u> |
| B. NFTY                   | <u>36</u> |
| C. Sisterhood             | <u>27</u> |



D. Brotherhood	<u>16</u>
E. Study Groups	<u>36</u>
F. Other _____	<u>6</u>

In this question there was an attempt to discover what congregational organizations offer programs in family life education. In all geographical areas high school departments are the most active. Also the Sisterhood generally offers more programs than the Brotherhood. The only exception is in New England. Both NFTY and study groups generally receive equal consideration around the country.

Conclusions:

Most programs of family life education focus on youth group age. The Brotherhood, which probably represents the oldest age group listed, has the fewest number of programs. Also, sections "A" and "B" include the young unmarrieds while "C" and "D" include married people. In many instances rabbis wrote the words "Young Marrieds" next to section "E". We may conclude that there is a correlation between age and marital status, and family life education programs.

10. In the interview situation do you see yourself as:

Priest	<u>13</u>
Counselor	<u>52</u>
Friend	<u>60</u>
Teacher	<u>44</u>
(Rabbi	<u>13</u> ) not included on original survey.

What is the rabbi's self image? How does he view his role in the interview situation? The above area was an attempt to answer these questions. The problem encountered in tabulating a check list of this type is that the words "Priest", "Counselor", "Friend", and "Teacher" have different meanings to individual rabbis. Yet, a check list is the only method that could be employed and tabulated in this type of survey. We would have no standard upon which to evaluate statements or comments. (See "Appendix A" question 11)

Some rabbis were unsatisfied with the list and added the category "Rabbi". This occurred in 13 per cent of the returns. It is interesting to note that in the Midwest 15 per cent of the questionnaires added the category of "Rabbi". This is also the only area they checked off "Counselor" more frequently than "Friend". The ratio here was five to four. In the East and New England the category of "Rabbi" was added in 13 and 10 per cent of the cases respectively. In the South, however, .4 of the returns added "Rabbi". The Southwest was the only area where this category was not added. It is also the only area where the category of "Counselor" received a number of votes equal to that of "Friend".

This entire question had the highest percentage of answers. A full 99 per cent of the returns had some aspect of the question answered. The 1 per cent that did not answer is in the South.

Conclusions:

Most rabbis prefer to view their role in the interview situation as one of a friend. A significant number include the term "Teacher". In the Midwest the terms "Counselor" and "Rabbi" have a more positive connotation than in other areas. Very few rabbis view their role as that of a priest. Those that do are concentrated mainly in the East and Northeast. In the Southwest the term "Priest" was not applied in any case.

## CONCLUSIONS

Reports issued by the CCAR indicate that there is growing interest in programs of premarital counseling. (See especially 1960 Conference report - footnote 48). Yet, they point out that rabbis are not spending enough time in this area. Our survey shows that as of 1966 rabbis are, in fact, spending less time on counseling than they did twelve years ago. At that time the average length of a premarital conference was 1.68 hours. Today this average is 57.7 minutes. There is, however, a tendency to have more than one session with the couple. The main effort still seems to be with individual rabbis rather than with the total Reform rabbinate.

The literature stresses the interview method as the most frequently used technique in marital preparation. Our survey supports this contention. Rabbis generally meet privately with the couple to discuss the marriage. The number of congregations that support group or community programs is quite small.

The interview itself focuses on adjustment to new role situations, stresses in modern marriage, consulting a physician, the order of the marriage service, the Jewish concept of marriage, attendance at services and congregational membership. The proposed pamphlet of the CCAR would include all but two of these areas: adjustment to new role situations and stresses in modern marriage.

Their chapter on "Areas of Adjustment" includes only the physical aspects of marriage and totally ignores psychological adjustment. Yet, our survey indicates that psychological adjustment is one of the most frequently discussed topics.

Books and articles on marriage are not intended to take the place of the interview. They are supplementary to the sessions held by the rabbi. In most cases, when a book is recommended it focuses on physical adjustment (Stone's A Marriage Manual is the most frequently recommended book).

Many articles have been written pointing out that the various organizations of the temple are not being used to adequately prepare people for marriage. (See note 41). The CCAR recommended that courses in family life education be established in grades 9-12 and a film be produced to emphasize the lack of counseling programs and preparation for marriage. (See note 52). Our survey shows that there is a lack of programing. However, 45 per cent of the returns mention some type of program on the high school level. The recent work by Roland Gittelsohn, Consecrated Unto Me, is already receiving wide acclaim. It is still too early to measure its effect.

In 1960 the Conference reported that many rabbis would like "...specific directions for premarital counseling...." (See note 48). Fifty-nine per cent of the survey questionnaires indicated some interest in a manual on the subject of

premarital counseling. The need seems to be in the area of technique, procedure and goal of counseling. This conclusion is formed on the basis of the type of literature consulted by the rabbis and their interest in having a premarital counseling manual. (See survey questions 6 and 8).

The Reform rabbi is concerned with preparing people for marriage. He views his role as mainly that of friend and teacher. The problem seems to be that specific information, while produced by a few rabbis, is not widely circulated. The present work of the CCAR Committee on Marriage, Family and the Home may combine the efforts of prominent rabbis in the field and produce a pamphlet that could help fill the gap that exists.

Finally, it is difficult to measure the extent to which the rabbi is a force in preparing people for marriage. Emphasis on the Jewish view of marriage and physical and psychological adjustment do, however, seem to focus on primary areas of concern. Few rabbis view their role as that of a functionary fulfilling the legal requirements of the state. The role of the rabbi as friend and teacher indicate that he is concerned with more than priestly functions.



APPENDIX A

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE -- JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION  
Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220  
Robert M. Benjamin

"The Pre-Marital Conference"

1. How frequently do you meet with the couple before the ceremony?  
(As a general rule)

One meeting \_\_\_\_\_  
Two meetings \_\_\_\_\_  
Three meetings \_\_\_\_\_  
More (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

2. How much time do you usually spend in such a meeting?

Half hour \_\_\_\_\_  
One hour \_\_\_\_\_  
Two hours \_\_\_\_\_  
More \_\_\_\_\_

3. Would you describe your meeting with the couple as "pre-marital counseling"?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

4. What topics do you touch on in the interview and with what degree of frequency?

	Often	Not Usually	Never
A. Jewish concept of marriage			
B. Order of the marriage service			
C. Congregational participation			
1. Attendance at services			
2. Adult education			
3. Membership in the congregation			
D. The Jewish Home			
1. Grace at meals			
2. Lighting candles			
3. Kiddush			
4. Festival celebrations (Such as Seder)			

	Often	Not Usually	Never
E. The Family			
1. Relations with In-Laws			
2. Differences in family back-grounds			
3. Adjustment to new role situations			
F. Physical Aspects of Marriage			
1. Visit to physician (aside from blood test)			
2. Birth control			
3. Family planning			
G. Stresses in modern marriage			
H. Economic Factors			
1. Budgeting			
2. Wife working			
3. Savings			

5. Which, if any, of the following books do you recommend to the couple?

Stanley Brav, Marriage and the Jewish Tradition  
 Oliver Butterfield, Sexual Harmony In Marriage  
 Duvall and Hill, When You Marry  
 E. M. Duvall, Building Your Marriage  
 Jerome Folkman, The Cup of Life  
 S. E. Goldstein, The Meaning of Marriage  
 Lewin and Gilmore, Sex Without Fear  
 Abraham and Hannah Stone, A Marriage Manual  
 Others \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Check those of the following that you have available or have consulted:

Joseph Brewer, The Jewish Marriage  
 Sidney Goldstein, Marriage and Family Counseling

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

6. (Continued)

Seward Hiltner, The Counselor In Counseling  
Robert Katz, Empathy  
Theodore Lenn, Some Aspects of Marriage and Family  
Counseling  
Carl Rogers, \_\_\_\_\_  
Verne Steward, Are They Qualified for Marriage?  
Charles Stewart, The Minister As Marriage Counselor  
Carroll Wise, Pastoral Counseling  
Others \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. Do you read any of the following regularly or occasionally?

"Pastoral Psychology"  
"Journal of Pastoral Care"  
"Religion and Health"  
"Marriage and Family Living"  
"American Journal of Sociology"  
Others \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. Would you be interested in having the following?

- A. Manual on the subject of pre-marital counseling  
B. Anthology with sample form of the interview  
C. Anthology with essays on the family  
D. Anthology about the Jewish conception of marriage,  
family and sex

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. What family life education programs are offered in your temple (Hillel group)?

- A. High school department  
B. NFTY  
C. Sisterhood  
D. Brotherhood  
E. Study Groups  
F. Other \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

10. In the interview situation do you see yourself as:

Priest  
Counselor  
Friend  
Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Do you have any suggestions or advice for a student or newly ordained rabbi concerning the wedding ceremony and meeting the couple before the marriage?

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Thank You

# FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Louis Linn and Leo W. Schwarz. Psychiatry And Religious Experience. New York, Random House, 1958. pp. 87-94.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 80-81.

<sup>3</sup>Earl A. Grollman. "Preparation For Marriage" (Mimeographed Outline). pp. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas J. Bigham. "The Religious Element in Marriage Counseling" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 2 no. 24). May 1952. p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Russell L. Dicks. "Pre-marital Counseling: The Minister's Responsibility" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 1 no. 7). October 1950. p. 41.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 41-43.

<sup>10</sup>David R. Mace. "The Minister's Role in Marriage Preparation" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 2 no. 24). May 1952. p. 42.

<sup>11</sup>Carroll A. Wise. "Education of the Pastor for Marriage Counseling" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 10 no. 99). December 1959. pp. 45-46.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>13</sup>Charles William Stewart. The Minister As Marriage Counselor. New York - Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1961. pp. 52-3.

<sup>14</sup>Andrew D. Elia. "Teamwork in Premarital Counseling" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 10 no. 99). December 1959. p. 37.



<sup>15</sup>Waller B. Wiser. "Launching A Program of Premarital Counseling" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 10 no. 99). December 1959. pp. 17, 66.

<sup>16</sup>Stewart. op. cit. pp. 61-62.

<sup>17</sup>R. A. Burkhardt. "A Program of Pre-Marital Counseling" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 1 no. 7). October 1950. pp. 25-33.

<sup>18</sup>Wesner Fallaw. "Non-directiveness in Marital Counseling" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 2 no. 24). May 1952. p. 53.

<sup>19</sup>Leland Foster Wood. "Non-directiveness in Marital Counseling" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 2 no. 24). May 1952. p. 53.

<sup>20</sup>"Report of The Committee on Marriage, Family and the Home" (CCAR Yearbook vol. 70). New York, 1961. p. 74.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>23</sup>Foster J. Williams. "A Community Program of Pre-marital Counseling" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 10 no. 99). December 1959. pp. 41-2.

<sup>24</sup>Paul E. Johnson. "Emotional Problems in Premarital Counseling" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 10 no. 99). December 1959. pp. 18-24.

<sup>25</sup>Erich Lindemann and Ina May Greer "Early Stresses and Strains of Marriage" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 2 no. 24). May 1952. pp. 10-13.

<sup>26</sup>Roy W. Fairchild. "Variety in Premarital Interviewing" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 10 no. 99). December 1959. pp. 10-12.

<sup>27</sup>Henry E. Kagan. "The Jewish Family" (CCAR Journal no. 7). Philadelphia, 1954. p. 10.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>29</sup>Leon S. Lang. "Four Foundation Stones" (Marriage and The Jewish Tradition. Stanley R. Brav ed.). New York, Philosophical Library, 1951. p. 16.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>31</sup>Samuel Glasner. "A Source for Strengthening Marriage" (Marriage and The Jewish Tradition. Stanley R. Brav ed.). New York, Philosophical Library, 1951. p. 6.

<sup>32</sup>Lang. op. cit. p. 20.

<sup>33</sup>Glasner. op. cit. p. 7.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-5.

<sup>35</sup>Lang. op. cit. p. 13.

<sup>36</sup>Joseph Breuer. The Jewish Marriage - Source of Sanctity. New York, Phillip Feldheim, Inc., 1956. p. 25.

<sup>37</sup>See especially: Morris Max. "The Jewish Concept of Marriage" (Marriage and Home). New York, Rabbinical Council of America, 5719. and: Ignaz Maybaum. "Tradition that is Living" (Marriage and The Jewish Tradition. Stanley R. Brav ed.). New York, Philosophical Library, 1951. pp. 52-68.

<sup>38</sup>Albert I. Gordon. Bride and Groom, A Manual For Marriage. New York, The United Synagogue of America, 1949.

<sup>39</sup>Andrew Klein. The Laws and Standards of the Marriage Service. New York, United Synagogue of America, 1964.

<sup>40</sup>Samuel Glasner. "Marital Counseling" (CCAR Journal no. 2) Philadelphia, 1953. p. 24.

<sup>41</sup>Sidney E. Goldstein. "The Rabbi and Marriage and Family Counseling" (An address delivered before the Rabbinical Assembly of America). Mimeograph, New York, June 24, 1947.

<sup>42</sup>Henry E. Kagan. "The Role of the Rabbi as Counselor" (Pastoral Psychology vol. 5 no. 47). October 1954. p. 21.

<sup>43</sup>Stanley R. Brav. "Resources For Marriage Counseling" (CCAR Journal no. 7). Philadelphia, 1954. pp. 25-26.

<sup>44</sup>"Report of the Committee on Marriage, the Family and the Home" (CCAR Yearbook vol. 60). Cincinnati, 1950. p. 151.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., vol. 67. Miami Beach, 1957. p. 115.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., vol. 70. Detroit, 1960. p. 85.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., vol. 72. Minneapolis, 1962. p. 81.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 84-85.

<sup>53</sup>Jerome D. Folkman. "A Ring and Everything" (CCAR Journal no. 16). Philadelphia, 1957. pp. 20-21.

<sup>54</sup>Sidney E. Goldstein. The Meaning of Marriage and the Foundations of the Family. New York, Bloch Publishing Company, 1943. p. 12.

<sup>55</sup>Jerome D. Folkman. The Cup of Life. New York, The Jonathan David Co., 1955. pp. 1-4.

<sup>56</sup>Robert P. Jacobs. Dream of Marriage. St. Louis, Mimeographed, 1964.

<sup>57</sup>Earl A. Grollman. "Before the Marriage Ceremony" (Mimeographed Outline).

<sup>58</sup>Edward Zerlin. "A Projective Technique In Marriage Counselling" (CCAR Journal). Philadelphia, June 1964. pp. 52-54.

<sup>59</sup>John F. Cuber. "The Pre-Marital Interview" (CCAR Journal no. 7). Philadelphia, 1954. p. 17.

<sup>60</sup>See especially: Roland B. Gittelsohn. Consecrated Unto Me. New York, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1965.

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