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TITLE A Study of the Changes in the Goals of  
American Judaism as Reflected in the Yearly Addresses Given  
by the Presidents of the CCAR

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**A STUDY OF THE CHANGES IN THE GOALS OF AMERICAN  
REFORM JUDAISM AS REFLECTED IN THE YEARLY  
ADDRESSES OF THE PRESIDENTS OF THE CENTRAL  
CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS**

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Referee, Professor Jacob Rader Marcus

## **DIGEST**

### **A STUDY OF THE CHANGES IN THE GOALS OF AMERICAN REFORM JUDAISM AS REFLECTED IN THE YEARLY ADDRESSES OF THE PRESIDENTS OF THE CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS**

This thesis surveys the goals presented in the annual speeches given by the Presidents of the Central Conference of American Rabbis from 1890 through 1993. The purpose of the thesis was to study the changes and trends in these goals over time.

The goals can be divided into four categories or groups: the Rabbis themselves, the Reform movement, K'lal Yisrael and general society. Important goals for the Rabbis include financial/job concern, publication/scholarship and the CCAR structure. Goals for the Reform movement include self-definition, religious education, Inreach/Outreach, relations with the UAHC and International Liberal Judaism. Goals for K'lal Yisrael include Israel/Zionism, relations with other organizations within the Jewish community, relations with the Orthodox and Conservative movements and oppressed Jewry/anti-semitism. Goals for general society include social justice, war and peace, the separation of Church and State, interfaith relations and hope.

The overall picture is fairly balanced, with no category receiving less than 20% nor more than 30% of the overall number of goals. However, there is a slight trend from specific to general, the greatest number of goals falling into the Rabbis category and the least into the general society category. In recent years the CCAR Presidents have listed fewer and fewer goals for general society, leaving this area to other groups within the Reform movement. In addition, the CCAR's relative success in

accomplishing their goals for the rabbis and their lack of success in achieving their goals for general society appears to be related to rhetorical factors. The rabbis form the immediate audience, while the members of general society are so far removed from the actual speech that they are nearly impossible to reach.

Overall the speeches were amazing in both their variety and scope; in fact it is hard to find any issue today that has not already been previewed by some CCAR President. Indeed these preachers as Presidents epitomize the words of "the preacher," Kohelet: "וְאֵין כָּל־חֲדָשׁ תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ", there is nothing new under the sun."



To my beloved Professor Jacob Rader Marcus. I wrote about the history; he has lived it.

and

To my beloved future wife Karen Denise Cohen. I wrote about the history; she managed to live with me while I wrote it.

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# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The exoteric objects of the association [the CCAR] are (a) to maintain and perpetuate a union of all American rabbis, with the center of gravity in the annual Central Conference, as is the case among the ministers of other religious denominations. (b) To make known to all whom it may concern the resolutions, decisions, suggestions or counsels of the Central Conference by an annual publication called "The Year Book of the Central Conference." (c) To establish and control a fund from which to give aid and support to superannuated and indigent colleagues and their families, not otherwise provided for.

--Isaac Mayer Wise  
First CCAR Presidential Address  
1890<sup>1</sup>

These were the very first goals of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, presented by the very first CCAR President in the very first speech at the very first conference. That historic speech established the authority of the conference,<sup>2</sup> and in the one hundred and three years since that time, CCAR Presidents have used the annual address to bring forth a variety of issues and to accomplish a variety of goals. In fact, it would be accurate to say that the annual address of the President has become a major method for propagating the goals of the CCAR and the Reform movement. Though these goals frequently relate to the CCAR itself and its members, the rabbis, the CCAR Presidents just as often mention goals for the Reform movement, K'lal Yisrael and general society.

The overall goals of the Conference over the years have been vast and varied, as impressive in their scope as they have been expressive in their language. A look at these goals shows both change and constancy, a willingness to respond to the times and a stubbornness in holding on to cherished customs and philosophies of the past. Indeed the goals of the Central Conference of American Rabbis as presented in the Presidential

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Wise. "Presidential Address Delivered to First Annual CCAR Convention, 1890." CCAR Yearbook, Volume I, 1890, pp. 11-21.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed history of the CCAR itself, see Sidney Regner and Elliot Stevens "The History of the Conference" in *CCAR Yearbook*, Volume XCIX., p.39.

yearly addresses paint an extremely broad picture of Reform Judaism in the United States and the world, broad enough to be analyzed, categorized and studied over time. Indeed, one can learn a great deal about the history of American Reform Judaism just by studying these basic documents of Jewish History. *In this thesis I intend to do just that--to study the goals and the changes in the goals of American Reform Judaism as reflected in the yearly addresses given by the Presidents of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.* Professor Jacob Rader Marcus calls American Jewry the "greatest adventure in world Jewish history."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this thesis will provide some kind of lens for viewing this great adventure.

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The obvious general purpose of this study is to use the speeches and goals to learn something about the history of American Reform Judaism. General scholarship in this area has been done before, specifically by Eugene Lipman in his essay "Tanu Rabbanan: Our Masters Have Taught Us." In it, he attempts to write a history of the CCAR through the speeches:

The multi-faceted history of the Central Conference of American Rabbis can be approached through many doors. The one chosen here consists in the first instance of the annual messages of Conference presidents and the responses of the plenary body to those messages.<sup>4</sup>

However, the essay is a view of the highlights of particular issues rather than a comprehensive study of the goals.

In terms of a new contribution to scholarship in this area, first and foremost, the main purpose of this thesis is to cover the goals in a more systematic and comprehensive fashion. Chapter One of this thesis simply

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Rader Marcus. "The Larger Task, Address delivered at the Ninetieth Ordination Exercises of the Hebrew Union College." Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1974, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Eugene Lipman. "Tanu Rabbanan: Our Masters Have Taught Us." CCAR Yearbook, Volume XCIX. Cincinnati: CCAR, p.39.

lists every issue ever brought up as a specific goal in any of the speeches. In Chapter One the goals are listed chronologically, and in Appendix A they are repeated alphabetically. These listings make the coverage both comprehensive and useful, for a researcher can use this thesis to look up a year and find out what issues were being discussed or look up an issue and trace it through the years. The most important and recurring issues are then discussed in greater detail in Chapters 2 through 6. The method chosen for accomplishing this task was to frame the goals according to the following question: for whom are the goals primarily intended? Are they centered on the Rabbis themselves, Reform Judaism as a movement, K'lal Yisrael as a whole or the greater general society? The goals themselves were then analyzed in detail according to these four categories, and trends over time were studied and measured.

Secondly, the goals were examined to actually define Reform Judaism itself. In other words, what definition of Reform Judaism or Judaism in general emerges from these goals? Does it define what an ideal Jew is supposed to think or be? At what point do the CCAR Presidents turn their allegiance from "Classical Reform" to "Neoreform?" The answer to these and other questions are discussed in Chapter Two.

Finally, three broad questions are asked after detailed analysis of the actual goals in the category chapters: (1) have the rabbis accomplished these goals? (2) were the goals descriptive or prescriptive, i.e. do the rabbis lead or follow? (3) what rhetorical strategies did the rabbis use when describing their goals?

The overall purpose of this study was to combine comprehensive study of the specific goals with the general view of the history of American

Reform Judaism and the CCAR that the specific goals provide. Answering the above questions was the way I went about this task.

## **CHAPTER ORGANIZATION**

The methods and purposes lent themselves to the following organizational scheme.

### **PART I--GOALS THEMSELVES AND SELF-DEFINITION**

**Chapter 1--The Goals Themselves:** In this first chapter I will simply list the goals by year. The goals will be repeated in the appendix alphabetically, but it is important to list them in order at the beginning of the actual study. The analysis which follows is only meaningful when one is familiar with the actual goals from the beginning of the CCAR through the present day.

**Chapter 2--Self-Definition:** "What is Judaism" and "What is Reform Judaism" are questions which have practically obsessed the rabbis throughout the years. In fact, so many of the speeches have the definition of Judaism in general and Reform Judaism in particular as major goals that it is necessary to devote an entire chapter to the concept. The rabbis' attempts to define Judaism are, in part, attempts to establish their own authority. They can not act as effective spokespeople, counselors or teachers until they fully understand their own role and the role of Judaism in the world. Their constant yearning for a self-definition sheds light on the meanings Judaism itself has had in the United States over the past century.

### **PART II--GOALS FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS**

For whom are the goals formulated? Are they for the rabbis, the Reform movement, K'lal Yisrael or the universal good? Answering this



question helps determine what the priorities of the rabbis are and have been. Studying this question over time allows us to see whether the rabbis have become less or more concerned with their own needs. The answer to the question "for whom are the goals formulated" can be subdivided into four separate chapters.

**Chapter 3--Goals for the Rabbis Themselves:** This chapter examines those goals and issues which primarily effect the rabbis themselves. Included in this group are goals of organizational maintenance for the CCAR itself, financial/job concerns and publication. Overall, there were more goals in this category than in any other.

**Chapter 4--Goals for the Reform Movement:** This chapter examines those goals and issues which were primarily concerned with the Reform movement. Among the most significant of these are education, missionizing (both within Judaism and outside it to prospective converts), International Liberal Judaism, relations with the UAHC, intermarriage officiating and unity within the Reform movement itself. In general, the percentage of goals in this category was very high during the CCAR's beginning stages, low between the two World Wars, and high once again in the most recent decades.

**Chapter 5--Goals for K'lal Yisrael:** This chapter examines those goals and issues which were primarily concerned with the entire Jewish community, K'lal Yisrael. Among the major goals in this category are relations with other Jewish community organizations, relations with the Orthodox and Conservative movements and Zionism. The overall picture in this category does not follow any particular by-decade trend, but has climbed to higher levels in recent years.

**Chapter 6--Goals for General Society:** This chapter examines those goals and issues which were primarily concerned with broader general society. Among the major goals in this category are war and peace, social justice, the separation of church and state, interfaith relations, and hope in the midst of darkness. The general trend in this category runs opposite to the Reform movement category. The percentage of goals in the general society category was low during the CCAR's earliest years, peaked during the period between the two World Wars, and has fallen once again in recent years. Overall, the Presidents formulated the least number of goals in this area.

### **METHOD OF STUDY**

The method of study involves analysis of the primary texts--the speeches themselves. All speeches given by the Conference Presidents, from 1890 to the present, were surveyed. Anything that was directly stated as a resolution, openly stated as a goal, or indicated by a statement of desire or need (e.g. "we should develop a plan" or "we need to build a program") was considered a "goal." I then summarized these goals into one phrase statements in order to work with them as raw pieces of data. Each and every goal was then listed separately and put down as its own entry on a database, regardless of whether or not that goal appeared in more than one year. (In other words if the same exact goal appeared two years in a row it is listed two separate times.) In all, there were 1105 goals enumerated in the speeches from 1890 to 1993. In addition to analyzing concepts and issues, I attempted to do some objective analysis by counting and comparing the number of times a specified goal or a particular type of goal occurred, as well as whether that goal was followed by a resolution for definitive action.



Secondary sources were also used as part of the study but primarily as background information. The reason I chose this approach was that the thesis depends on raw data analysis, the actual goals; most of the secondary sources written to date do not get specific enough to delve into these actual goals. A large purpose of the study was to work with the primary sources, the speeches themselves, so they have been emphasized at the expense of the secondary sources.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The biggest potential limitation of the study is whether or not it is generalizable to the rest of the Reform movement. How representative of Reform Judaism are the CCAR Presidents? Their goals may indeed be at odds with the goals of mainstream American Reform Jews, but measuring this potential difference would be extremely difficult. Firstly, there are very few sources which measure attitudes of the Jewish community over time, and secondly, any surveys available may not ask the same kinds of questions the rabbis pose. Perhaps this is a problem not only with this study, but also with any issues which involve comparing rabbinical and lay people's opinions. There is always a gap between rabbis and congregants, but it is an issue which is nevertheless beyond the scope of this study.

Secondly, this thesis, like most historical analyses, is limited by subjectivity. An attempt has been made to analyze the goals objectively, by comparing numbers and categorizing the goals; nevertheless, this kind of study is subjective by its very nature. Subjective or not, however, the study begins by looking at the actual data--the goals of the CCAR as presented by the Presidents of the CCAR from 1890 to the present.

# **PART I**

## **GOALS THEMSELVES SELF-DEFINITION**

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **THE GOALS**

## **THEMSELVES**

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE GOALS THEMSELVES

The following chapter presents the actual goals enumerated in the speeches by the CCAR Presidents. The list is chronological and goes from Isaac Mayer Wise's first speech at the first conference in 1890 to the most recent conference speech available, that of Walter Jacob in 1993. Every goal either directly stated or indirectly implied is listed under its year/speaker heading, though the goals within each year are not necessarily listed in the same order in which they were listed in the speech.

Anything that was directly stated as a resolution, openly stated as a goal or consciously indicated by a statement of desire or need (e.g. "we should develop a plan" or "we need to build a program," etc.) was considered a "goal." The goals were then summarized and put into one sentence phrases, each goal being phrased in the same way--"to do a particular action." Each goal was given the same phrasing in order to make them more easily comparable.

The only exception to this phraseology was the specific goal of self-definition. In many of the speeches a major goal of the speaker was to define the essence of either Judaism in general or Reform Judaism in particular. Rather than state the goal as "to define Judaism in the following way..." the goal of self-definition is simply listed as "self-definition," with a quotation or summary of that definition following. Though some of the other goals in the speeches could also be characterized as having self-definition as their intent, they were not listed under this heading since this was not their exclusive intent. In all, there were 1104 goals enumerated in the speeches from 1890 to 1993, each of which is listed below.

1890--Isaac Mayer Wise

To establish the authority of the CCAR to take action  
 To educate Jewish youth using a "Sabbath Catechism"  
 To offer financial support for indigent rabbis  
 To create a uniform liturgy for "all houses of worship"  
 To publish a yearbook  
 To maintain and perpetuate a union of all American rabbis  
 Self-Definition--Judaism is a "universal religion"

1891--Isaac Mayer Wise

To establish an American *Beth Din*  
 To offer financial support for indigent rabbis  
 To publish a yearbook  
 To give scholarship and academics recognition to encourage publication  
 To promote unity within the CCAR

1892--Isaac Mayer Wise

To decide specific *halachic* questions  
 To promote unity within CCAR  
 Self-Definition: We promote and are "Historical Judaism"

1893--Isaac Mayer Wise

To educate the youth using catechism  
 To finish the second volume of the *Union Prayer Book* (the *Machzor* part)  
 To systematize and harmonize our own theology

1894--Isaac Mayer Wise

To promote unity within the CCAR

1895--Isaac Mayer Wise

To educate the youth using the "Manual of Religious Instruction"  
 To educate adults by offering an "Adult Summer School"  
 To decide what our relationship to *halacha* is  
 To get rid of the *mila* requirement for adult male converts  
 Self-Definition: "Israel is a missionary people, Judaism is a missionary religion..."

1896--Isaac Mayer Wise

Systematize Reform doctrines  
 Offer financial support for indigent rabbis  
 To decide what our relationship to *halacha* is  
 To promote unity within the CCAR ("This conference consists of the reformatory element exclusively")  
 Self-Definition: The CCAR standpoint is "Historical Judaism"

1897--Isaac Mayer Wise

To affirm the view of anti-Zionism  
 To establish a "Book Concern on Business Principles" for the CCAR  
 To get rid of charlatan rabbis  
 To systematize Reform doctrines  
 To publish an Encyclopedia

1898--Isaac Mayer Wise

To systematize Reform doctrines  
 To publish, including encyclopedias, academic papers, a catechism and a clear theological system

1899--Isaac Mayer Wise

To ask congregations to pay for their rabbi to come to the CCAR conference  
 To promote ethical standards in job placement for rabbis  
 To offer financial support for indigent rabbis

To publish a collection of the CCAR year books collection

#### 1900--Joseph Silverman

To get rid of charlatan rabbis  
 To promote ethical standards in job placement for rabbis  
 To support HUC  
 To cooperate with *B'nai B'rith* lodges  
 To encourage scholarship and academics to be more like "the great scientific or academical societies"  
 To maintain that synagogue\* and religion are the most important aspects of Judaism  
 To reach out to the "unchurched"

#### 1901--Joseph Silverman

To support the exhibit of the American Jewish Historical Society  
 To aid the colonization of Palestine to relieve suffering  
 To publish and distribute free tracts explaining Jewish doctrines  
 To lend financial support for people in need in Galveston, Texas  
 To promote the study of Hebrew  
 To support the "Golden Rule Brotherhood" in the interests of interfaith relations  
 To sell the *Union Prayer Book* and *Union Hymnal*  
 To be more aggressive in terms of missionizing  
 To publish a collection of CCAR Yearbooks  
 To continue to support publishing the *Jewish Encyclopedia*--first volume is completed  
 To prevent dissatisfied rabbis from leaving the ministry  
 To support oppressed Jews in Russia  
 To unify the different regions  
 Self-Definition: To continue "to stand upon historic Judaism...building a bridge with the past"

#### 1902--Joseph Silverman

To proclaim the strength of American Judaism  
 To affirm anti-Zionism stand  
 To systematize Reform doctrines  
 To establish the Isaac M. Wise Memorial Fund for the CCAR  
 To report on improvement in relations with the Orthodox  
 To publish the *Jewish Quarterly Review*  
 To publish a "Book for Private Devotion"  
 To publish a "Manual for Confirmation" which would include which tenets are essential for Judaism  
 To publish Pesach *Hagadah*  
 To publish *Rabbi's Handbook*  
 To start a summer school for the education of rabbis  
 To support rabbis' pulpit freedom and leadership  
 To support Russian Jews  
 To Support Henry Goldfogle's resolution for US to pressure Russia to observe international treaties

#### 1903--Joseph Silverman

To give out membership cards so congregants can visit another city's synagogue  
 To report on Orthodox 's intolerance against Reform  
 To encourage scholarship and academic activities  
 To call an international conference to consider ways to counteract persecution of Jews in Russia  
 To establish a Synod  
 To systematize Reform theology and decide *halacha*  
 To establish a central authoritative body with the power to act for all Israel in crisis situations

#### 1904--Joseph Krauskopf

To affirm the principle of the separation of Church and State

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\* "synagogue" is spelled in two different ways in this paper, both as "synagogue" and as "synagog," depending on how it is spelled in the actual speech.

- To copyright *CCAR Yearbook*
- To establish a "People's Reform Synagogue" to reach "ghetto Jews"
- To encourage lay participation within the CCAR
- To merge CCAR and UAHC
- To publish more things in order to increase CCAR revenue
- To establish a "Social Religious Union" to promote closer relations between rabbis and lay people
- To encourage Sunday services "different in character" from Sabbath services
- To establish a Synod
- To widen the scope of the CCAR

#### 1905--Joseph Krauskopf

- To create a committee to help fight anti-semitism
- To make Committee on Sectarianism a standing committee to uphold separation of Church and State
- To decide which Hebrew pronunciation is correct, Sephardic or Ashkenazic
- To expand the "People's Reform Synagogue" program to reach "ghetto Jews"
- To lengthen tenure of office for Executive Heads of CCAR
- To encourage Sunday services "different in character" from Sabbath services
- To defend the idea of a "Synod"
- Self-Definition: A Jew "is not a nation nor a race, it is a people of fellow-sufferers"

#### 1906--Joseph Stolz

- To encourage academic papers
- To be able to arbitrate between rabbi and congregation
- To catalog an index to periodicals\*
- To uphold the principle of the separation of Church and State
- To provide financial support for literary undertakings
- To offer lessons in "Practical Rabbinics" at conferences
- To publish Jewish music
- To establish summer schools for educating rabbis
- To support oppressed Russian Jews
- To unify the American Jewish people
- To establish the primacy of the synagogue in Jewish life
- To emphasize the religious aspect of Judaism

#### 1907--Joseph Stolz

- To increase synagogue attendance
- To improve religious education--more schools, better schools, better teachers, better books and more time
- To stress observance in the home
- To establish a pension fund
- To publish to make Judaism more accessible to Jews on the fringes
- To publish *Scientific Annual* and "responsa" literature
- To support a research fund for antiquarian/archaeology searches in Palestine
- To establish special education projects for the deaf, the sick, the imprisoned, farmers and laborers
- To support San Francisco Earthquake victims
- Self-Criticism: "We are now in the minority, even in this country; we have been put on the defensive; and that, in the interest of the liberal interpretation of our religion, it is incumbent upon us to listen to and ponder over any criticism of our principles that means to be fair, honest, sympathetic and reasonable."
- Self-Definition: "Reform is not its own religion, it is only an interpretation thereof. Reform is not a culmination, it is a movement."

#### 1908--David Philipson

- To promote child labor legislation
- To uphold separation of Church and State
- To support Falasha Jews
- To establish services for prisoners
- To publish a *Conference Literary Annual*
- To help publish the JPS Bible
- To give a summary of the year's work



To establish services for summer resorts  
 To promote the Superannuated Minister's Fund  
 Self-Definition: The Jewish people are still "a mission people," despite many denigrating the concept

#### 1909--David Phillipson

To denigrate the actions of the Orthodox  
 To establish Arbitration Board for congregation/rabbi grievances  
 To establish services for the farming community  
 To celebrate an "Abraham Geiger Day"  
 To cooperate with the Alliance Israelite Universelle to help Jews in Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe  
 To publish tracts  
 To publish a *Young Israel Journal*  
 To oppose "White Slave Traffic"

#### 1910--Max Heller

To denigrate the actions of the Orthodox  
 To encourage congregations to help finance the CCAR, HUC and UAHC  
 To defend legitimacy of Reform and drop apologetics  
 To publish textbooks for religious school, beginning with a Bible history  
 To spread the Reform movement abroad working with Claude Montefiore  
 To support Russian Jews by pressuring the US government

#### 1911--Max Heller

To oppose "Christian Science Jews"  
 To encourage congregations to help finance CCAR, HUC and the UAHC  
 To defend legitimacy of Reform  
 To commemorate centennial birthdays of Ludwig Phillipson, Leopold Stein and Leopold Loew  
 To participate in interfaith appreciation for tercentennial of King James Bible  
 To support "Lost Tribes" -- Falasha, Chinese and Benei Israel in India  
 To "missionize" by teaching outside world about Judaism  
 To cooperate with other Jewish organizations  
 To publish text books for religious schools  
 To stress the religious aspects of Judaism  
 To support Russian Jews abroad on religious grounds  
 To oppose White Slave Traffic

#### 1912--Samuel Schulman

To oppose "Christian Science Jews"  
 To abolish a committee if it isn't doing anything  
 To encourage emotional and mystic value of Judaism, "why some of our people have been led astray"  
 To stress Hebrew in the religious schools  
 To establish and/or clarify marriage and divorce rituals  
 To cooperate with other Jewish organizations  
 To publish personal prayers  
 To publish a revised *Union Prayer Book*  
 To stress the religious aspects of Judaism  
 To encourage social justice in general--the synagogue should be an active leader  
 To support oppressed Jews abroad  
 To expand cooperation with the UAHC committee  
 Self-Definition: Reform has won. There has been a triumph of Reform principles.  
 Self-Definition: American Judaism "We are proud of the name and we insist upon its emphasis."

#### 1913--Samuel Schulman

To systemize Reform theology and doctrines by publishing theological essays  
 To eliminate the "Eastern Council of Reform Rabbis"  
 To encourage congregations to establish lifetime contracts for rabbis  
 To abolish the rule that Presidents of CCAR can serve no more than 2 terms  
 To help with publishing of JPS Bible



To affirm the revelation of the Bible as the word of God  
 To preserve the historical Jewish Sabbath on Saturday  
 To establish a "Committee on Social Justice"  
 To promote the "Superannuated Ministers Fund"  
 Self-Definition: We must become conscious of the fact that in the phrase "Reform Judaism," Judaism is the greater thing and reform the lesser."

#### 1914--Moses Gries

To teach in order to combat intellectual anti-semitism.  
 To enlist Christian support for Russian Jews  
 To improve Jewish education by using the new methods and improving teacher training  
 To set long-term future goals for Reform  
 To missionize to Jews in other lands  
 To improve and emphasize music  
 To cooperate with other national organizations  
 To work for peace in general  
 To help publish the JPS Bible  
 To publish *CCAR Yearbook* quicker  
 To support social service in general  
 To express dissatisfaction with the Beilis Trial, (support for Russian Jews)  
 To work for one umbrella national organization  
 To commission a survey for unaffiliated Jews  
 Self-definition: "Judaism is life and not articles of faith; life and not a code of laws."

#### 1915--Moses Gries

To uphold separation of Church and State  
 To get more children enrolled in Jewish Education  
 To keep America out of war  
 To work to stop WWI  
 To help publish the JPS Bible  
 To emphasize the religious aspect of Judaism  
 To support Jews abroad  
 To cooperate with the UAHC  
 To work for one umbrella national organization with the power to act on behalf of all American Jewry  
 To support a World Tribunal

#### 1916--William Rosenau

To establish branch congregations from large congregations  
 To make a clear "Declaration of Principles"  
 To plea for ethics and personal dignity among preachers  
 To oppose the "Burnett Immigration Bill," which contains a literacy test  
 To keep America out of WWI  
 To publish and sell *Union Prayer Book*  
 To publish *Minister's Handbook*  
 To publish tracts  
 To encourage education for rabbis at the conferences  
 To adapt HUC curriculum in order to account for rabbinic specialization  
 To expand the "Superannuated Ministers Fund" and the "Relief Funds"  
 To support oppressed Jews abroad  
 To keep synagogues open every day and make the worshipper become a participant  
 To promote unity among the different national organizations within the Jewish community  
 To establish commission on religious work in universities

#### 1917--William Rosenau

To cooperate with the American Jewish Congress  
 To call for military chaplains  
 To oppose Christian Science  
 To oppose immigration restrictions

- To discourage "Jewish League of American Patriots" and all non-religious Jewish organizations
- To emphasize Jewish literature
- To form local rabbinic groups
- To establish and clarify marriage and divorce rituals
- To keep records of rabbis willing to change places or deserving of promotions (primitive placement)
- To publish *Book of Penitential Prayers for Prisoners*
- To publish *Minister's Handbook*
- To publish *Union Prayer Book*
- To publish a *Volume of Sermons*
- To emphasize the rabbi's role as a pastor
- To establish summer school for the education of rabbis
- To assert the strength of the Reform movement
- To emphasize the religious aspect of Judaism
- To support oppressed Jews abroad

Self-Definition: Reform, to be successful, must possess Jewish individuality. "It dare not be all things to all people."

#### 1918—Louis Grossman

- To work on arbitration between rabbis and congregations
- To call for military chaplains
- To clarify the Jewish view on war through tracts
- To emphasize Jewish education
- To "missionize" Reform world-wide
- To cooperate with other national organizations
- To establish Pension Fund
- To praise US Army for bravery and restraint
- To lend support to President Woodrow Wilson
- To support a "reconstruction" of the synagogue and synagogue life
- To emphasize the religious aspect of Judaism
- To enlist volunteers to serve abroad after the war
- To support Russian self-determination
- To establish the primacy of the synagogue
- To "inreach" to unaffiliated Jews
- To encourage rabbinic work in universities
- To support the United States efforts in World War I
- To ask the Zionists and anti-Zionists to be civil to each other

#### 1919—Louis Grossman

- To reorganize Jewish Education—the Sunday School is too peripheral
- To memorialize Isaac Mayer Wise
- To produce a "Statement on Jewish Ethics"
- To support the League of Nations
- To remember the "Mission of Israel," international morality
- To support the rehabilitation of Palestine
- To publish a prayer book for the military
- To modernize rabbinic training to include socializing function of the rabbi
- To promote rabbi's function as teachers
- To reconstruct synagogue life

Self-Definition: To encourage "Constructive Reform" "...to remove what had become aborted...was not a positive contribution. Reform must emancipate and liberalize but it must also produce new life. It is a foolhardy thing to pull at the roots."

#### 1920—Leo Franklin

- To cooperate with B'nai B'rith to fight anti-semitism
- To combat Christian Science
- To bring Judaism back to college students
- To enlist financial support for Jewish war victims
- To work on interfaith relations

- To encourage "International Reform"
- To support the League of Religions
- To establish Pension Plan
- To support the physical reconstruction of Palestine
- To publish liturgy more cost-effectively to get it to more people
- To protest the Sargent picture "The Synagogue," which portrays Judaism negatively
- To support social justice in general
- To promote the "Back to the Synagog" campaign to reach unaffiliated Jews

#### 1921--Leo Franklin

- To fight anti-semitism
- To call for Reserve Military Chaplains
- To prevent defections from the rabbinate
- To encourage financial support for Jews abroad
- To oppose immigration limits
- To encourage congregations to invite scholars-in-residence in history and literature to educate people
- To publish *Book of Meditations and Prayers*
- To publish cheaper JPS Bible
- To publish cheaper prayerbooks through an "Endowment Publication Fund"
- To publish prayerbooks and revise them to make them more appealing to more people
- To recruit young men for the rabbinate
- To encourage religious goals for the synagogue rather than social or academic goals
- To support HUC
- To work with churches to fight anti-semitism

#### 1922--Edward Calisch

- To cooperate with the ADL
- To support armament limitations
- To uphold separation of Church and State
- To establish a "Code of Ethics"
- To protest Hungarian anti-semitism
- To oppose immigration restrictions
- To establish Pension Plan
- To support prohibition--don't aid criminals by using sacramental wine
- To publish a "practical" Bible
- To publish volumes of sermons
- To establish a revival service
- To protest the Sargent Picture "The Synagogue"
- To support HUC and JIR
- Self-Definition: "We cannot overmuch or overoften emphasize the fact that we are primarily a religious  
◦ brotherhood."

#### 1923--Edward Calisch

- To take anti-Zionist stand--"History has for us one lesson, and that is that Judaism comes before Jewry."
- To encourage interfaith cooperation
- To establish Pension Plan
- To publish "Practical" Bible
- To publish *Book of Meditations and Prayers*
- To publish revised *Hagadah*
- To guard the title of "Rabbi"
- To publicize a *Theology of American Judaism*
- To publish tracts
- To encourage "Back to the Synagog" campaign to reach unaffiliated Jews

#### 1924--Abram Simon

- To uphold separation of Church and State
- To utilize Emanuel Gamoran to revamp Jewish Education
- To establish series of conferences for religious leaders of the Church and Synagog

- To support multi-religious "Liberal Movement"
- To remember our "Mission " concept
- To help rebuild Palestine
- To encourage the peace movement
- To solidify the Pension Relief Endowment Fund Plan
- To support prohibition
- To preach prophetic Judaism in our synagogues
- To publish a revised *Union Prayer Book* and *Union Hymnal*
- To publish "The Principles and Achievements of the CCAR"
- To stress the primacy of the synagogue
- To encourage the Temple Center (Reconstructionist-like)

Self-Definition: "Reform Judaism has passed its experimental and apologetic stage. We have made the 'Reevaluation of Reform Judaism' the central theme of our convention."

#### 1925-Abram Simon

- To work on Jewish education
- To clarify relationship between evolution and Judaism
- To encourage financial support for Jews in Eastern Europe
- To conduct an "Interfaith Institute" with the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America
- To support "International Liberal Judaism"
- To support "Jewish Science "
- To work for International peace
- To solidify the Pension Plan
- To glorify the Pharisee because we are the heirs
- To reconcile philosophy and Judaism
- To support social justice in general
- To get acceptance for a "Statement of Principles"
- To support HUC
- To publish tracts
- To get representation on the UAHC board
- To compromise on Zionism

#### 1926-Louis Wolsey

- To support and celebrate the Centennial of America
- To cooperate with the "Friends of Israel" (a Catholic-led group)
- To support "International Liberal Judaism"
- To support Reform in Israel
- To cooperate with the Synagog Council of America
- To emphasize the spiritual, religious aspects of Judaism
- To work out a paper on "Jewish Culture"
- To compromise on Zionism

Self-Definition: "Our protest against the identification of Judaism with ceremonialism, our insistence upon an interpretation of Judaism as that of a progressive, mobile, democratic religion..."

#### 1927-Louis Wolsey

- To combat the proselytizing of Christians
- To emphasize religion as primary
- To support social justice in general
- To study the theology of the *Union Prayer Book*

#### 1928-HG Enelow

- To support Agro-Joint in Israel
- To denigrate the culture movement—"Jewish culture always has been the quest and the service of God"
- To combat the proselytizing of Christians
- To support the "Beth Jacob Jewish Education Movement" in Eastern Europe
- To celebrate anniversary of the Jacobson temple in Seesen
- To support Marranos
- To support peace societies

- To establish a "Professional Conduct Committee"
- To offer publishing support for Intellectual Jewish Work Ozar HaSepharim
- To affirm that the Rabbi's goal is to serve God
- To affirm religion as primary in Judaism
- To accuse the Zionists of being the real assimilationists
- To reconcile Judaism and Science
- To enlarge the scope of the "Commission on Social Justice" and change its name to the "Commission on Economic, Industrial and other Social Relations"
- To clarify Reform theology
- To oppose "White Slave" traffic

#### **1929--HG Enelow**

- To emphasize "Adult Education"
- To support the Alliance Israelite Universelle
- To affirm anti-Zionism--Palestine is not the only place where a wholesome Jewish life might be lived
- To fundraise
- To support the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society
- To support ORT Jewish agricultural movement
- To work on Pension Plan
- To publish popular studies in Jewish literature and history
- To publish papers to establish primacy of Reform
- To emphasize religious aspect of Judaism and denigrate secular Judaism
- To support religious school in accord with the historic concepts and ideals as Reform.
- To support Yiddish Scientific Institute of Wilna
- To compromise on Zionism--support effort to restore Palestine but condemn Zionism
- Self-Definition: Reform as primary. "No less urgent is our need for a new vindication of the propriety and necessity of Reform Judaism. Saddest of all has been the spectacle of assaults upon Reform Judaism by those who are supposed to belong to its own household."

#### **1930--David Lefkowitz**

- To denigrate Humanism as a religious movement
- To support "Interdenominational Peace League"
- To support Jewish Agency in Palestine (an opportunity to the lovers of Zion who may not be Zionists)
- To support Joint Distribution Committee
- To study Maimonides
- To support oppressed Jewry abroad
- To publish source book from selected sermons and lectures in CCAR yearbooks
- To revise the *Union Prayer Book*
- To support Professor Kahana's Bible commentaries through the Littauer funds
- To support the Vienna Rabbiner Seminar
- To support the "World Fellowship of Faiths"
- To encourage young people's religion-- Junior Congregations, Young Folks' Leagues etc.

#### **1931--David Lefkowitz**

- To denigrate Humanism as a religious movement
- To fight anti semitism
- To cooperate B'nai B'rith to fight discrimination
- To make administrative changes within the CCAR
- To establish a "Congregational Helping Fund"
- To give words of comfort during the depression
- To encourage congregations to maintain their rabbis even during the depression
- To celebrate the George Washington centennial
- To thank Littauer fund for its financial support
- To encourage financial support for oppressed Jewry in Europe
- To encourage financial support for Palestinian Jewry
- To promote the idea of Group Insurance as a temporary measure until a pension plan can be reached
- To publish new *Union Hymnal*
- To support a Pulpit Placement Plan

- To establish a "Rabbinical Equalization Fund" to help out the volunteer military chaplains
- To encourage an interfaith religious forum
- To consider socialistic tendencies to benefit our society
- To put together a statement of the fundamental principle of Judaism compatible with modern thought.
- To financially save the UAHC
- To support the World Union for Progressive Judaism
- Self-definition: Let us not again have to choose between Isaiah and Joseph Caro. Reform Judaism has definitely placed itself with Prophetic Judaism

#### 1932--Morris Neufeld

- To combat Christian missionary activity
- To restructure the administration of the CCAR
- To emphasize and improve Jewish education
- To lend financial assistance to indigent rabbis
- To lend financial support to needy scholars
- To celebrate the George Washington centennial
- To give graduate fellowships as a response to depression
- To support the Joint Distribution Committee
- To restructure the Liturgy Committee to get fewer members to meet less often
- To support the National Conference of Christians and Jews
- To publish and publicize the *Union Hymnal*
- To restructure Jewish community
- To celebrate the anniversary of Spinoza
- To support the Superannuated Relief Fund
- To "inreach" to the unaffiliated Jews
- To decide whether or not to support the World Congress of Jewish Organizations

#### 1933--Morris Neufeld

- To support German Jewry in face of pre W.W.II anti-semitism
- To cooperate with the Joint Distribution Committee
- To establish Pension Plan
- To increase the "Relief Fund for Indigent Rabbis"
- To settle large numbers of Jews in Palestine
- To have CCAR Social Justice Commission work jointly with Conservative and Orthodox
- To provide a subvention fund for scholars
- To support the "Synagogue Center Stern Plan"
- To work toward unity in national organizations
- To support the World Congress of Jewish Organizations

#### 1934--Samuel Goldensen

- To break loose from dependence on other Jewish organizations
- To express discontent about anti-semitism in Germany
- To denigrate Zionism while affirming that Palestine can be a haven to some of the German Jews
- To enlist financial support for Jewish education
- To watch illiberalism and intolerance among ourselves
- To revise the liturgy
- To emphasize our moral "mission"
- To publish weekly paper whose sole purpose should be the dissemination of the knowledge of Judaism
- To reestablish religion as primary in Judaism
- To fight for social justice in industry

#### 1935--Samuel Goldensen

- To denigrate "Judaism as a civilization"
- To denigrate Zionism as a replacement for religion
- To affirm religion as primary in Judaism
- To strive for social justice in general
- Self-Definition: To define Reform Judaism



**1936--Felix Levy**

- To support various academic and scholarship programs
- To support agricultural Jews landward movement
- To express worry over dictatorship troubles
- To second the Brotherhood's motion that gambling in synagogues is wrong
- To affirm that God is the critical piece in Judaism
- To make Hebrew a priority
- To support all Jews abroad
- To help foster Palestine/Arab relations
- To formulate the "Principles of Reform Judaism"
- To affirm that the rabbi's salary is the obligation of congregation
- To support "Relief for Rabbis Retirement Fund"
- To reaffirm religion as primary in Judaism
- To reaffirm that the Jewish Sabbath is Saturday
- To support the Synagog Council as part of the affirmation that religion and synagogue are primary
- To encourage unity amongst national organizations--United Palestine Appeal and the American Joint Distribution Committee

**1937--Felix Levy**

- To express dismay about and fight against anti semitism
- To combat assimilation
- To re-enthron the *Halacha* as central to Jewish life
- To encourage Hebrew scholarship
- To lengthen term of office for CCAR president
- To cooperate with the Orthodox and belong to "Catholic Israel"
- To support Palestine as the "ancestral homeland"
- To embrace particularism in Judaism
- To encourage "Positive Judaism"
- To protect Rabbi from becoming Judaism for rent
- To reformulate positive aspects of Reform and lose Reform as a denial religion
- To reestablish the primacy of the synagogue
- To cooperate with the UAHC and HUC to prevent duplication
- To end fighting between movements and organizations

**1938--Max Currick**

- To denigrate the concept of a central national organization
- To get rid of charlatan rabbis
- To establish an "Ethics and Conduct Code"
- To maintain the freedom of the pulpit
- To seek help from Christian groups, US government and League of Nations for Jewish immigration
- To support oppressed Jewry abroad
- To establish a Placement Committee
- To publish a revised *Union Prayer Book*
- To aid the absorption refugees in local communities
- To welcome refugee rabbis
- To encourage scholarship
- To provide financial support for scholarship
- To publicize the Synagog Council
- To work with Orthodox and Conservatives to establish the synagogue as primary
- To cooperate with the UAHC on peace resolutions
- To inreach unaffiliated Jews

**1939--Max Currick**

- To aid non-Jewish war victims
- To protest the British White Paper
- To affirm the connection between democracy and religion
- To support religious school development
- To support the General Jewish Council and the concept of unity between national organizations

- To support the investigation of subversive movements
- To affirm the concept of the "Mission of Israel" a la Isaac Mayer Wise
- To affirm patriotism for the United States
- To caution against our own prejudices
- To publish the revised *Union Prayer Book, Volume II*
- To encourage the rabbi to be a progressive spokesman
- To support refugee rabbi support
- To "inreach" to unaffiliated and small town Jews
- To work for unity with the Conservative and Orthodox movements

#### 1940--Emil Leipziger

- To affirm separation of Church and State
- To support defense buildup in case there is a war
- To call for ethics in pulpit placement
- To provide financial support for indigent rabbis
- To provide financial support for oppressed Jewry
- To support the General Jewish Council
- To get synagog representation on the General Jewish Council
- To support the National Conference of Christians and Jews
- To express optimism for the Jewish people
- To consider making Palestine a greater refugee center
- To prevent America from entering WWII
- To expand and encourage scholarship
- To call for unity within Israel

#### 1941--Emil Leipziger

- To pray for strength to combat the new anti-semitic ideology of Aryan hatred
- To oppose "release time" from schools on the basis of the principle of separation of Church and State
- To express hope for the ideal of peace despite the reality
- To discuss the post-war status of the Jew
- To spread Reform ideology
- To reaffirm the primacy of the synagogue
- To affirm that religion is the primary goal of the synagogue
- To support Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- To garner the "strength to be ourselves" as a movement
- To cooperate with the UAHC
- To call for unity within the Synagogue Council
- To call for unity in Judaism overall

#### 1942--James Heller

- To call for military chaplains
- To affirm the separation of Church and State
- To make changes in the General Jewish Council
- To support the merger of HUC and JIR
- To cooperate inter-religiously in the war/peace effort
- To start a magazine to make Reform Judaism articulate
- To report on conditions in Palestine
- To work for a Pension Plan
- To call for pulpit placement ethics
- To cooperate with the RA and Rabbinical Council, perhaps having conferences at the same place
- To admit failures Reform has made, specifically our exclusivity
- To defend the whole system of religion
- To support the revised *Union Prayer Book*
- To combine the Commissions on Social Justice and Peace
- To reestablish the synagogue as primary; the world is now ready for a new emphasis on religion
- To support the UAHC
- To "inreach" unaffiliated Jews
- To produce a formal statement by CCAR expressing support for US in WWII



**1943-James Heller**

- To commemorate Chaplain Alexander Goode's heroism
- To ask for disbanding of the American Council for Judaism
- To cooperate with the American Jewish Conference
- To make mourning for Nazi victims part of the Yom Kippur service
- To establish a "Peace Institute on Judaism and a Just and Durable Peace"
- To work for a Pension Plan
- To publish a *Liberal Judaism* periodical
- To get together a Pulpit Placement Plan
- To produce a "Theology in Relation to Modern Thought" by the CCAR
- To cooperate with the UAHC
- To protest the British White Paper
- To assert that Zionism and Reform Judaism are not incompatible

**1944-Solomon Freehof**

- To support the American Jewish Conference
- To provide books for public schools on basic Judaism
- To support our military chaplains
- To establish a Chaplain/Congregational Tension Committee
- To support a Common Committee (which would encompass BB, AJC, AJCongress)
- To fundraise for subvention (scholarship)
- To work for a Pension Plan
- To solve placement problems resulting from the war
- To support agencies which rescue oppressed Jews
- To support the United Fund Drive with the UAHC and HUC
- To work for unity within CCAR; don't let petty differences stand in our way
- To support America's position in World War II

**1945-Solomon Freehof**

- To establish a "Book Concern and Publishing House"
- To ensure fairness for the chaplains when they return from W.W.II
- To recruit military chaplains
- To cooperate with the HUC and JIR as well as bid them to cooperate with each other
- To work for a durable International peace
- To work for a Pension Plan
- To finish the revision of the *Union Prayer Book*
- To express sympathy to Eleanor Roosevelt on the death of her husband
- To reevaluate the Synagogue Council
- To continue to progress in terms of unity within the CCAR
- To express relief, but not celebration, that World War II is over

**1946-Abba Hillel Silver**

- To study the atom bomb as an ethical question
- To express appreciation for the military chaplains
- To ensure fairness for the chaplains when they return
- To reassert Judaism as an ethical religion
- To establish a permanent Executive Secretary
- To separate the Justice and Peace Commission into two
- To rebuild Jewish learning centers here in America
- To help get refugees to Palestine at once
- To reassert religion as primary in Judaism
- To support the Synagogue Council
- To establish a permanent national Jewish body for unity amongst the Jewish people

**1947-Abba Hillel Silver**

- To engage a permanent Executive Secretary for the Commission on Justice and Peace
- To call for military chaplains

To support the Emergency Displaced Persons Admission Act or Stratton Bill  
 To support HUC  
 To support the Marshall Plan support to rebuild Europe based on political realism  
 To lobby US government to let all refugees go to Palestine  
 To support the United Nations  
 To protest the British White Paper protest  
 Self-Definition: Because of the war "our own generation of Rabbis has had to concern itself primarily not with the problems of theology and scholarship or the ideal pastorate, but with the status of our people."

#### 1948--Abraham Feldman

To support the American Jewish Assembly  
 To arbitrate between rabbis and congregations  
 To support local "Councils of Jews and Christians"  
 To express appreciation for German Jewry and their achievements  
 To establish God's Kingdom in society (mission-like concept)  
 To encourage home prayer books  
 To support HUC  
 To support the merger of HUC and JIR  
 To end the Zionism debate once and for all and support Israel  
 To express appreciation for the Jewish Publication Society  
 To teach more "Practical Rabbinics" at HUC  
 To publish Rabbinical Journal to deal with sermons, practical rabbinics, etc.  
 To work for better Rabbi/Assistant Rabbi relations  
 To establish a "Commission on Social Action"  
 To make the Synagogue a central place (Reconstructionist like)  
 To establish tenure programs for rabbis  
 To publish tracts for Reform Judaism  
 To cooperate with the UAHC  
 To form more UAHC/CCAR Joint Commissions

#### 1949--Abraham Feldman

To congratulate Israel for joining the United Nations  
 To support Liberal Judaism in Israel  
 To support NFTY  
 To establish a placement bureau  
 To establish pre-rabbinic training  
 To recruit future rabbis for HUC  
 To increase "Kodesh," religion in people and prevent an overly secularized world  
 To start a "Religious Assembly" through the Synagogue Council  
 To establish tenure programs for rabbis  
 To cooperate with UAHC and HUC  
 To support the World Union for Progressive Judaism

#### 1950--Jacob Marcus

To emphasize American Jewry, too, not just Israel  
 To set down a blueprint of "Liberal Jewish Practice" from what has been *be-al peh* over the last 150 years  
 To affirm the separation of Church and State  
 To put an educational emphasis on 13 to 17 year olds  
 To establish a conference on "God and Man"  
 To support Liberal Judaism in Israel  
 To support the National American Jewish Assembly to speak and act with authority for American Jewry  
 To establish a placement bureau  
 To publish a "Rabbinical Journal"  
 To improve religious services  
 To discourage mergers and work for smaller congregations  
 To establish tenure programs for rabbis

**1951-Philip Bernstein**

To call for military chaplains  
 To uphold the separation of Church and State in schools  
 To cooperate with the Conservative movement  
 To hope for light despite the darkness of our times  
 To support "Liberal Judaism" in Israel  
 To oppose McCarthy-like activity  
 To support the New York House of Living Judaism  
 To come up with a Placement Plan  
 To obtain a professional executive needed for the CCAR  
 To fight for Russian Jewish rights  
 To support Israel  
 To come up with a tenure program  
 To publish the Union Home Prayer Book

**1952-Philip Bernstein**

To call for military chaplains  
 To oppose both Communism and Reactionism  
 To provide an "Equalization Fund" for chaplains  
 To oppose the lifestyle of esoteric retreats  
 To support the military protection of freedom  
 To hope despite the darkness of the times  
 To plan an "Institute on Psychiatry and Religion"  
 To plan an "Institute on Church and State"  
 To plan an "Institute on Israel"  
 To support Israel financially  
 To support Liberal Judaism in Israel  
 To come up with a Pension Plan  
 To come up with a Placement Plan  
 To establish religion as primary in Judaism  
 To come up with a tenure program

**1953-Joseph Fink**

To celebrate American Jewry's 300 years  
 To support freedom for the Christian clergy  
 To help mitigate the Cold War  
 To oppose Dictatorship and Reactionism  
 To encourage financial support for Jewish causes  
 To protect freedom of speech  
 To encourage higher standards for Israel  
 To hope despite the darkness of the times  
 To oppose the MacCarran-Walter Immigration Law because it is racist  
 To support the people in Israel  
 To support Liberal Judaism in Israel  
 To publish the CCAR Journal  
 To support publishing the JPS Bible revision  
 To encourage pulpit freedom  
 To concentrate on rabbi reeducation  
 To encourage Shabbat observance at conventions  
 To support Soviet Jewry against Communist anti-semitism  
 To support the United Nations  
 To promote unity amongst national organizations

**1954-Joseph Fink**

To oppose the American Council for Judaism  
 To celebrate American Jewry's 300 years  
 To work for Arab/Israeli peace  
 To support Christian clergy's freedom of the pulpit

- To affirm Reform belief in God
- To hope
- To oppose "Independent Religious Schools" (day schools)
- To support Liberal Judaism in Israel
- To oppose the concept of "Limited War"
- To make teaching Maimonides a priority
- To oppose McCarthy like activities
- To publish *CCAR Journal* report

#### **1955--Barnett Brickner**

- To support the Arab/Israeli peace process
- To study automation
- To support civil rights
- To support a Defense agreement with Israel
- To provide financial equalization
- To emphasize Torah as faith, *emunah* instead of as *halacha*
- To support foreign aid for anti communism
- To integrate foundation school integration with religious school. (day schools)
- To hope
- To support HUC in Israel
- To support Israel
- To study juvenile delinquency
- To support Liberal Judaism in Israel
- To revise the liturgy to keep up with "religious revival"
- To work on a Placement Plan
- To publish a *Convert's Manual*
- To publish a *Rabbi's Manual*
- To oppose the McCarran Walter immigration act
- To support regional conferences
- To revise the prayer books and *Hagadah*
- To clarify and formulate Reform Theology
- To support a United Germany (watched carefully by NATO)
- To support the United Nations
- To support women's ordination
- To support the World Union for Progressive Judaism

#### **1956--Barnett Brickner**

- To assert American Judaism's independent strength even from Israel
- To secure CCAR official representation on Board of Governors of UAHC
- To support desegregation with other liberal clergy in the South
- To support the sale of arms to Israel
- To work out a Pension Plan
- To encourage friendly Christian Clergy to help give positive publicity to Israel
- To support religious rights for American Jews in Saudi Arabia
- To conduct a survey for Reform
- To castigate Orthodoxy and the American Council for Judaism for disrupting Jewish unity
- To support women's ordination

#### **1957--Israel Bettan**

- To use the newer methods in education
- To reemphasize "Prophetic Judaism" and social justice
- To cooperate with other rabbinical bodies
- To lose the distinction between Torah and other forms of Jewish teaching
- To develop treatises on Reform Judaism
- To destress uniformity in practice (Reform does not need it)

#### **1958--Jacob Rudin**

- To support the CCAR Journal

- To restructure the CCAR office for more efficiency
- To do Combined Campaign fundraising for the CCAR, UAHC and HUC
- To publish *Code of Practice and Ritual Guide*
- To plan retreats for CCAR
- To clarify the relationship between the UAHC, HUC and CCAR

#### 1959--Jacob Rudin

- To restructure the CCAR
- To establish a minimum framework of standards for Reform
- To address the problem of loneliness in the rabbinate
- To establish a Placement Director
- To plan retreats for the CCAR
- To cooperate with HUC and the UAHC

#### 1960--Bernard Bamberger

- To uphold the principle of Church and State
- To do "Combined Campaign" fundraising for the CCAR, UAHC and HUC
- To emphasize ethics and morality teaching--mission like stuff
- To publish a *Guide for Belief and Observance*
- To cooperate with HUC
- To work for peace in general
- To work out a placement plan
- To clarify Reform's relationship to State of Israel
- To establish a Social Justice platform
- To support the World Union for Progressive Judaism

#### 1961--Bernard Bamberger

- To review the Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation ceremonies
- To deal with the problem of non-kosher catering in the Synagogue
- To support Civil Rights legislation
- To affirm that Communistic Imperialism is our enemy
- To express dissatisfaction that the Conservatives movement is going too far in their attacks
- To respond to American Economic problems--consume or save, automation, etc.
- To teach ethics and prophetic Judaism
- To hope-- "...in these troubled times, we must have more to offer our people than rumblings of doom"
- To decide the mixed marriage question
- To publish *Bettan Memorial Volume*
- To publish *Rabbi's Manual*
- To publish *Union Songster*
- To work on the Pulpit Placement Plan
- To clarify Reform's relation to Israel
- To establish a Religious Action Center for greater emphasis on social justice

#### 1962--Albert Minda

- To offer associate memberships for outstanding lay people
- To commemorate the centennial anniversary of the Jewish Military Chaplaincy with a service and more
- To reformulate the *Rabbinic Code of Ethics*
- To support HUC
- To study "Medicine and Judaism"
- To work on the Pulpit Placement Plan
- To publish a history and philosophy of CCAR
- To set up rabbis to minister to rabbis in need
- To conduct a survey of rabbis
- To publish a *Synagogue Derech Eretz Guide*
- To cooperate with HUC and the UAHC
- To support the World Union for Progressive Judaism

- To conduct combined fundraising w. HUC and UAHC
- To support a Conference on Religion and Race with Catholics and Protestants
- To study the "family" and what is happening to it
- The support the HUC Jerusalem campus
- To study Israel and the Middle East
- To support Israel
- To support the Jewish Chautauqua Society
- To support the National Council of Jewish Women
- To support the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods
- To concentrate on philanthropy
- To work on a Placement Plan
- To support Pope John XXIII
- To help publish the JPS Bible's new translation
- To respond to the racial crisis
- To get involved in negotiations between Strikes and Labor/Management relations
- To conduct a survey of Reform Judaism
- To support Maurice Eisendrath's work in the UAHC
- To support the United Jewish Appeal

Self-definition: "Our own Reform movement here in America was inspired by the faith and conviction that Judaism in a free, voluntaristic society could not only survive, but could also become a positive force in the fulfillment of America's destiny."

#### 1964--Leon Feuer

- To celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the CCAR
- To participate in the "Civil Rights March on Washington"
- To reorganize CCAR Committees
- To work on "Expertness in Depth Studies" to formulate our views on the current issues of society
- To support HUC
- To decide position on mixed marriages
- To move CCAR Headquarters to a new office
- To work out Pension and Insurance Plans
- To finally implement the Placement Plan
- To reassess and reassert priorities for American Jewish Life
- To support the Soviet Jewry President's Conference
- To deal with the problem of the UAHC becoming like a rival rabbinical structure

Self-definition need: "As we face the future, our immediate concern should be the strengthening of our Conference for the tasks which lie ahead--an assessment of its relationship to the Jewish community, as well as to our own Reform Jewish institutions."

#### 1965--Leon Feuer

- To reorganize the CCAR structure
- To reach out to College Youth
- To restructure Committee Reports
- To support HUC through a constant liaison
- To discourage intermarriage
- To denigrate neo-Orthodoxy
- To respond to Orthodox attacks
- To denigrate Jews practicing "Personal Encounter Dialogue" as a copy of neo-Orthodox Christians
- To combat poverty in America
- To support President's Conference to reduce overlap
- To support the US in protesting right wing dictatorships
- To fundraise for HUC scholarships
- To promote social justice and "Prophetic Judaism" to combat poverty
- To support the Synagogue Council
- To work with UAHC on Joint Commissions
- To promote the "Mission" concept and optimism

1966--Jacob Weinstein

- To oppose American military involvement in foreign affairs
- To hire an Assistant President for the CCAR
- To call for military chaplains
- To restructure CCAR dues structure
- To respond to "God is dead" philosophy
- To acquire formal board representation at HUC
- To work on Pension Plan
- To reemphasize "Prophetic Judaism" in Reform
- To publish a revised *Hagadah*
- To praise the Religious Action Center
- To promote social action in general
- To support Soviet Jewry
- To encourage unity amongst the three branches of Judaism through the Synagogue Council
- To synthesize liberal and conservative elements yet realize we'll get criticized by both sides
- To "inreach" to unaffiliated Jews

1967--Jacob Weinstein

- To call for military chaplains
- To support the "Conscientious Objector" status
- To revise the *Hagadah*
- To work on CCAR's relationship to HUC
- To support Israel's defense despite Vietnam stance
- To support Israel economically, with public relations and a peace-corps type of American group
- To study the Mixed Marriage problem
- To restructure the Pension Plan
- To work on the Placement Plan
- To set up joint commissions with UAHC
- To protest Vietnam conflict

1968--Levi Olan

- To consider stance on Euthanasia
- To encourage financial support for rabbis and the CCAR--*Im ein kemach ein Torah*
- To hope despite the chorus of the prophets of doom
- To support Israel against Arab propaganda
- To fight overtly antisemitic acts
- To reemphasize "Prophetic Judaism" a la Isaac Mayer Wise
- To work on Rabbi/Congregation relationships
- To combat racism
- To combat secularism
- To study American Jewish Congregational Life and HUC
- To provide Torah study for rabbis
- To protest Vietnam conflict

1969--Levi Olan

- To affirm concept of "Continuous Revelation"
- To demand responsibility from Reform Jews; Reform today has become all things to all people.
- To make interfaith relations a lower priority--they have been a "dismal failure"
- To offer Israel more than token support
- To express that "Minimal Standards" or a "Code" will not work
- To reawaken the will to live as believing Jews in the face of secular success
- To reevaluate Reform Judaism
- To admit that reforming the tradition no longer necessary ("Positive" Reform)
- To promote unity among all rabbis in America
- To seek unity on the Israel issue in the face of Arab propaganda



**1970—Roland Gittelsohn**

- To support HUC in Israel
- To informally set minimum standards for Reform Jews
- To affirm that Zionism has been part of Reform since Max Heller in 1908
- Self-Definition: Judaism has always been dynamic, has developed and grown from age to age. 2. Judaism and religion have always been inextricably intertwined. 3. Judaism has never been monolithic.

**1971—Roland Gittelsohn and David Polish**

- To condemn Americans who say American Jews can not criticize Israel
- To discipline congregations who are being unfair to the rabbis
- To restructure the CCAR
- To affirm the right to criticize Israel out of love
- To establish a Joint National Conciliation Commission
- To condemn "Leftist" anti-semitism
- To oppose officiating of mixed marriages reaffirming 1909 and 1947 stands
- To work on a Placement Plan
- To support the President's Conference
- To watch Rabbi/Congregation relations—our responsibility does not end by placing a man in a pulpit
- To emphasize proper rabbinic conduct
- To set up Rabbis for Rabbis
- To criticize the servility in denouncing the JDL in a letter to the President, despite that they are against JDL
- To revise the *Union Prayer Book*
- To support the World Jewish Congress

**1972—David Polish**

- To convene a "Conference of World Jewish Leaders"
- To come up with creative responses to tradition
- To take a position on the Forest Hills Housing controversy
- To put together guiding principles of Reform together with HUC and UAHC
- To clarify Reform's relationship to *Halacha*
- To affirm that Reform supports Israel and Zionism
- To come up with an Israel/Galut synthesis
- To study the quota system
- To emphasize "Survival Values" across denominational lines
- To clarify theological confusion
- To seek unity within Jewish people, to "abjure false separatism"
- To prioritize synagogue survival, accepting "alternative people" and bringing back Jews who have been active in non religious causes

**1973—David Polish**

- To democratize the CCAR
- To denounce corruption in government
- To work on the HUC/UAHC relationship
- To support Israel
- To restore the prestige of rabbis within the Jewish community
- To urge unity for *K'lal Yisrael*

**1974—Robert Kahn**

- To denounce discrimination
- To make Education a priority
- To support Israel
- To provide more unified leadership for Reform Judaism
- To support Liberal Judaism in Israel
- To provide pastoral counseling training
- To emphasize the poverty problem
- To glorify the Rabbi as a model scholar, priest, pastor, prophet, and spokesman
- To institutionalize continuing rabbinic education
- To seek unity within Jewish people as a whole



To clarify the principle of unity--"What we need to look toward, even as we experiment with varieties of religious experience, is the redevelopment of a movement, a movement with a defined philosophy, a cohesive program, with norms and commitments."

#### 1975--Robert Kahn

To affirm American democracy's Jewish roots in spite of Viet Nam and Watergate

To democratize the CCAR

To "cool down" inflammatory remarks

To do something about the problem of disunity in Reform

To respond to the economic crisis of stagflation

To emphasize the emotional dimension of religion

To promote high ethics in the rabbinate

To emphasize the ethnic dimension of religion

To support HUC and UAHC

To support Israel

To synthesize the Israel/Galut relationship

To take a we don't hate them even though they hate us approach to the Orthodox with "Law of Return"

To reassess the Placement Program

To publish *Union Hagadah* and *Gates of Prayer*

To support continuing rabbinic education

To encourage regional rabbinic activity

Self-definition: Reform Judaism is an interpretation of the Jewish faith. 1. Belief in God means there is order in the universe. 2. Divine image means spiritual qualities. 3. God gave us Torah means morality is not just the invention of man.

#### 1976--Arthur Lelyveld

To adopt the "Centenary Perspective"

To do a "Community Structure" study

To use *Derech Eretz* in regard to *Kashrut* and officiating marriages with priests

To promote the idea of "diversity within unity"

To promote friendships with rabbis in other movements

To hope

To encourage lay leader training for synagogues

To emphasize that *Mitzvah* is a Divine demand

To revise the Pension Plan

To work on the Placement Plan

To emphasize Prophetic Judaism in social action

To make a decision about RA members who wish to join CCAR

To encourage regionalization for continuing rabbinic education

To criticize self-hating Jewish Israel critics

To encourage Synagogue/Federation partnerships

#### 1977--Arthur Lelyveld

To express concerns over Chabad's missionary activity and non-acceptance of Reform

To lobby US government to support Israel

To emphasize that if we trade land for peace that it is our land as stated in the Balfour Declaration

To support Liberal Judaism in Israel

To emphasize "Divine Mitzvot"

To review the Placement Plan

To welcome RA members who have joined the CCAR

To push for Reform presence in the World Zionist Organization

To strengthen Reform

To cooperate with HUC and the UAHC

To encourage Reform congregations to support the Synagogue Council of America

Self-definition: "But our form of Judaism is not an inferior brand of Judaism. We are not lapsed Orthodox Jews nor are we the sponsors of every man doing what is right in his own eyes. We are the inheritors of that dynamism that was normative in the Talmudic age."

**1978--Ely Pilchik**

- To announce the name switch of the *CCAR Journal* to *The Journal of Reform Judaism*
- To promote Conservative and Reform Judaism sticking together on Israel issues
- To denigrate the idea that the Federations are relegating the Synagogue to something insignificant
- To acknowledge the difficulties of inflation
- To encourage interfaith relations with Islam, especially Egypt
- To fight to keep the "Law of Return" liberal
- To support Liberal Judaism in Israel
- To work for nuclear disarmament
- To continue to improve the Pension Plan
- To continue to improve the Placement Plan
- To continue to improve Rabbi/Congregation relations
- To study and clarify Reform theology
- Self-definition: Judaism, in a liberal spirit, emphasizes the essential goodness of the human being and it imposes upon us the yoke. Tikkun olam, etc.

**1979--Ely Pilchik**

- To show concern for the environment
- To infuse God into science
- To search for meaning in the Holocaust
- To show liberal zealotness
- To respond to Orthodox attacks
- To synthesize "Particularism" and "Universalism"

**1980--Jerome Malino**

- To deal with the problem of the aloneness of rabbis
- To affirm that criticizing Israel is OK
- To support Liberal Judaism in Israel
- To deal with problems of rabbinic compensation, security, etc.
- To prioritize continuing rabbinic education
- To deal with problems in the rabbi's status
- To emphasize "Social Justice" in general
- To emphasize that success should not be judged by secular measures--small is fine in terms of congregation
- To improve placement for women in the rabbinate
- To support the World Union for Progressive Judaism

**1981--Jerome Malino**

- To affirm that criticizing Israel is OK
- To reemphasize the "Mission" of the Jewish people
- To ask the Orthodox to stop hating us and encourage ourselves not to hate them
- To call for unity within the Jewish people
- Self-definition: Faith and folk, an indissoluble bond, yet each reflecting a vitality all its own. There is no Judaism without Jews, no Jews without Judaism. The indissoluble bond between faith and folk confounds the secularists...

**1982--Herman Schaalman**

- To criticize those who are anti-Orthodox and who think *K'lal Yisrael* is not important
- To emphasize "Covenant Theology"
- To emphasize a dynamic and historical Halacha
- To clarify the Israel/Galut relationship
- To emphasize the concept of "Mutual Revelation;" "*Matan Torah*" is matched by "*Kabbalat Torah*"
- To affirm "neo-Reform" articulated in the 1937 Columbus platform towards total acceptance of the corporate, collective nature of Judaism
- To ask the Orthodox to stop attacking Reform
- To affirm that the Torah is divinely inspired

**1983--Herman Schaalman**

- To emphasize the concept of "*Am Yisrael*"

- To emphasize "Covenant Theology"
- To ask Israel to act morally
- To affirm that Israel must be a Jewish state
- To call for nuclear disarmament
- To emphasize that Rabbis are unique, different than counselors
- To ask rabbis to use "*Kedusha*" and "*Kehila*," not contracts and employees
- To call for unity among Jewish people; Israel's actions affect us

#### **1984--Gunther Plaut**

- To drop apologetics and insecurities
- To encourage rabbis to set aside time for themselves to study
- To stress the concept of "*Tikkun Olam*"

#### **1985--Gunther Plaut**

- To stress that "Autonomy" is not a Divine commandment
- To encourage "Home Observance" even over attendance at Friday night services
- To emphasize "*Mitzvah*" as the "crucible of Judaism" and the core of concern of Reform as well
- To emphasize the Synagogue as house of learning
- To emphasize the concept of "Tradition"

#### **1986--Jack Stern**

- To "Inreach" uninvolved Jews
- To discourage intermarriage
- To reemphasize the concept of "Mission"
- To attack the Orthodox for demanding that its own conversion become the law of Israel
- To "walk around the differences" with the Orthodox rather than try to resolve them.
- To "outreach" to non Jews in our synagogues
- To support "Patrilineal Descent" in the face of attacks

#### **1987--Jack Stern**

- To drum up fundraising for the CCAR from congregations
- To pressure congregants not to hire and fire based on stance on intermarriage officiating
- To support Liberal Judaism in Israel
- To make recruiting rabbis is our responsibility
- To continue to improve Rabbi/Congregation relations
- To recruit talented people in our synagogues to do work not only in non-religious Jewish causes
- To congratulate ourselves on the "K'lal Yisrael Statement of Unity," a "Covenant of Fate" rather than a "Covenant of Faith" read by 3800 rabbis in 2500 synagogues across movement

#### **1988--Eugene Lipmann**

- To use *Derech Eretz* in our relationship with the the Orthodox; don't hate them though they hate us
- To support Liberal Judaism in Israel
- To promote peace to everyone, including Arabs and Orthodox

#### **1989--Eugene Lipmann**

- To put limitations on "Autonomy"
- To uphold the principle of the separation of Church and State
- To resist various pressures from congregants to take "unrabbinic" stands
- To emphasize religious education
- To discuss the issue of intermarriage officiating
- To support using the word Zionist in connection with Israel support
- To come to resolution on the status of Non-Jews in the synagogue
- To cooperate with other groups such as the Synagogue Council, interfaith groups, etc.
- To discuss the problem of job satisfaction for rabbis
- To support the World Union for Progressive Judaism
- To support NFTY

**1990--Samuel Karff**

- To set up "Boundary Mitzvot" while rejecting "the implication that the more closely you adhere to the *Shulchan Aruch* list of do's and don'ts, the more authentic is your observance"
- To decide on the question of homosexuality and the rabbinate
- To come to a synthesis between "*Lehre*" and "*Leben*"
- To encourage rabbi behavior to be "*Kadosh*"
- To justify reforms made for human dignity

**1991--Samuel Karff**

- To discuss the issue of criticizing and supporting Israel
- To offer Israel theological support
- To call for financial support for Liberal Judaism in Israel
- To represent Judaism to non-Jews, a modern "Mission" of Israel

**1992--Walter Jacob**

- To come up with a "Guide" for all aspects of Reform Jewish life
- To set up a system of "*Mitzvot*"
- To reemphasize "Prophetic Judaism"

**1993--Walter Jacob**

- To encourage longer terms for synagogue board members
- To take a firm stand on the question of the non-Jew in synagogue
- To promote the ideal of the traditional Jewish family
- To clarify the theology and ideology of the Israeli/Diaspora relationship
- To strengthen Liberal Judaism abroad

# **CHAPTER 2**

# **SELF-DEFINITION**

## CHAPTER 2

# SELF-DEFINITION

"What is Judaism" and "what is Reform Judaism" are questions that have obsessed Reform Judaism's leadership throughout the years, particularly the rabbis of the CCAR. This obsession makes it necessary to devote an entire chapter to this one goal. Michael Meyer states that it is most helpful to understand the Reform movement

in terms of dynamic tensions created by specific sets of polarities. Perhaps the most basic set for the Reform movement involves its self-definition: Is the movement wholly continuous with Jewish tradition, a mere variant of earlier forms, or does it constitute a sharp break with the past, a radically new configuration?<sup>5</sup>

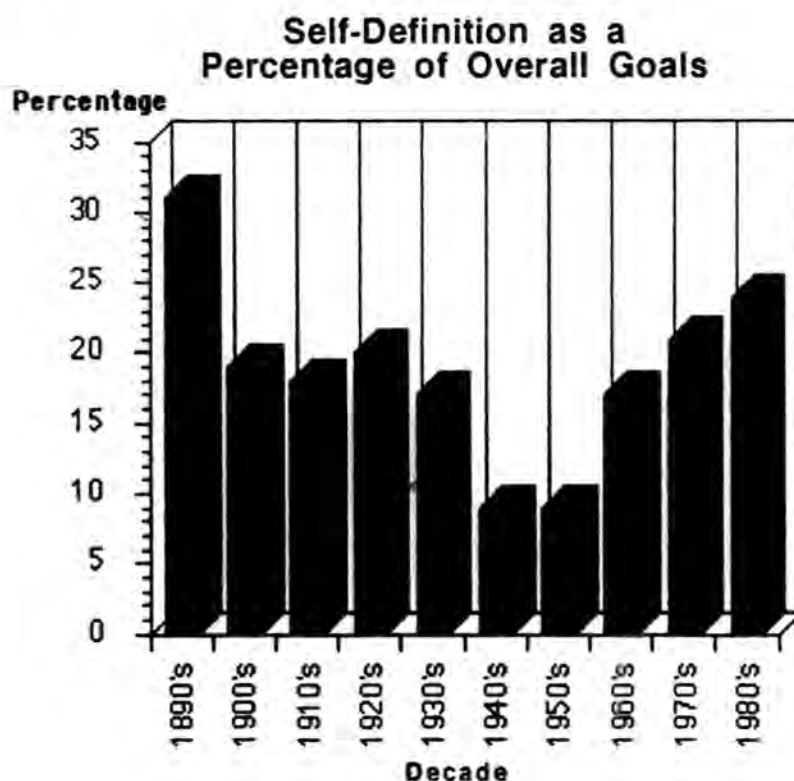
Meyer also counterpoises authority versus individual freedom and universalism versus particularism when trying to understand the "essence of Reform Judaism."

The Reform movement has tried to formulate its "essence" or self-definition three times, with the Pittsburgh Platform in 1885, the Columbus Platform in 1937 and the Centenary Perspective in San Francisco in 1976. Each of these documents represents a formal attempt at a specific time to pinpoint the definition and scope of Reform Judaism. The self-definitions presented in the platforms are necessarily broad in order to take into account the diversity of Reform's self-definitions. Even taking the broad structure into account, however, these documents merely scratch the surface of Reform Judaism's self-definition. Indeed, the range and sheer number of definitions for both Judaism in general and Reform Judaism in particular are even more enormous than the platforms might indicate.

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<sup>5</sup> Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 1988, p.ix.

A look at the actual number of times the goal of self-definition appeared in the yearly addresses makes this phenomenon salient. Some of these goals provide the actual definition (e.g. Judaism is a "mission" religion), some of the goals simply state the need for self-definition (e.g. Reform Judaism needs to systematize its theology), and some of the goals have more than just self-definition as their purpose (for instance, the statement "Judaism is a religion and not a state" serves the dual purpose of both attacking Zionism and providing a self-definition). The number of goals devoted to self-definition shows how important this goal truly was and is to the CCAR Presidents, as well as how this importance has changed over time. The following chart by decade shows the percentage of goals which had self-definition as the primary purpose.





The actual percentage numbers are listed below.

<b>SELF-DEFINITION PERCENTAGE</b>	
<b>Year</b>	<b>% of Total Goals</b>
1890-1900	31%
1901-1910	19%
1911-1920	18%
1921-1930	20%
1931-1940	17%
1941-1950	9%
1951-1960	9%
1961-1970	17%
1971-1980	21%
1981-1990	24%

Immediately this chart shows an inverted bell shaped curve. Self-definition occupied the most significant attention during the earliest years of the CCAR. This makes sense, considering that the rabbis had a strong need to define their own authority at the beginning of their venture. The defining of Reform Judaism was in itself a way for the rabbis to establish this authority.

The percentage leveled off for the next four decades but maintained a fairly high percentage (ranging from 17 to 20%) until the 1940's and 1950's, when the level dropped down to only 9%. This trend appears to be driven by both internal and external factors. One possibility for the relatively low percentage in the 1940's and 1950's was the formulation of the Columbus Platform in 1937. This document may have quelled the need for the rabbis to pay as much attention to self-definition as they had done in previous years. In the decades preceding the Columbus Platform the percentages remained relatively high. The rabbis and the laypeople of this time were clamoring for a new definition of Reform Judaism, one that would embrace more of what can be called "Neoreform" elements. Perhaps the rabbis maintained a relative level of satisfaction after 1937 with the resulting compromise definition and therefore debated it less. On

the other hand, such a drop-off did not occur immediately after the Pittsburgh Platform in 1885 nor the Centenary Perspective in 1976. Therefore, it is not clear that the Columbus Platform provided the reason for the 9% level in the 1940's and 1950's.

I believe external factors provide a better explanation. Externally, the rabbis were forced to respond to the situation thrust upon them by both World War II and the establishment of the State of Israel. Regarding World War II the military needed chaplains, World Jewry needed financial help and American Jewry needed comfort. The CCAR had little choice but to make World War II a priority. Regarding Israel the CCAR needed to clarify its position, for only once their views were clarified could they provide the political muscle and emotional support the fledgling state needed. Together these two issues occupied an extraordinary amount of attention, so issues like self-definition took a back seat. This is not to say that external issues in other decades were unimportant to the rabbis, but these two specific issues seemed to occupy more attention in the speeches in these two decades than any other external factors did in any other decade.

The percentage increased once again in the 1960's and has continued to increase gradually since then. The 24% in the 1980's represents the highest percentage since the first decade of the CCAR's existence. Apparently the Reform movement's need for a self-definition is only getting greater, mirroring the confusion of American culture as we approach the 21st century. The overall pattern for the CCAR has gone from uncertainty at the beginning of the century to relative certainty in the middle to a rise in uncertainty at the end. That has been the general trend of the amount of times self-definition has been mentioned as a goal by the presidents of the CCAR. It is time now to move beyond these general

historical trends to the specific self-definitions provided by the rabbis on a decade by decade basis.

### The 1890's

The first Conference and its leader, Isaac Mayer Wise, were charged with two important duties: (1) deciding upon the Conference's scope and definition and (2) establishing the authority of the Conference to promote this point-of-view. A third task, systematizing Reform Jewish doctrines, became the hot topic near the end of the decade. For Wise pursuing these first two duties meant letting go of some of his earlier objectives. Originally, the course of Reform was not Isaac Mayer Wise's basic concern. Rather, "he was determined above all else to establish a strong and united Judaism in America."<sup>6</sup> Thirty-five years earlier at the Cleveland Conference, Wise attempted to unify the diverse elements of American Jewry, trying at once to appease the traditional elements led by Isaac Leeser and the more radical elements led by David Einhorn. The Conference made some statements and decisions but did not create a lasting, unified body. The self-definition of the Cleveland Conference could not satisfy enough people enough of the time.

The first meeting of the CCAR, in the twilight of Wise's career, was not burdened with the same amount of divisiveness. In fact the CCAR had an advantage in this task that the other fledgling American Jewish institutions did not have, as Meyer points out. That advantage is that "unlike the UAHC and HUC, the CCAR was a Reform institution from the start."<sup>7</sup> The Pittsburgh Platform in 1885 and the "Treifa Banquet" in 1883

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 240.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 276.

had already divided American Judaism into two main camps, Reform and Traditional. Unlike at the Cleveland Conference in 1855, Isaac Mayer Wise did not have the same need to appease in Cincinnati.

What he did need to do was articulate the new-found spirit of the Conference, the new self-definition of Reform Judaism. This definition would encompass two aspects--universalism and the Jewish "mission."

We are furthermore agreed, I trust, that the spirit of Judaism, made intelligible to us in its literary monuments and its historical revelations, is the essence of universal religion...<sup>8</sup>

It was the mission of Judaism from its inception to become at the fulness [sic] of time the religion of the human family. Its mission is the conversion and fraternization of the human family...<sup>9</sup>

Judaism was to be a universal and missionary religion. This was to be the kind of Judaism which the CCAR would promote.

Wise repeated the message that Judaism is a "missionary religion" in 1895, when he asserted that

the Mission doctrine remains as sound as ever. Israel is a missionary people, Judaism is a missionary religion, without compromises.<sup>10</sup>

Wise also defined Reform Judaism as "Historical Judaism," a term he continued to use in his speeches throughout the decade and which he defined specifically in 1892.

Therefore this Central Conference at once, without apology and artificial diplomacy, unfurled the banner of historical Judaism as its standard and insignia, to wave over the hosts of Israel. Historical Judaism is a departure from Kabbalistic mysticism and rabbinical legalism.<sup>11</sup>

He reaffirmed this position in 1896 and used the phrase throughout most of his speeches. Essentially, the self-definition propagated by Wise during the 1890's can be summed up as universalistic, missionary and historical.

<sup>8</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1890, p.15.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1895, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1892, p. 4.

However, defining Reform Judaism was not enough. The Conference also felt the need to establish a structure wherein this definition of Judaism could be promoted. The Conference itself was to be that structure.

All reforms ought to go into practice on the authority of the Conference, not only to protect the individual rabbi, but to protect Judaism against presumptuous innovations and the precipitations of rash and inconsiderate men.<sup>12</sup>

Not only did the CCAR (Wise in particular) attempt to define Reform Judaism, but they tried to declare for themselves the means with which to do the defining. Wise wanted significant changes made by congregations to be approved by the CCAR. In essence he hoped for unified worship, practice and ideology. This hope was never realized, though, as he underestimated the value of autonomy to the congregations.

The remainder of the decade saw what Eugene Lipman called "Authority vs. Pluralism"<sup>13</sup> play itself out through debates on two specific issues. As Meyer again points out, "no issue so evenly divided the CCAR as the related matters of creed and synod."<sup>14</sup> Wise mentioned the need to systematize Reform doctrines several times throughout the decade. He began this drive for Reform systematization in 1893 when he mentioned the need to have "a systematic theology of Judaism, satisfactory at least to this entire body"<sup>15</sup> before anything else could be done. In 1895 and 1896 he discussed the need for the Reform movement to decide on its relationship to halacha. In 1897 and 1898 he made especial mention of the need for the systematization to become formalized.

We are now at the fixing of the doctrines, which is most necessary for the future of Judaism in the age of criticism and skeptical tendencies. We open

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>13</sup> Eugene J. Lipman, "Authority vs. Pluralism" in *Tanu Rabbanan: Our Rabbis Taught.*, p. 39.

<sup>14</sup> Meyer, p. 278.

<sup>15</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1893, p. 17.



this session with a series of papers leading in that direction to clear and crystallize the doctrines of Judaism.<sup>16</sup>

In 1898 he made his intention even more clear.

Permit me to reiterate my old problem, to lay before the world a clear and comprehensive statement of the principles of Judaism--call them dogmas, principles, doctrines, precepts, or by any other name--but let the world know clearly and distinctly what is the substance of Judaism...But let us no longer stand before the world as a denomination without principles... If we are teachers of Israel as we claim to be; if we are the only representative body of American Judaism, let us define it for him and for the world, "And let not the congregation of Israel be like sheep that have no pastor."<sup>17</sup>

Naturally, the self-definition in the first decade of the CCAR's existence was dominated by its founder, Isaac Mayer Wise. Wise continued to work for this systematization until the very end of his life. If he could not achieve unity within American Judaism as a whole, at least he would strive for unity within Reform Judaism. Unfortunately for Wise, this goal was never achieved either. The debate, however, did continue and was even expanded when the issue of synod came into the forefront during the next decade.

### The 1900's

The 1900's began with a continuation of the 1890's stress on the "mission" of the Jewish people, "historical Judaism" and American Judaism. The need for systematizing Reform doctrine also remained and was expanded with the debate over having a permanent synod. By the second half of the decade, the debate over self-definition centered around responding to new trends in Judaism--Reconstructionism, Judaism as a "peoplehood" and the growing numbers of Orthodox brought over by waves of Eastern European immigration.

<sup>16</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1897, p.xii.

<sup>17</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1898, p.16.

Joseph Silverman, the first Conference President after Wise's death, continued Wise's stress on "historical Judaism" and "mission" in his 1901 address. "We stand always upon historic Judaism," he said, "not breaking abruptly with the past."<sup>18</sup> The mission concept he took even further, calling upon the Jewish community to consider active proselytizing to "bring our doctrines more readily to the attention of a world that is open to conviction."<sup>19</sup> In 1902, he reaffirmed the value of "American Judaism," partly in response to the Orthodox immigration trends and partly as a response to Zionism.

In no uncertain tones let us proclaim to the world in general, and to our European brethren in particular, the glorious tidings that, far from experiencing an impending crisis, American Judaism is giving evidence of internal strength and of a spiritual growth which the old world can hardly duplicate.<sup>20</sup>

In that same 1902 speech he proposed the idea of a formal synod. At that point it seemed as though the general agreement on self-definition could extend to a formal decision-making process. Silverman reasoned that the uniformity achieved in liturgy with the success of the Union Prayer Book could be extended to issues of proselytism, intermarriage, cremation, funeral customs, observances of religious rites, the dietary laws and more.

It seems to me also advisable that this Conference should place itself in touch with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in order to devise some plan by which its deliberations may receive proper recognition from congregations and its decisions be regarded as authoritative. In the absence of a Synod or Sanhedrin, the Conference ought, in a measure, to be that central body whose duty it shall be to give a decisive interpretation of Jewish law and practice, and determine what united course of action congregations shall adopt.<sup>21</sup>

He expanded his proposal of making the CCAR be the Synod to the creation of a separate Synod the following year.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1901, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1902, p.33.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p.37.



The Conference has thus far been only a literary and deliberative body whose influence has only been suggestive and advisory. For many years we have felt this weakness which has been recognized by all leaders of our times and by the zealous rabbis of former generations. Every great period of ancient Israel had its Sanhedrin or Synod...We feel the need of such an authoritative ecclesiastical body in Judaism today.<sup>22</sup>

The debate over a Synod was continued by Silverman's successor, Joseph Krauskopf, in 1904 and 1905. It is clear from his remarks in 1905 that the idea of a Synod was under strong attack.

A considerable number oppose the proposed Synod because of their misunderstanding of the purpose which it is to serve. Its existence, it is claimed, would fetter the independence of the Rabbi, would put an end to the religious autonomy of the congregation, would reintroduce the ban, and force reform and progress back to the thralldom of the Dark Ages.

But I fear no failure, Dr. Wise's life's hope...will be realized, probably at this Conference, notwithstanding all that has been published and said and agitated against it. Israel is in need of a central authoritative body. They who know anything of the loyal and intelligent of our people know that their advocacy of a Synod is the expression of their desire to conserve their ancient heritage.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the strong language and the appeal to the memory of Isaac Mayer Wise, the initiative was never realized. The leadership of the opposition, Kaufmann Kohler, had as powerful a voice as the CCAR President, and his arguments helped bring it down to defeat.<sup>24</sup> The only other mention the Synod ever received was by HG Enelow 1928,<sup>25</sup> and he brought it up strictly as a matter of context for his other ideas. The CCAR's attempts at authority would have to turn to other avenues.

Halfway through the decade, in 1906, the debate over self-definition began to explore new territory. Events within the Jewish community led the rabbis of the CCAR to assert their stand that Judaism was primarily a

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1903, pp. 26-27.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph Krauskopf, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1905, p. 177-181.

<sup>24</sup> Meyer, p. 278.

<sup>25</sup> Beryl Levy, *Reform Judaism in America*, 1933, pp. 109-131.

religion and that the synagogue was the most important institution in Jewish life. Joseph Stolz declared in 1906:

The Jew is pre-eminently the exponent of a religion...it is the congregation which is the nurturing place, the platform, the school, the witness, the outward symbol of Judaism, his representative institution. The social club, the fraternal society, the charitable association, the Zionist gate, the trade-union may each contribute to the welfare of the Jewish people and may each attract much of their consecrated service and devotion; yet the congregation is the central sun from which light radiates to all of these...<sup>26</sup>

Stolz likewise responded to the new fact that the Eastern European immigration waves had made Reform Judaism the minority in the United States. Stolz called not only for self-definition for Reform Judaism, but also for self-criticism.

It is nevertheless wise for us to face the stern fact that we are now in the minority, even in this country; that we have been put on the defensive; and that, in the interest of the liberal interpretation of our religion...it is incumbent upon us to listen to and ponder over any criticism of our principles or methods that means to be fair, honest, sympathetic and reasonable...<sup>27</sup>

He did not attack the Orthodox or the new expressions of Judaism; instead he asked why these things were succeeding. What was wrong with Reform that had made these other expressions so successful? He then actually did some criticizing himself, speaking out against Reform sectarianism.

Reform is not our religion, it is only an interpretation thereof. Reform is not a culmination, it is a movement. And whenever it pretends to be the finality, it ceases to be Reform.<sup>28</sup>

He criticized Reform for having its own element of Orthodoxy and actually encouraged ceremony and home observance, an almost unbelievable point-of-view considering the Pittsburgh Platform's statement that "only the moral laws were binding." In a sense this self-criticism was a precursor of

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Stolz, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1906, pp. 230-231.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Stolz, *CCAR Yearbok*, 1907, p.162.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 164-165.

"Neoreform" and the new direction Reform would take in the decades following.

Stolz's views were also a precursor of the Neoreform versus Classical Reform debate, because his successor, David Philipson, turned these views around 180 degrees with a reemphasis of the Jewish "mission." He calls the glorifying of Yiddish, the political rehabilitation of the Jewish State, Jewish art and similar issues "such fads" which "will all pass as interesting incidents in the strange medley of this period of transition."<sup>29</sup> The real essence of Reform, according to Philipson, was still the Jewish "mission."

And that which shall remain will be the great fundamental ideal of the mission of the Jews (I fear not to use this phrase, although it has become fashionable in certain quarters of late to gibe at it) as a people of religion and of Judaism as a religious force through all the world.<sup>30</sup>

Philipson's message continued at the end of the decade with his successor, Max Heller, who called for the Reform movement to drop apologetics, to "cease to explain the reasons for its existence, or to set forth the proofs of its usefulness."<sup>31</sup> He also made a point to celebrate the centennial birthdays of the German Reformers Ludwig Phillipson, Leopold Stein and Leopold Loew, continuing to glorify classical Reform Judaism. However, as the next decade approached, it was clear that this conception of Judaism no longer carried a unanimous voice in the CCAR. Contemporary Reform Jews tend to believe that the early American Reformers spoke with one accord; the speeches of the Presidents of the CCAR indicate otherwise.

To sum up, the decade began with a certain unity of Judaism as a "mission" and as an "historical religion," failed to achieve the next step of

<sup>29</sup> David Philipson, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1908, p. 146.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Max Heller, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1910, p. 159.

unity, a Synod, in the middle, and ended by beginning the Classical Reform versus Neoreform debate (though these terms were not yet being used). This informal debate would continue to rage for the next several decades, dominating the issue of self-definition until the Columbus Platform in 1937, and to some extent, all the way to the present day.

### The 1910's through the 1930's.

The next three decades saw a continuance of the issues presented in the 1900's, and although they did not fall into a neat order, there were essentially four issues which dominated the general subject of self-definition: (1) stressing the religious aspect of Judaism, which was in part a reaction to the growth of "secular Judaism," (2) responding specifically to Reconstructionism and Zionism, (3) deciding on whether the Reform movement would go the direction of "Classical Reform" or "Neoreform," and (4) systematizing Reform doctrines.

This first theme, stressing the religious aspect of Judaism, appears in over half of the speeches (eighteen out of the thirty) between 1911-1940. This stress took several different tacks, particularly in the 1910's. For instance, Max Heller, in 1911, stressed that "religion is the *raison d'être* of the Jew,"<sup>32</sup> and that it was only as representatives of a religion that Jews become involved in social issues. Moses Gries used the theme in response to World War I.

...the ideal is mocked with laughter, dragged through the mire and drenched with human blood. We believe in the reality of Religion. We shall not cease to labor to reunite Life with Religion, that once again Religion may inspire and consecrate human feeling and thought and conduct.<sup>33</sup>

William Rosenau used it in his call for new methods to evaluate rabbis:

<sup>32</sup> Max Heller, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1911, p. 133.

<sup>33</sup> Moses Gries, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1915, p.153.

not in the number of lectures he delivers, the classes he conducts and the clubs he forms, but in the religious and Jewish uplift for which he is responsible by his personal touch.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the different applications used, all of them were for the purpose of emphasizing that Judaism was primarily and exclusively a religion.

In the twenties and thirties the assertion of "Judaism as a religion" appeared to be more specifically a reaction to secular Judaism and Reconstructionism. Meyer characterizes this period as one in which the Reform synagogue was on the defensive.

Jewish community centers proliferated, and in city after city Jewish Federations came into existence, organizing charitable activities and providing prestigious opportunities for local Jewish leadership. The persistent question was therefore how to stem the synagogue's continuing drift toward the periphery.<sup>35</sup>

This growing problem was manifest in the speeches. William Rosenau, in 1921, stressed that this new secular Judaism was useful only if it led to the strengthening of religious spirit.

Unless the entertainment and the dance and the gymnasium facilities which have latterly become a part of the equipment of so many of our synagogues succeed in awakening in the youth and the adults of the community a new and hearty interest in the activities of the synagogue that are essentially religious, they serve a small purpose.<sup>36</sup>

Similar expressions continued in several of the speeches throughout the next two decades. Typical of this kind of thinking were the words of HG Enelow, in 1929:

One of the unmistakable marks of Jewish life in recent years, has been the attempt to dissociate the Jew from the Jewish religion and to secularize Judaism.

As far as I am concerned, we have no task more important than the combating of this view, which not only misrepresents Jewish history, but must also serve to confuse the Jewish mind, to vulgarize Jewish life, and to undermine the

<sup>34</sup> William Rosenau, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1917, p. 201.

<sup>35</sup> Meyer, p. 303-304

<sup>36</sup> William Rosenau, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1921, p. 109.



Jewish future.<sup>37</sup>

In this remark, one can see the heavy influence JCC's, federations, etc. were bringing to bear on the American Jewish community.

The reactions to secularized Judaism continued throughout these three decades. The above quotations are just small examples of these reactions. The problem of the deemphasis of the religious aspect of Judaism became so severe that Rabbi Abraham Simon, the 1923-25 President of the CCAR helped create the Synagogue Council of America in 1926, bringing together Reform, Conservative and Orthodox Jews committed to keeping the synagogue central to Jewish life. By the end of the thirties Max Currick specifically called on the rabbis of the CCAR to help publicize the Synagog Council as well as work more closely with the Orthodox and Conservative movements to help realize the goal of making religion the primary purpose of Judaism.<sup>38</sup>

Jewish secularism was not the only movement which forced responses from the CCAR Presidents. Reconstructionism and Zionism also required attention from these rabbis. At first, a few of the CCAR Presidents attempted to adapt aspects of Reconstructionist thought and practice to the Reform movement. Specifically, William Rosenau, in 1916, suggested a new approach to looking at the synagogue:

Synagogs, now barring their doors from the end of one Sabbath to the beginning of another, shall once more have to be open every day for worship, instruction and social reunion. The Community Houses, which are springing up in increasing numbers in connection with synagogs, will, among other results, also achieve this.<sup>39</sup>

In effect, Rosenau was asking the CCAR to broaden their view of synagogues. He was asking the Jewish community to consider the synagogue as a center

<sup>37</sup> HG Enelow, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1929, p. 165.

<sup>38</sup> Max Currick, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1939, p. 248.

<sup>39</sup> William Rosenau, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1916, p. 180.

of Jewish life, a center of Jewish civilization, an idea remarkably similar to that of Mordecai Kaplan.<sup>40</sup> Louis Grossman went even further in 1919. He not only adapted aspects of the Reconstructionist program--he actually adopted the Reconstructionist language.

Anyway, we are facing a condition today which imperils the unity of the Communal synagogue already assaulted insidiously by the modernist environment. We should trace the causes of the disintegration as a first step in the Re-form. The *Reconstruction* (italics mine) demands that the fraternal, charitable and educational agencies return to the synagogue so that they may jointly cultivate the Jewish spirit within it.<sup>41</sup>

Grossman used what to many was a forbidden word. Earlier in the same speech Rosenau talked about "constructive" reform and how Reform Judaism must "produce new life,"<sup>42</sup> phrases which sound strikingly Reconstructionist. To be fair to Grossman, it must be pointed out that he discussed the "mission" of Israel and social justice in that speech as well, but it was clear that Reconstructionist elements were creeping into Reform.

By the thirties, however, some Reform rabbis were making it clear that as a whole, the Reconstructionist movement was way off the mark for Reform Jews. Samuel Goldensen, in 1935, put it this way:

Instead of being regarded and accepted as a religion, we are now asked to believe that Judaism is primarily a civilization.<sup>43</sup>

To me, it seems that what the world needs is not only religion, but specifically the kind of religion which Judaism has emphasized throughout the ages. If there is any one service that we Rabbis can render to Jewry and to the world at large, at a time in which both are in the greatest need, it is to affirm once more the spiritual basis of life and to emphasize with all our might God and His Righteousness.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, the debate over Zionism had an influence on the self-definition of Reform. The Classical Reformers saw Zionism as a secularly

<sup>40</sup> Reconstructionism, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

<sup>41</sup> Louis Grossman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1919, p. 128.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 113.

<sup>43</sup> Samuel Goldensen, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1935, p. 135.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 137-138.



based movement, a misunderstanding of Israel's mission. To them, Judaism, as mentioned earlier, was first and foremost a religion. As will be discussed later, the CCAR attempted to wean itself away from a position of anti-Zionism, but most in the CCAR wanted to make it clear that they did not support its secular aspects either. HG Enelow summed this position up clearly in 1929.

What Reform Judaism, however, could not accept was what has now come to be labeled as "the ideology" of the new Palestinianism. It could not accept the representation of the Jews of today as a separate nation whose proper homeland is Palestine.<sup>45</sup>

The rabbis of the CCAR were divided by this time in their views on Zionism. They were unanimous, however, in their assertion that Judaism should not be defined by the Zionist movement.

The rabbis were likewise unanimous in their assessment that there were problems in Reform Judaism. Reform Judaism was begging for a new self-definition. The key debate was over which direction the Reform movement should move, reemphasizing prophetic, classical Reform Judaism or moving on toward the uncertainties of Neoreform. The polarity in these two positions was summed up well by 1961 President Bernard Bamberger, though the following quotation comes from an article he contributed to the *CCAR Journal* and not from one of his Presidential Addresses:

There have been two divergent trends within Reform Judaism. One has put its stress on the noun Judaism, the other on the adjective Reform. The first seeks to demonstrate and to maintain the continuity of Reform with the Jewish past, the second sees Reform as a revolutionary break with the past.<sup>46</sup>

For the purposes of this study "Neoreform" will be defined as that which emphasizes the ritual, mystical, halachic and particularistic aspects of

<sup>45</sup> HG Enelow, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1929, p. 170.

<sup>46</sup> Bernard Bamberger, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Reform Judaism" in the *CCAR Journal*, no. 52, p. 22.

Judaism as opposed to the universal, ethical aspects of the "Jewish Mission" and Prophetic Judaism.

The first hint of a Neoreform concept was in 1907 by the aforementioned Joseph Stolz, who criticized the Reform movement for being "sectarian" and encouraged the use of more rituals. A more specific and direct mention was made by Samuel Schulman in 1912, when he mentioned the "deepening Jewish sentiment in American Reform congregations."<sup>47</sup> As an example he cited the fact that even one of the most radical congregations in the land put the Torah and the Ark back into the sanctuary. He also stressed the use of the Hebrew language and cooperating with the Orthodox. He even went so far as to talk about the mystical value of Judaism, a statement which would have been considered heretical fifteen years earlier.

We ought to realize why some of our people have been led astray. We ought to insist upon the emotional and mystic value of Judaism. The Synagogue was always many-sided. It had a complete message for the many-sided needs of human nature...And it always performed the mystic function, inasmuch as it brought God into life and made man feel the divine significance of daily living.<sup>48</sup>

This statement went directly against the Pittsburgh Platform's assertion that Reform Jews "reject all [ceremonies] such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization."<sup>49</sup> In 1913, he responded to would-be critics:

We must become conscious of the fact that in the phrase "Reform Judaism," Judaism is the greater thing and Reform the lesser.

To limit Judaism exclusively to Prophetism is as much to develop it one-sidedly as to limit it to ceremonialism.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Samuel Schulman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1912, p. 245.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>49</sup> "Pittsburgh Platform," 1885. See Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p.388.

<sup>50</sup> Samuel Schulman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1913, p. 203, 205.

It should be pointed out that this same speech by Schulman also mentioned the "triumph of Reform principles," the insistence upon using the term "American Judaism," social justice in general and the possibility for rabbis to arbitrate between labor and management. All these concepts fit in well with a Classical Reform program. Schulman's mentioning of Neoreform elements was hardly a call for revolution. Nevertheless, he did help to plant seeds of Neoreform which would become ever more prominent in later decades.

Louis Grossman's call for a "reconstruction" of the synagogue in 1918 and 1919 could also be viewed as a call for "Neoreform" rather than "Reconstructionism." He pointed out that the "lines of demarcation between reform and orthodoxy are nowadays not so tightly drawn,"<sup>51</sup> indicating that he was observing a trend rather than attempting to shift the view of Reform Rabbis. In 1919 he actually did call for "positive" or "constructive" reform.

To crowd out the residuals of orthodox belief, to remove what had become aborted and to substitute for them what is truthful and genuine and living, to de-orientalize the Jew and to relieve the processes of Americanization of hindrances that had little justification and were irrelevant was not a positive contribution....A reform that merely improves things is not final. Reform must emancipate and liberalize; but it also must produce new life.<sup>52</sup>

To him, the "negative" reforms of the past had gone too far.

It is a foolhardy thing to pull at the roots of religion. We loosen the soil in which it thrives and who knows what delicate fibers we kill.<sup>53</sup>

The boldest statement of all was made by Felix Levy in 1937, the same year the Columbus Platform came out. He used language that could

<sup>51</sup> Louis Grossman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1918, p. 167.

<sup>52</sup> Louis Grossman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1919, p. 113.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

have almost come out of the mouth of an Orthodox rabbi, promoting particularism, reformulation of Reform and the centrality of the halacha.

...they have almost completely discarded the legal aspects of Judaism; they keep next to nothing of ceremonial, Sabbath and holy day and Jewishly are undifferentiated for the most part from their non-Jewish neighbors.

The unique feature of Jewish life is Torah, and the most striking element in Torah is the Halachah.<sup>54</sup>

His call for greater observance and halachic norms were the cornerstones of the argument as to which direction the Reform movement should go.

More common in these years than this "Neoreform" approach was the reemphasizing of "Classical Reform" and prophetic Judaism, particularly so in the twenties. In several of the speeches one can sense the diatribe against those who would take Reform Judaism in the direction of "Neoreform," such as Louis Wolsey's in 1926:

Our protest against the identification of Judaism with ceremonialism, our insistence upon an interpretation of Judaism as that of a progressive, mobile, democratic religion, our teaching that the essence of Judaism is ethical, that its Messianic though is moral and not national, that it is a universal and not a parochial faith, that it thinks of the Jew as a moral priest of humanity and not as a sinner in exile, when aggressively and earnestly presented to the Liberal and Progressive thought of Europe may hasten the day of peace between Jew and Christian.<sup>55</sup>

Although he was talking about participation in an Interfaith Conference, his words could just as easily have been directed at Louis Grossman's 1919 remarks.

HG Enelow, a well-known bastion of Classical Reform, spoke directly to those within the movement who opposed this classical view of Reform Judaism.

Saddest of all has been the spectacle of assaults upon Reform Judaism by those who are supposed to belong to its own household and who nevertheless are ready to deride and belittle it, since to do so has gotten

<sup>54</sup> Felix Levy, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1937, p. 180.

<sup>55</sup> Louis Wolsey, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1926, p. 141.

to be the fashion in certain circles and is regarded as a sign of spiritual superiority and intellectual independence, or as an excuse for personal indifference to one's obligations to Reform Judaism.<sup>56</sup>

Enelow does provide his own definition, however, reminding his colleagues of their historic obligation to Classical Reform.

The priest-people--the people dedicated to the cause of holiness--the people of the Covenant: these are the terms of Reform Judaism for Israel.<sup>57</sup>

Enelow invokes the term "priest" people; others invoke the equally classical prophets, such as David Lefkowitz in 1931.

Reform may need redirection, but certainly not retracing of its steps. Let us not again have to choose between Isaiah and Joseph Caro. Reform Judaism has definitely placed itself with Prophetic Judaism; along that line alone must we advance.<sup>58</sup>

Again, one could almost hear him arguing in the same room with a President like the aforementioned Felix Levy in 1937, who called for exactly the opposite--the reenthronement of halacha.

The argument went back and forth between the CCAR Presidents in this thirty year period. It seemed no one could agree on which self-definition should be used. However, most of the rabbis did agree that there was a great need for at least some kind of new definition. They wanted to systematize Reform doctrines and achieve a certain unity. In the previous decade, the 1900's, the CCAR Presidents pressed for a synod. This initiative eventually failed. Between 1910 and 1940 the rabbis concentrated instead on the idea of producing a comprehensive "Guide to Reform Judaism." Several different avenues were explored. Some conferences encouraged publishing theological essays, some sought to clarify the principles of Reform Judaism, some asked for a clear Declaration of Principles, some pushed for a formal Jewish ethics statement, some wanted

<sup>56</sup> HG Enelow, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1929, p. 167.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. 170.

<sup>58</sup> David Lefkowitz, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1931, p. 193.



a source book of sermons and lectures, some dedicated their speeches to the task (Samuel Goldensen in 1935), and some even made it the theme of the entire conference (Abram Simon in 1924). Despite its support as an idea, no guide was produced during this time period. The more successful venture in this area was the publishing of individual "tracts." These tracts ranged in subject matter from Jewish theology to Jewish practice to Jewish views on individual issues. For the most part they were distributed free to the public so both Jews and non-Jews could better understand basic principles of Judaism in general and Reform Judaism in particular. While they were not exactly platforms, they at least allowed the Reform movement to put some of its views on paper, both for clarification and dissemination purposes.

Eventually, this need for self-definition and the many arguments over that definition did result in a new platform, the Columbus Platform in 1937. Unfortunately, it did not succeed in quelling the arguments it hoped to supersede. The Reform movement continued to question itself, though with lesser frequency, in the next two decades, the forties and fifties.

### **The 1940's and 1950's**

These were the two decades where the numbers of statements which could be classified as "self-definition" decreased. In fact, these were the only two decades where the numbers were below ten percent. Three possible reasons for this dropoff, as stated earlier, were the producing of the Columbus Platform, the overwhelming nature of the Second World War and the founding of the State of Israel. Another possibility is that at least one aspect of the self-definition debate, whether or not Judaism was a peoplehood or a religion, was solved by World War II. Hitler and the

Holocaust proved that the Jew could not be separated from his Judaism. Judaism was both a peoplehood and a religion from that point on. Nevertheless, there were attempts at self-definition during this time period as well as observable trends in each decade.

The self-definitions in the 1940's were clearly dominated by the tragedy of this war. The CCAR Presidents stressed the religious aspect of Judaism, as they had in earlier decades in response to "secular Judaism," only this time it was as a response to the moral and spiritual decay of the world. The attitude was that the world needed Judaism "now more than ever." In 1942, in the middle of World War II, James Heller argued that the "very heart of the present conflict is religious."<sup>59</sup>

The whole system of religion, the whole edifice of ethical ideas, upon which democracy is built, is under attack.<sup>60</sup>

A new spirit seems to me to be infusing it, a vivid sense that the world and our people need us, a yearning to re-establish the primacy of the synagogue, a will to fashion this body into a vessel for this spirit and these plans.<sup>61</sup>

Just after World War II, in 1947, Abba Hillel Silver preached a similar message, this time with the hope that religion could lift the downtrodden spirits of the conflict-weary world.

Only an ardent concentration and emphasis by the leaders of our people--lay and religious alike--upon the religious message of Judaism to the Jews of our day...will set the red blood of courage and confidence coursing through the veins of our people.<sup>62</sup>

The world needed the specifically religious message of Judaism for moral guidance during World War II and for comfort after it.

<sup>59</sup> James Heller, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1942, p. 217.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p. 215.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p.231.

<sup>62</sup> Abba Hillel Silver, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1947, p.224.



Finally, in 1948, Abraham Feldman preached this religious message of Judaism in the ravaged world as a renewal of the Jewish "mission." This "old" definition was to be Reform Judaism's "new" message as well.

No matter how we define it or describe it, no matter how we may differ amongst ourselves in our definitions and descriptions, the fact is incontrovertible that Judaism's principal goal and destiny, its primary aim and function are litaken olam bemalchut Shaddai, to make society safe for the Kingdom of the Almighty...<sup>63</sup>

Then more than ever did the world need this Jewish "mission," the religious message of Judaism.

The fifties were characterized by a new popularity for the religious message; it was a boom time for religion in general. Growing numbers joined churches and synagogues and attended regularly. Belonging to a church and believing in God became hallmarks of Americanism.<sup>64</sup> The CCAR rabbis echoed many of the same thoughts about the specifically religious content of Judaism, but they were characterized more by particularism than they had been in the past. Lawrence Siegel called the emphasis on Jewish particularism a "substitute ideology in place of the broad universal messianic outlook of so-called classical Reform Judaism."<sup>65</sup> He cited the war, the establishment of the State of Israel and the assimilation of Eastern European Jews into Reform Judaism as the reasons for this Jewish particularism. Regardless of the reasons, it is clear that the rabbis were influenced by it and used it to preach the religious nature of the world's conflicts.

<sup>63</sup> Abraham Feldman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1948, p. 177-178.

<sup>64</sup> Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*. New Haven, 1972, pp. 949-963.

<sup>65</sup> Lawrence Siegel, *The Neo Reform Growth of American Reform Judaism as Reflected in the CCAR Yearbook*, 1942-1959, 1961.

Even more prominent was the renewed desire to produce a comprehensive guide for practicing this religious message. Jacob Rader Marcus raised the issue once again at the beginning of the decade in 1950.

During the last 150 years, Liberal Judaism has built up its own Torah she-be-al peh, its own unwritten law. It is time to set it down in black on white.. We do stand for something. Rabbis need this guidance. God knows the laymen need it!<sup>66</sup>

Apparently Marcus had been against such a guide in the past, but the need was strong enough for him to have changed his mind "gradually, over a period of years."<sup>67</sup>

Individual rabbis did produce various guides in the fifties, including Jerome Folkman in 1955, Abraham Feldman in 1956, and Frederic A. Doppelt and David Polish together in 1957. This third effort, entitled *A Guide for Reform Jews*, became the most popular among these guides; "that book addressed the Reform Jewish community as a whole, and it spoke the language of mitzvot..."<sup>68</sup> However, no CCAR or UAHC sponsored guide was produced until 1972, and that one, a Shabbat manual, could hardly be called comprehensive.

Barnett Brickner moved from a guide for Reform practice to the related guide for Reform theology. According to Brickner the movement needed to decide what it believed before it could effectively determine what it should practice.

I am convinced that the time is now ripe for our Reform Movement to move from the many sporadic attempts to conduct institutes, workshops, and seminars dealing with theology into the development of a systematic body of Jewish theology. We must answer the question, "What do Reform Jews believe?", on a deeper level than ever before. Without a systematic Reform theology, we will have no guide to Reform religious living in America.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Jacob Rader Marcus, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1950, p. 239-240.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p.239.

<sup>68</sup> Meyer, p. 376.

<sup>69</sup> Barnett Brickner, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1955, p.12.

In 1957, Israel Bettan recommended "a variety of treatises on important aspects of Reform Judaism,"<sup>70</sup> similar to the tractates produced a few decades earlier. If the movement could not produce a comprehensive guide at least they could write up the individual aspects.

In the very next year, however, Jacob Rudin pushed for that elusive guide in his final recommendation of his address:

It is recommended that consideration be given to the advisability of a formal presentation of the question of a Code of Practice or Ritual Guide for Reform Judaism at a CCAR convention in the near future.<sup>71</sup>

Apparently the near future did not mean the next year, though, because in his 1959 speech, the final speech of the decade, he was careful not to mention that he wanted an actual guide when discussing the general subject. He pleaded for the establishment of some kind of frame, but took pains to say that this would not actually be a guide.

This is neither code nor guide, really, which I have in mind. It is the irreducible minimum upon which Reform Judaism must build...Surely there are such minimal standards. There must be. To say there are not is to say that Reform Judaism is without its discipline for daily living.<sup>72</sup>

Apparently, the controversy over autonomy versus guide was too controversial to bring up again, and a guide on even one aspect of Judaism, Shabbat, was not produced officially by the CCAR until 1972. However, he and others did continue to press for "minimal standards," a trend that would continue into the next two decades.

### The 1960's

In contrast to the forties and fifties, where the percentage of self-definition goals dropped to less than ten percent, the sixties saw an increase

<sup>70</sup> Israel Bettan, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1957, p.6.

<sup>71</sup> Jacob Rudin, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1958, p.13.

<sup>72</sup> Jacob Rudin, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1959, p.11.

in the need for self-definition. The category of self-definition jumped back up to 17% of the overall number of goals. This increase matched the mood of self-criticism and self-doubt that was sweeping the country. The sixties was a decade of confusion; the CCAR Presidents, in part, were simply echoing the signs of the times.

The CCAR Presidents in the sixties struggled with the concept of self-definition and looked for ways to measure the attitudes of Reform Jews. In a sense the rabbis were trying to determine a self-definition for Reform Jews by looking at what was happening, rather than asserting a definition and then expecting Reform Jews to follow it. Albert Minda discussed surveying the rabbis in 1962<sup>73</sup> and all Reform Jews in 1963.<sup>74</sup> Leon Feuer based his 1964 speech on clarifying the confusion in both the CCAR and Reform Judaism in general.

As we face the future, our immediate concern should be the strengthening of our Conference for the tasks which lie ahead--an assessment of its relationship to the Jewish community, as well as to our own Reform Jewish institutions. This requires self criticism as well as the evaluation of the institutions of Reform and of American Jewish life generally. What are we doing? What are we failing to do? What needs to be done? What can be better done?<sup>75</sup>

The rabbis of the sixties made a conscious effort to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. Ask before telling was a key theme for this decade. In 1968 Levi Olan pressed for this same comprehensive study of what Reform Judaism had become. It was a critically important task to Olan.

Mindful of the urgency for many vital moral and social issues, I recommend it as the first order of business of our Conference to begin immediately, hopefully in cooperation with the Union and the College-Institute, a scholarly examination of the condition of American Jewish congregational life, and of our Rabbinical Seminary. The purpose of such a study is not sociological or psychological although these disciplines will be helpful. Its

<sup>73</sup> Albert Minda, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1962, p. 14.

<sup>74</sup> Albert Minda, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1963, p. 13.

<sup>75</sup> Leon Feuer, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1964, p. 3.

aim is to relate the existent condition to the kehila kedushah, to the covenanted community.<sup>76</sup>

Apparently, asking the questions was more important than providing answers in this decade. However, it should also be pointed out that the rabbis did have suggestions for what those answers could be. For the most part, those Conference Presidents who did make statements of self-definition were inclined toward a reemphasis of Prophetic Judaism. Statements which sound remarkably "Classical Reform" were spoken by Leon Feuer in 1965, Jacob Weinstein in 1966 and Levi Olan in 1968.

Can we sit in this hallowed sanctuary and forget that Isaac M. Wise and his associates also wanted to turn their faces outward to the world? They may have been somewhat naive, they may have been nudging the Messiah a bit in anticipating an early advent for the kingdom of God on earth, but they believed b'emuna shlema that Judaism, perhaps not in the credal, but certainly in the pragmatic sense, the Judaism of the Torah and of prophetic passion...that this Judaism will ultimately become for all practical purposes the religion of the world. Together with others, we have taken our Judaism where it frequently ought to be, into the highways and the marketplaces to champion the cause of civil rights and that of the struggle against poverty.<sup>77</sup>

Reform Judaism especially has placed itself on the line by its major emphasis on the moral and ethical values of the prophets of Israel.<sup>78</sup>

This Conference for more than a half century has spoken forcefully to the social evils of society. Our announced resolutions are vigorous in their support of national programs which aim at alleviating, if not curing, the ills of our society. In the deteriorating condition for the nation we shall address ourselves again this year with comparable dedication and vigor to specific programs and ideals which can better the life of man.<sup>79</sup>

The debate continued to rage.

### The 1970's

The seventies were a time of synthesis of self-definition for the Presidents of the CCAR. Once again there was an increase in the amount

<sup>76</sup> Levi Olan, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1968, p.8.

<sup>77</sup> Leon Feuer, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1965, p.13.

<sup>78</sup> Jacob Weinstein, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1966, p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> Levi Olan, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1968, p. 11.



of times self-definition was mentioned as a goal (21% of the total number of goals), but for the most part, there was no specific direction to these goals. The goal instead was to synthesize the past elements of Reform Judaism into an integrated whole.

Roland Gittelsohn, at the beginning of the decade in 1970, stressed the dynamic nature of Judaism, that it has never been monolithic and that in "authentic Judaism religion and nationalism have always been inextricably intertwined."<sup>80</sup> Essentially, he was arguing that Judaism had always been a synthesis of different forms. His argument was in an effort to minimize the conflict between different types of Reform Judaism.

David Polish clarified this point further when he said that "the most revolutionary act we can perform is to abjure false separatism."<sup>81</sup> He then encouraged syntheses between universalism and particularism, halacha and autonomy, and Israel and Galut. Synthesizing was the key to Polish's vision of Reform Judaism.

Robert Kahn, in 1974, also took pride in this variety of practices. "Variety is the major motif in today's Reform,"<sup>82</sup> he asserted. However, he also cautioned that Reform needed "the redevelopment of a movement even as we experiment with varieties of religious experience."<sup>83</sup>

This "diversity within unity" approach reached a pinnacle in 1976 with the production of the San Francisco Centenary Perspective. One of its headings is entitled "Diversity Within Unity, the Hallmark of Reform."<sup>84</sup> The CCAR Presidential Address that year, given by Arthur Lelyveld, celebrated that approach. However, "diversity within unity" is really a

<sup>80</sup> Roland Gittelsohn, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1970, p.6.

<sup>81</sup> David Polish, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1972, p. 7.

<sup>82</sup> Robert Kahn, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1974, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>84</sup> Meyer, p. 392.



statement of self-contradiction. The fact that the "Centenary Perspective" and the rabbis had to make it explicit was an indication that the Reform movement was characterized less by unity and more by disunity. Nevertheless, the CCAR Presidents for the rest of the decade stressed synthesis, integration and dynamism.

### The 1980's and 1990's

The 1980's were much more argumentative than the 1970's when it came to self-definition. Once again there was an increase in the amount of times self-definition was mentioned as a goal (24% of the total number of goals), but in the eighties they were characterized much more by direct and unequivocal statements. The days of accepting an amorphous synthesis were over. These rabbis returned once again to the argument of halacha versus prophetism.

Early on in the decade, in 1981, Jerome Malino hearkened back to the "mission concept" of the Classical Reform period.

This sense of the mission of the Jewish people, a concern for the universal implications of Jewish existence, is desperately needed today when there is in evidence a drawing inward on the part of Jews and a preoccupation with their own parochial needs.<sup>85</sup>

According to Malino, new times needed old concepts of ethics and morality.

However, the next two CCAR Presidents, Herman Schaalman and Gunther Plaut, turned in the opposite direction. Not that they necessarily opposed the Jewish "mission," but they were more concerned with halacha, or at least minimal standards of Jewish observance. Their version of Reform was much more Neoreform than Malino's. Schaalman, in 1982 and 1983, seemed to be greatly influenced by "covenant theology." He called the Jewish people the "am berit, the covenant people," and he issued

<sup>85</sup> Jerome Malino, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1981, p.9.

an "urgent warning of dire danger for those who advocate an easy disregard for *kelal*, for the totality of the Jewish people."<sup>86</sup> He also emphasized *halacha*, although he was careful to define *halacha* as a "continual dynamic response" for Reform Jews rather than a fixed code of laws.<sup>87</sup>

Gunther Plaut, in one of the more controversial speeches in the history of the CCAR Presidents, was even more direct in his approval of Neoreform and the enthroneing of observance.

Mitzvah is the crucible of Judaism and therefore must forever remain the core concern of Reform as well. I have no hesitation to affirm that though the ideals of the Pittsburgh Platform were grand and its hopes magnificent and messianic, its practical result was to encourage non-observance...<sup>88</sup>

Plaut even went so far as to attack the concept of autonomy, one of the very pillars of all the platforms of Reform Judaism.

I as a participant will publicly aver that as so often happens when new directions are hewn out, we went too far. We stood on the ground of religious existentialism and it proclaimed personal autonomy as vital and we raised it to the heights of an axiom.

As a person, one is free and autonomous to do whatever one wants to do, but when one joins a specific group that has specific ideals and goals, one limits that autonomy voluntarily.<sup>89</sup>

It is important to point out that Plaut was not insisting that Reform Jews become Orthodox; however, he was urging an unprecedented amount of Neoreform. He was attempting, in a sense, to redefine Reform Judaism.

His successor, Jack Stern, without explicitly criticizing Plaut, reaffirmed the Jewish "mission" concept, perhaps to appease those who had feared Plaut and others had gone too far.

<sup>86</sup> Herman Schaalman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1982, p.4.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> Gunther Plaut, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1985, p. 4.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

Those early Reformers gave back a voice to the prophets and shone a light on that old prophetic vision of a society embraced by compassion and justice. If we fault those Reform forbears for turning away too much from the mitzvot of our tradition and our ritual and peoplehood, then we also would be faulted if we made the mistake in reverse—if in our own justified zeal for rediscovering and reinstating the mitzvot of tradition and ritual and peoplehood we were to turn away from the mitzvah of our God-given ethical mission to the world.<sup>90</sup>

Classical Reform continued to be pushed right alongside "Neoreform."

The debate continued throughout the eighties, and a true resolution still has not been found.

### Toward a Contemporary Self-Definition

In the 1990's Walter Jacob once again raised the issue of a guide, in his words a "standard guide for all aspects of Reform Jewish life."<sup>91</sup>

Apparently the issue of authority in Reform Judaism is still alive and well. The time had come, according to Jacob, to "provide direction and definite standards. A system of mitzvot must be our way." Jacob, in this speech, was actually encouraging both a mitzvot system (Neoreform) and prophetic Judaism (Classical Reform) simultaneously.

We must couple the prophetic message to halakhah. In a sense, that is what we do on each Shabbat when we combine Torah and Haftarah.<sup>92</sup>

Even more than in the speeches of the seventies, Jacob suggested that there could be an ultimate synthesis. The way to do it, according to Jacob, was to emphasize both aspects. However, Jacob's vision may be just another hope that will never be achieved. Both "mitzvah" and "prophetism" can be emphasized, but divine demands have yet to be achieved in Reform Judaism. To Reform Jews over the years, anything that has been demanded has been an anathema.

<sup>90</sup> Jack Stern, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1986, p. 5.

<sup>91</sup> Walter Jacob, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1992, p.123.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 121.

It is time now to turn to the three questions which will be asked at the end of every chapter: (1) Are these goals descriptive or prescriptive? (2) What rhetorical strategies were used to accomplish these goals? (3) Did the CCAR Presidents succeed in accomplishing them?

### Descriptive or Prescriptive

By its very nature, a goal of "definition" attempts to describe the situation as it is. CCAR Presidents attempted to grapple with the issues of their time by framing where they fit into the current scenario of Reform Judaism. In that sense, the goal of "self-definition" has been **descriptive**.

On the other hand, the very fact that self-definition was such a prominent goal in so many of the speeches indicates that it has primarily been a **prescriptive** goal over the years. The definitions the rabbis used were really attempts to chart particular courses for Reform Judaism. Consequently, the prescriptions given by the various presidents varied with the a particular individual's own opinion and vision. Thus when Isaac Mayer Wise defined the people Israel as a "missionary people," when Joseph Stolz declared that Reform was not a culmination or a new sect but only an interpretation of Judaism, when Edward Calisch argued that Judaism was essentially a "religious brotherhood," and when Jerome Malino said that Judaism was an "indissoluble bond" between faith and folk, these men were telling the rest of the rabbis of the CCAR what they hoped Reform Judaism would be. They were not necessarily describing the situation as it was or even as their congregants may have viewed it. Ask a Reform Jew what Reform Judaism is, and he is likely to express it in terms of his level of observance of the rituals. The CCAR Presidents, on the other hand, used their speeches and self-definitions to prescribe what

Reform Judaism should be, to express their deepest hopes for the direction of Judaism in general and the Reform movement in particular.

### **Rhetorical Questions and Strategies**

One of the first question a speechwriter asks when writing a speech is "who is the audience?" A major part of the effectiveness of any speech depends upon whether the speech matches the given audience's needs and desires. There are two types of audiences which can be analyzed: the immediate audience and the extended audience. The immediate audience for these speeches was made up of the rabbis of the CCAR. The extended audience included the larger Reform Jewish community, who would get the same message if it was passed on by the individual rabbis. To be effective, then, a goal would have to not only convince the rabbis themselves, but convince them to convince others. In general, the self-definition goals failed to persuade either audience. The amount of times the self-definition changed indicates that the presidents failed to make their message stick. Furthermore, if the self-definitions were not persuasive to the rabbis it is safe to assume that they did not even make it to the congregants, the extended audience, let alone persuade them.

The second rhetorical question that must be asked is what types of strategies and appeals were employed by the CCAR Presidents to convince their colleagues to abide by their definitions or at least come up with comprehensive definitions. In general, rhetorical strategies can be put into a three-fold classification: *ethos* (the ethical appeal), *pathos* (the emotional appeal) and *logos* (the logical appeal). In terms of self-definition, the primary appeal used by the CCAR Presidents was one of *ethos*.



Specifically, ethos is identified with the ethics and credibility of either the speaker or the concept. Indeed the speakers make constant reference to their credibility in formulating self-definitions. Many refer to the history of the Conference and of Reform Judaism as part of their appeal. Looking back at the quotations in this chapter shows how this ethos appeal works. Phrases like "from its inception," "American Judaism is giving evidence," "one of the unmistakable marks of Jewish life in recent years," "we are facing a condition today," "what the world needs now," "the synagogue was always many sided," "during the last 150 years," and other similar phrases appear all over the self-definitions. The speakers are trying to show that they are justified in making a self-definition. It is an ethos appeal to the situation in which the Presidents find Reform Judaism in their current environment. As a further ethos appeal, many of the rabbis couch their definitions as part of the "original vision" of Isaac Mayer Wise, similar to the way Congressmen refer to the spirit of the framers of the United States Constitution. With the Founders' implicit support, the vision has a much greater chance of being successful.

### **Success or Failure?**

The attempt of the Presidents to come up with a comprehensive or even a consistent self-definition has to be termed a failure, almost whatever way it is measured. Already alluded to is the simple amount of times self-definition came up as an explicit goal. If the CCAR could have agreed on a particular self-definition, there would be no need to continually come up with new ones.

Secondly, there were no resolutions in the History of the CCAR that stated an actual definition for Reform Judaism. A resolution does not



necessarily indicate success, but the lack of any necessarily does indicate failure. The closest the CCAR came to was the 1983 patrilineal descent resolution which stated who was a Reform Jew; on the other hand, the resolution did not state what Reform Judaism was.

Thirdly, all attempts to systematize Reform Jewish doctrines, whether in the form of a synod or a guide, failed. The synod was not brought up after 1905. As Mordecai Podet pointed out:

Two decades of committees and discussion had as its only concrete results the official rejection, by a narrow vote, of the authority of post Biblical Jewish literature.<sup>93</sup>

The only authority issue they decided was that Rabbinic literature had no authority. Moreover, a comprehensive guide has likewise never been produced, despite the fact that such a guide has been promoted in nearly every decade since the turn of the century, including the 1990's.

## Conclusions

The bottom line is that the CCAR has never come up with a comprehensive, working self-definition, nor the authority by which they may move Reform Jews to abide by such a definition. Even the CCAR's introduction to potential converts is careful to clarify that the CCAR has no rigid self-definition.

The CCAR represents a diversity of views on theology and ritual observance; thus these guidelines and suggested procedures seek to establish a working consensus of practice within the Reform Rabbinate rather than a set of standardized requirements in matters concerning gerim.<sup>94</sup>

If the rabbis of the CCAR can not even agree on what definition to give to non-Jews, then certainly they will never be able to agree on one that is

<sup>93</sup> Mordecai Podet, *The Impact of Historical Forces on the Intellectual Outlook of the CCAR*, 1951, p. 85.

<sup>94</sup> CCAR Committee on Gerut, *Divre Gerut: Guidelines Concerning Proselytism*, 1983, p. 1.

more comprehensive. This lack of definition has been true both in practice and in theology, as Milton Matz pointed out:

The basic theological issues of the Conference revolved about its inability to formulate any stable credo. It is to be remarked that on the whole the field of Reform theology has been woefully neglected, and that the Conference yet faces a heavy task.<sup>95</sup>

Rabbi Sylvin Wolf identified reasons for this failure.

The dilemma which has confronted Reform is that on the one hand it has set aside the binding authority of the rabbinic tradition, and on the other it has looked to that same tradition for authenticity through the adoption of style, forms and methods.<sup>96</sup>

This way of utilizing the tradition is a paradox. How can one utilize authority if he has declared that it is non-binding? Therein lies the crux of the problem of defining Reform Judaism.

In addition, Reform Rabbis and Reform Jews have become terribly attached to their autonomy. Plaut, in 1985, argued that autonomy should not be an axiom of Reform Judaism, but whether he likes it or not, it is. Leon Feuer, writing in 1965 in an essay entitled "Summary and Prospect," previewed the type of feelings Plaut uttered twenty years later.

There will continue to be a desire, and the issue will be debated again and again, for some regulatory code, at least for the purpose of establishing some standards of practice for Reform Jews and their congregations. Unless the present mood radically alters, this pressure is likely to be resisted.<sup>97</sup>

The Reform movement has produced literature such as *Gates of Mitzvah*, *Gates of the Seasons* and *Gates of Shabbat* which suggest how an ideal Reform Jew should conduct his religious life—but time and tribulation have proven that suggestions are all these documents can ever be. The argument between Classical Reform and Neoreform has raged for nearly eighty

<sup>95</sup> Milton Matz, *Theological Developments in American Reform Judaism*, 1952, p. 44.

<sup>96</sup> Sylvin Lawrence Wolf, *Reform Judaism as a Process*, 1978, p. 151.

<sup>97</sup> Leon Feuer, "Summary and Prospect" in *Retrospect and Prospect*, 1965, p. 253.

years, as has the hope for a comprehensive guide. The key factor is that this argument is still going on. Even if Neoreform does become normative practice, it will not be Reform Judaism to everyone. Even if a guide is produced, it does not guarantee that Reform Jews will follow it or even agree with it. The history of the CCAR Presidents' attempts to define Reform Judaism testifies to this reality. The conclusion of this chapter can only be that there can never be a comprehensive self-definition for the totality of Reform Judaism.

## **PART II**

# **GOALS FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS**

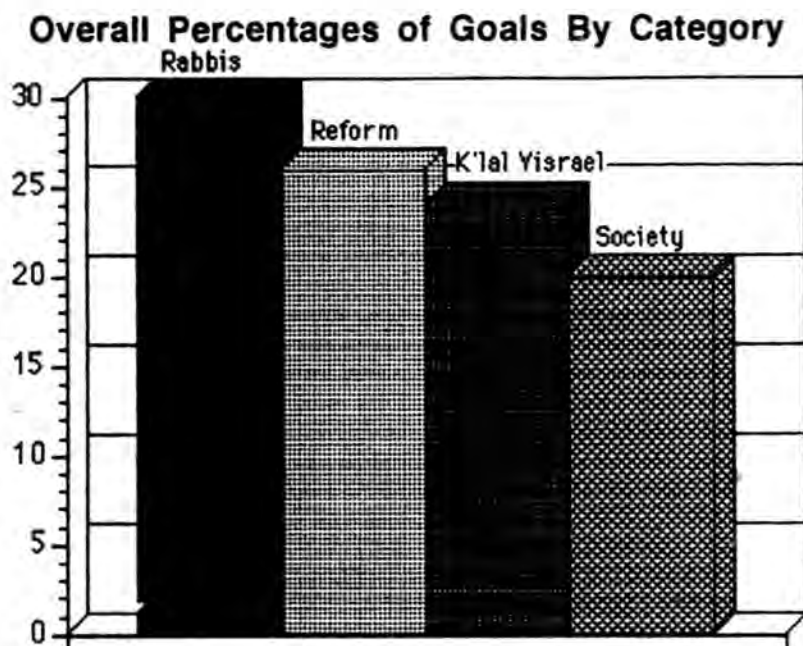
## GOALS FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS

For whom are the goals formulated and intended is the question that this chapter will attempt to answer. In general, the "whom" can be divided into four groups: the Rabbis themselves, the Reform movement, K'lal Yisrael and general society.

It must be acknowledged that this division is not rigid and that there are many goals which overlap into more than one category. For example, the goal to formulate a position on Zionism affected all four categories. The rabbis were affected, since their ability to be employed depended, to some extent, on their position on this issue. The Reform movement was affected, for the position was intended to speak for the Reform movement. K'lal Yisrael was affected, for what the CCAR decided would influence Reform's relationship with rest of the Jewish community. Finally, general society was affected, since Zionism had become a world issue. A case could be made that Zionism fits into any one of these categories, but since its *primary* effects were on the general Jewish community I have chosen to analyze Zionism as part of the K'lal Yisrael category. The point that needs to be made is that the divisions are not hard and fast.

Despite this crossover effect, separating the goals into categories is extremely useful, because it allows us to see what the *primary* concerns of the CCAR were and are. Have they primarily been a self-concerned, self-contained group, or do they see their role as part of the broader contexts of American Judaism or American society? If they are a part of the more general context of American Judaism, to what extent are they involved? The analysis in this chapter will delve into these questions.

A look at the actual numbers is useful. The following graphs show the percentage of goals by category.



Overall, the categories of goals for the CCAR have been fairly balanced. No category of goals received more than 30% nor less than 20% of the overall total. This percentage range of 10% shows a balanced picture and a fairly even distribution level among the categories, with a slight progression from the broad (general society at 20%) to the narrow (the Rabbis themselves at 30%). Overall, however, the rabbis were concerned with both narrow and broad goals; apparently they wanted to "do it all."

On the other hand, the "Rabbis" category does show a higher overall percentage than any of the others, being the only category with an overall percentage of thirty. Though this difference is not tremendous it is a difference nonetheless. In a limited sense, then, it would be accurate to say that the CCAR has been primarily concerned with itself—the rabbis.

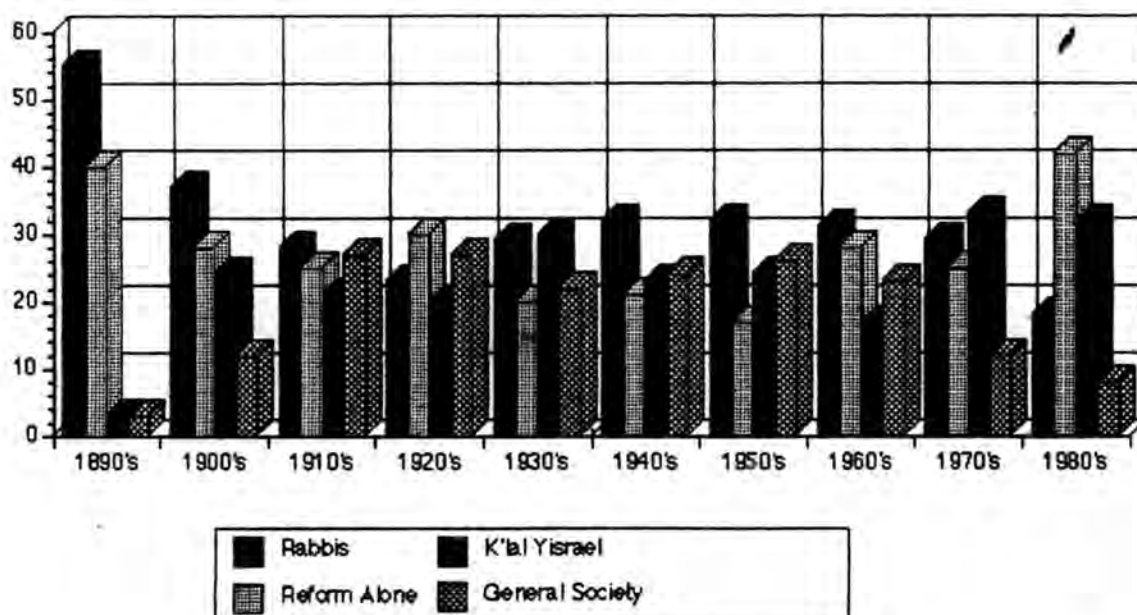


This makes sense, considering that this is what distinguishes the CCAR from other Jewish religious organizations. The CCAR is a group of rabbis. Rabbinic problems and tasks are primarily what concern them.

These trends can be examined more closely by decade. The chart and bar graph below show how the categories have changed over time.

CATEGORICAL PERCENTAGES OF GOALS				
Decade	Rabbis	Reform Alone	K'lal Yisrael	General Society
1890-1900	55%	40%	03%	03%
1901-1910	37%	28%	24%	12%
1911-1920	28%	25%	21%	27%
1921-1930	23%	30%	20%	27%
1931-1940	29%	20%	30%	22%
1941-1950	32%	21%	23%	24%
1951-1960	32%	17%	24%	26%
1961-1970	31%	28%	17%	23%
1971-1980	29%	25%	33%	12%
1981-present	18%	42%	32%	08%
Overall	30%	26%	24%	20%

Category Percentages By Decade



The percentage of the category "rabbis" starts very high but levels off quickly thereafter. The 55% during the CCAR's first ten years represents a far higher percentage than any other category received during any single decade. This shows that the CCAR's founders intended it to be an organization primarily concerned with its own needs. Most prominent among these first goals were offering financial support for indigent rabbis and the encouragement of publications to support their endeavors. The percentage fell quickly in the next three decades, from 55% in the 1890's to 37% in the 1900's to 28% in the 1910's to 23% in the 1920's. After that, the percentage leveled off in the low 30's. However, the most recent decade saw the percentage sink all the way down to 18%, its lowest total ever. This low percentage was driven in part by the fact that publishing has become less of a concern among the rabbis. Furthermore, there are other factors driving the "Reform Alone" and the "K'lal Yisrael" category percentages up, and these will be discussed in detail later. Does it mean the rabbis are more content now with what is happening within the rabbinate? No, that conclusion can not be drawn from the statistics, but it is clear that the rabbis in the 1980's had more pressing concerns. It would be premature, however, to make too much of this "trend," since the dip can only be seen in this one particular decade.

The category "Reform Alone" follows the shape of an inverted bell curve. Initially, it made up quite a high percentage of the goals (40% in the 1890's), dipped all the way down to 17% in the 1950's, and then rose all the way back up to 42% in the most recent years. This 42% in the 1980's represents the highest total among any of the categories. Again it should be pointed out that one decade does not a definitive trend make, but it is clear that goals which affect the Reform movement primarily are more

important now than they were between 1930 and 1950. Among the prominent goals in this category are self-definition for the Reform movement, working with the UAHC, education and, lately, the Reform movement in Israel. The percentages of this category appear to be driven primarily by the self-definition goal. The more the need for self-definition, the greater the amount of goals in the overall category of "Reform."

The K'lal Yisrael trend shows a slight trend upward over time, though the line is filled with many peaks and valleys. Other than this slight upward movement the graphically represented line does not follow a very consistent pattern. Therefore, it is difficult to point to definitive trends over the years. This category appears to be more determined by reaction than action. In other words, the different activity within the Jewish community was more determinative of trends in this category than any conscious effort made by the rabbis themselves. What confuses the picture even more is that since it is the amount rather than the importance of the different events which is charted here, the presence of an extremely important and dominant goal could actually lower the percentage of the category. For example, the debate over Zionism was of supreme importance for several decades, but since this goal overshadowed other "K'lal Yisrael" goals, the statistics in that category during those decades were low. It was an extremely important issue, but it was only one issue nevertheless. By contrast, the CCAR in the last two decades has had several different "K'lal" issues occupying their attention, and thus the statistics of the category were high. Among these issues are Soviet Jewry, relations with the Orthodox and the American Jewish community's relationship to Israel. The issues may not be as heated as in other decades,

but there are more of them being discussed. In addition to Zionism, current relations with Israel and relations with the Orthodox, other "K'lal Yisrael" issues which the CCAR discussed throughout the decades included rescuing Holocaust and pogrom victims, support for Jews abroad and whether or not to support various organizations such as the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, the General Jewish Council, B'nai B'rith and others.

The final category, "General Society," follows the shape of a regular bell curve. The percentages started extremely low in the 1890's and 1910's, peaked with 30% in the 1920's, and then gradually decreased until the category reached just 8% in the 1980's. As such, it runs opposite to the category of "Reform." This makes sense, for during the times when the rabbis were concerned with the broader goals of general society they were less concerned with the internal workings of the Reform movement. Conversely, when they were concentrating on the Reform movement they naturally had to cut back on their concentration on general society goals. Specifically, the goals for general society were highest during and between the great World Wars. They naturally were concerned with reacting to world events, and in their optimism they believed they could affect what happened in general society. As both the wars and the optimism died down, the CCAR moved on to the more particular concerns of the Reform movement. In addition to reacting to various wars, this category is made up of reactions to trends in American society as well as all different kinds of social justice concerns which come under the domain of "prophetic Judaism."

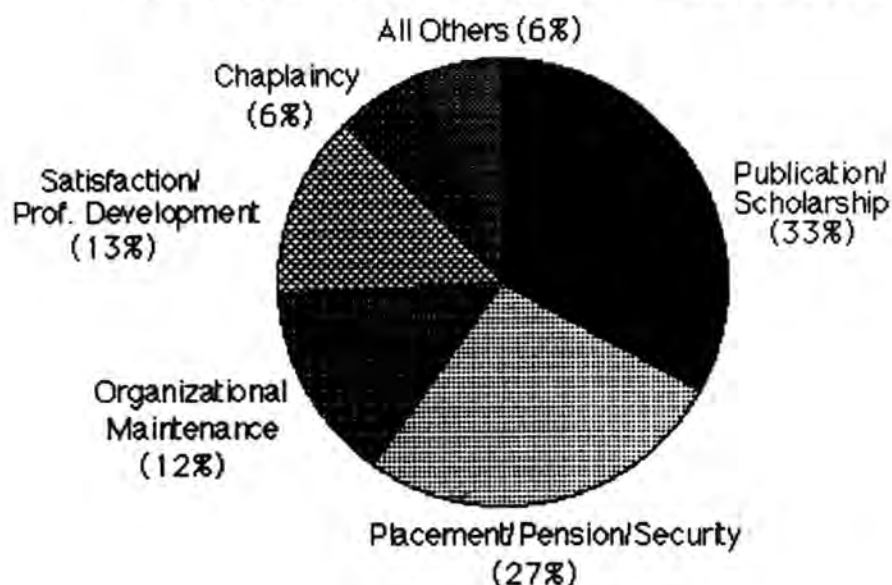
It is time now to examine each of the categories and their goals in greater detail, moving from the general trends to the goals themselves.

# CHAPTER 3

## THE RABBIS

### THEMSELVES

#### RABBIS CATEGORY BREAKDOWN



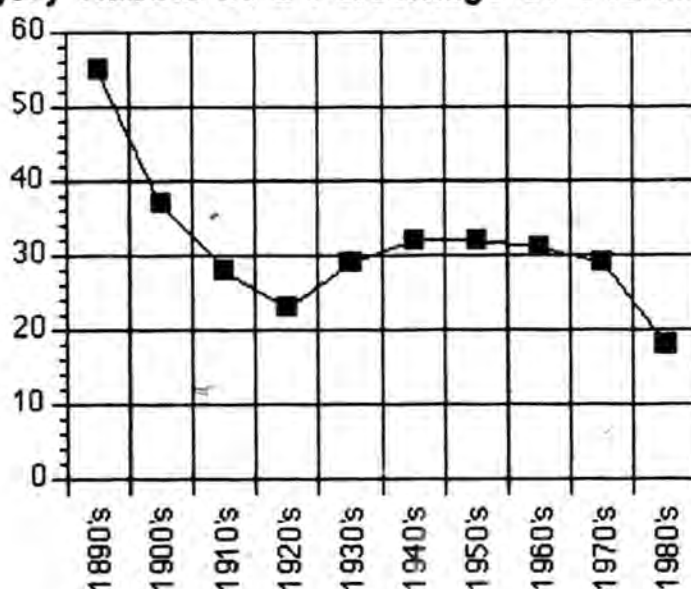
## CHAPTER 3

# THE RABBIS THEMSELVES

The very first goals relating to the rabbis themselves in Wise's 1890 speech were to (1) "maintain and perpetuate a union of all American rabbis," (2) to provide financial support for indigent rabbis and (3) to publish a yearbook for the CCAR. These three goals, CCAR organizational maintenance, financial/job concern and publication, have remained the primary concerns of the rabbis themselves all the way until the present time. Nearly all goals in this category can fit into one of these three subcategories, though each decade added its own twists to them.

The trend for the overall category of "Rabbis themselves" can be seen in the following line graph:

**Category Rabbis as a Percentage of Overall Goals**



As stated previously the percentage of the category "rabbis" started very high but leveled off quickly thereafter. The initial level of 55% in the



1890's shows that the CCAR's founders intended it to be an organization primarily concerned with its own needs. The percentage dipped down quickly thereafter, but leveled off in the relatively high 30 percent range toward the middle of the decade. As with all line graphs, this one exceedingly high number skews the look of the entire graph. The trend downward does not look as drastic when one starts with the 1900's. The one drastic dip, though, was in the most recent decade, the 1980's where 18% represents its lowest total ever. It would be premature, however, to call this dip a "trend," since the dip can only be seen in this one particular decade. I do not think the rabbis are more content now with what is happening within the rabbinate or the CCAR, but it is clear that the rabbis in the 1980's were more concerned with defining Reform Judaism and their relationship to K'lal Yisrael. These factors will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

This chapter will look into the specifics of the goals which were primarily intended for the rabbis themselves: CCAR organizational maintenance, financial/job concern and publication. Each of these three areas encompassed a broad range of goals in and of itself.

### **The Organization Itself**

CCAR organizational maintenance has probably received the least amount of attention over the years. Apparently, the Central Conference of American Rabbis was more concerned with the "Rabbis" than it was with the "Conference." However, there were several goals which directly addressed the needs of the organization itself. After Isaac Mayer Wise served the first ten years and Joseph Silverman the next four, no President of the CCAR ever served for longer than two terms. Already the first

President who had to follow this rule, Joseph Krauskopf, argued against it in his outgoing address for future presidents.

What if the Hebrew Union College were to change its President and Faculty every year or two? What if it had changed its President of the Board of Governors at every Convention?<sup>98</sup>

The argument was renewed again by Samuel Schulman in 1913, because he felt the rule made "for the prevention of leadership, which is of great value."<sup>99</sup> Apparently, his colleagues did not agree, for the Conference abides by the two year term limitation rule to this day. A longer length of office for the President would naturally give him more power, and this power would run against the autonomy the Reform rabbis held so sacred. Perhaps that is why the point was not raised in any Presidential speech after Schulman's in 1913.

Though the CCAR did not seek more power for their president, they certainly did feel the need for greater administrative help. With the President, Treasurer and Committee Chairmen all located in different cities, business matters became very complicated and very lengthy. Joseph Krauskopf, in 1904, recommended appointing a permanent clerk to the office.

What we need, and need at once, is a central office, in charge of a salaried clerk, who shall be the one permanent officer of this body, the responsible custodian of our property, the manager of our business affairs...Besides conducting all the business of this body, he shall discharge the clerical duties of our Secretaries, collect the material for the Year Book, read its proof and see it through the press.<sup>100</sup>

This clerk later turned into an "Executive Secretary" who became indispensable to the CCAR, judging by the amount of times one of them, Isaac Marcuson, was thanked in the speeches. After his death in 1952, the

<sup>98</sup> Joseph Krauskopf, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1904, p. 38.

<sup>99</sup> Samuel Schulman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1913, p.219.

<sup>100</sup> Joseph Krauskopf, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1904, p. 37.

CCAR established a full-time "Executive Vice President," Rabbi Sidney Regner, and he took over in a new permanent headquarters in New York in 1954. Today, in addition to the rabbinical Executive Vice President there are two other Executive Rabbis, one who serves as the Director of Placement and one who functions as the Administrative Secretary and Director of Publications. There are also several secretarial and administrative staff members.<sup>101</sup>

In addition, several CCAR Presidents called for broader reconstructions of the CCAR organization. Restructuring was mentioned as a specific goal in 1931, 1932, 1959, 1965, 1973 and 1975. In 1931 it was to merge the Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Treasurer and Publication Committee Chairman into one office, the aforementioned "Executive Secretary."<sup>102</sup> In 1959 it was to revamp the committee and fundraising structures.<sup>103</sup> In 1965, Leon Feuer called for a fairly major overhaul:

...to take some modest steps toward the interior strengthening and tightening of our organizational structure, streamlining our cumbersome and antiquated committee complex, reforming some obsolete and unsatisfactory conventions procedures, economizing on the time and energy of our Executive Vice President and his staff, and thus enabling the CCAR more effectively to wield religious leadership and to confront the perplexing and difficult tasks of the future.<sup>104</sup>

Finally, in 1973 and 1975, the goal was to "democratize" the Central Conference in order to get more rabbis involved in the CCAR. This involved several major steps, including expanding the size of the Executive Board to more adequately reflect the size of the CCAR, expanding the Committee on Committees (which controlled nominating who was on those

<sup>101</sup> Elliot Stevens, "The History of the Conference," 1990, pp. 17-18.

<sup>102</sup> David Lefkowitz, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1931, p.202.

<sup>103</sup> Jacob Rudin, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1959, p.6.

<sup>104</sup> Leon Feuer, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1965, 4.

committees), making committee meetings open to non-committee members, providing for formal representation of every Region on the Executive Board, encouraging greater participation by the Regions in the affairs of the Conference, providing suitable representation for colleagues in the non-pulpit Rabbinate, and making the Conventions themselves more concerned with business, leaving study to the regional gatherings.<sup>105</sup> This group of changes, emphasized very strongly in the speeches by David Polish, is the most recent mention of major structural changes in the CCAR as a specific goal in the presidential addresses. Since it was the last mention we have, silence argues that these changes may have accomplished their goals. Indeed the numbers of people involved in committees has increased in the last twenty years. Whether or not the members of the CCAR will be satisfied with this approach over the long haul remains to be seen.

Organization by committee has been a major priority for the CCAR over the years. Throughout its history the CCAR has appointed literally dozens of committees on a great variety of topics, from reactions to specific events facing the world to committees which dealt with educating congregants to issues which affect the rabbis exclusively.

In the early years there were few committees, the most important being Ritual, Hymnal, Publication, Ethics, Superannuated Ministers' Fund, Sabbath Question, and a few others. Gradually the number of committees increased, with standing committees being established in the fields of Church and State, Arbitration, History, Religious Education, Responsa, Social Justice, Liturgy, Chaplaincy, Synagogue Music, and many others. By 1964 there were 29 standing committees, three special interest groups, several special committees, and six joint commissions with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.<sup>106</sup>

The first mention of appointing committees as an explicit goal was by Krauskopf in 1905. In that speech he recommended that the Committee on

<sup>105</sup> David Polish, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1973, p.3.

<sup>106</sup> Sidney Regner. "The History of the Conference," 1990, p. 11.

Sectarianism be made permanent and that the Conference also establish a Committee on Anti-Semitism. A permanent Committee on Social Justice was likewise proposed (and passed) by Samuel Schulman in 1913<sup>107</sup> and became significant enough to enlist a permanent executive secretary, undergo several name changes, and both merge with and separate from other committees. Most committees, however, have been set up on a temporary basis and have appeared and disappeared according to the needs of the CCAR. At times the nature of committees themselves has been the issue, as in that same 1913 speech by Schulman, where he urged that

when committees show no results, after a few years of existence, they should be discontinued.<sup>108</sup>

Perhaps Polish, with his emphasis on involving more members, would have voted to keep some of the non-functional committees that Schulman wished to eliminate. Obviously, the arguments and issues repeat themselves, for in such an organization as the CCAR, one can envision an argument between two Presidents whose terms were sixty years apart.

The final self-concern of the CCAR is its relationship to other bodies of Reform rabbis. Initially, the CCAR was strongly opposed to sectional meetings of rabbis. After all, they went directly against the earliest visions of Isaac Mayer Wise, who wanted specifically to "maintain and perpetuate a union of *all* American rabbis." Sectional groups were viewed by the early presidents as potential rivals to the CCAR. Joseph Krauskopf spoke against the "Sectional Rabbinical Conference" of the South in 1904:

It does seem as if there was danger of segregations lurking in that movement. If the north and east and west were to imitate the example of the south, the Central Conference would find its occupation gone.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Samuel Schulman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1913, p. 212.

<sup>108</sup> Samuel Schulman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1912, p. 237.

<sup>109</sup> Joseph Krauskopf, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1904, p. 31.



Samuel Schulman, in 1913, had a similar reaction to the Eastern Council of Reform Rabbis, as he reported proudly that the Executive Committee of the CCAR had asked them to disband within a certain time and to inform every member of the CCAR that the Executive Committee "expressed its disapproval of the new organization."<sup>110</sup> Little is mentioned after that until 1975, where Robert Kahn took precisely the opposite approach.

Regionalization was completely encouraged by this time, even to the point where he expressed with excitement that the regions may get "official representation on the Conference Executive Board."<sup>111</sup> The regional conferences and activities revolved more around continuing education and mutual problem solving/sharing, but the way in which the CCAR views regionalization in the present is a 180 degree turn from the early years.

These have been the ways in which the CCAR has fulfilled Wise's original goal of "maintaining and perpetuating a union of all American rabbis:" restructuring the organization itself, appointing, disbanding and democratizing committees, and reacting to various regional activities. It was the theme of Wise's second goal, however, that occupied the greater amount of attention for the members of the CCAR. The general theme was that of goals that concerned the rabbis as individuals, and the specific goal was that of "providing financial support for indigent rabbis."

### **The Individual Rabbis**

The CCAR was formed, in part, out of rabbis' concerns for themselves and their jobs. As such, the CCAR was to serve as an agent of protection for the individual rabbis. Many of the goals enumerated by the Presidents of the CCAR reflected this concern.

<sup>110</sup> Samuel Schulman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1912, p. 200.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Kahn, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1975, p. 4.



One of the first goals mentioned in that first speech by Wise was the need

to establish and control a fund from which to give aid and support to superannuated and indigent colleagues and their families, not otherwise provided for.<sup>112</sup>

This fund is alluded to several times throughout the 1900's and 1910's. The need to support economically distressed rabbis became especially evident again during the 1930's, where the Great Depression forced the CCAR to establish a temporary emergency fund to help those who had become its financial victims.<sup>113</sup> While the need that the Superannuated Ministers Fund addressed, that of rabbinic "security," was evident in various speeches all the way to the present day, the need has been reflected in several different approaches.

By 1907 the call was to help the rabbis financially before they became indigent by establishing a pension fund. From its first mention in 1907 to its most recent mention in 1980, pension has been mentioned as an explicit goal nineteen times! This number does not include all the times it has been alluded to but not directly stated as a specific goal. Clearly it has been a major priority for the rabbis of the CCAR. When Joseph Stolz first brought it up in his 1907 speech, only three rabbis were drawing from the fund, which, as he explained, was created by

the accumulation of one-half of our membership dues, one-half of the net profits of our publications and one-half of the interest received from our investments."<sup>114</sup>

He foresaw that in the future there would be many more in need of the fund, so he called upon the rabbis to "make ample provision for the

<sup>112</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1890, pp. 12-13.

<sup>113</sup> Morris Neufeld, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1932, p. 155.

<sup>114</sup> Joseph Stolz, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1907, p. 173.

future"<sup>115</sup> at that time. A committee was established and the rabbis worked hard to put an adequate plan into place. It took them several years to even formulate a plan, but the optimism in that plan was evident in Leo Franklin's 1920 speech.

The proposed pension plan inaugurated by this Conference and which we hope may soon be put into operation by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations will go far to relieve the anxiety of some of our men as to their sustenance in old age or when through physical disability, they become unable to fulfill their functions.<sup>116</sup>

Unfortunately, the plan was not implemented as speedily as the rabbis would have hoped. Talk proved cheap, since it required the cooperation of the UAHC, individual congregations and the CCAR. The process continued to be delayed, and one can sense the urgency in the remarks of Edward Calisch just two years later.

The dignity of the rabbinate, the peace of mind of the Rabbi, his ability to serve his people to the fullest extent of his powers, are insured by a knowledge of the fact that a well-defined and well-deserved provision is made for the contingencies of illness, accident, old age, or other possible causes of incapacitation. I, therefore, recommend that an expression be made emphasizing the sense of responsibility that rests upon both Rabbis and laymen in this regard and urging them to a fulfillment of it.<sup>117</sup>

Some rabbis did participate in a group plan, but sadly, a complete program was not in place by the time of the Great Depression. When HG Enelow recommended that the rabbis study "anew of the problem of rabbis' pensions"<sup>118</sup> in 1929, he did not realize that studying would be too little and too late in just a few short months when the stock market crashed. It seemed as if an adequate pension plan would never be in place. David Lefkowitz, in 1932, was looking for alternatives given the continual delays the pension plan had encountered.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p.174.

<sup>116</sup> Leo Franklin, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1920, p. 178.

<sup>117</sup> Edward Calisch, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1922, p.118.

<sup>118</sup> HG Enelow, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1929, p. 196.

For a number of years the proposed Pension Plan for Rabbis had been before us and before our congregations. We learn that by no means the necessary number of rabbis and congregations have announced their willingness to enter into the plans...The older men have had to put that plan definitely aside and have turned to other possibilities of protection... Group insurance partially offers such a possibility.<sup>119</sup>

The alternatives would have to do, at least until, 1942, when once again a plan was proposed.

The Joint Committee on Pensions will, I hope, have a concrete plan to lay before you, one that will at long last enable us to make a beginning.<sup>120</sup>

Finally, in 1944, it the dream became a reality, according to then President Solomon Freehof:

The establishment of a Pension Plan for rabbis has long been the dream of our Conference and now at last it is virtually a reality. The main funds for the Pension Plan have been established.<sup>121</sup>

This original plan set up the "Rabbinical Pension Board" with representation from the CCAR and the UAHC. It also called for individual retirement income policies with a fixed death benefit to retirement and a guaranteed income annuity at retirement. Premiums were set at ten percent of the salary of the rabbi, seven percent being contributed by the congregation and three percent by the rabbi. As Elliot Stevens pointed out, however, "it quickly became apparent that the ten percent level of contribution would no longer suffice."<sup>122</sup> The plan was reworked into a true group retirement plan in 1956, according to then President Barnett Brickner,<sup>123</sup> and was not seriously debated or delayed as the previous plans had been. However, it was restructured again eleven years later in 1967 to a level of fifteen percent which the congregation would have to pay by

<sup>119</sup> David Lefkowitz, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1932, p.201.

<sup>120</sup> James Heller, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1942, p.229.

<sup>121</sup> Solomon Freehof, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1944, p. 158.

<sup>122</sup> Elliot Stevens, p. 34.

<sup>123</sup> Barnett Brickner, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1956, p. 3.

themselves. Then President Jacob Weinstein devoted more time and detail to this issue than any other President in the History of the CCAR, and pointed out that "we need not apologize for discussing our security and that of our families."<sup>124</sup> Work to keep up with the times is mentioned as a goal in 1976 and 1978, but no explicit changes were laid out in the speeches. Today's plan is characterized by several different options, and changes, in general, are entrusted to the Rabbinical Pension Board rather than brought up in front of the Conference body. The last mention of the issue as a goal was in 1980 by Jerome Malino, where he attempted to justify why rabbis are concerned with compensation and security.

The Rabbi must live in respectful dignity and must be able to provide for the satisfaction of those intellectual and aesthetic desires which have been cultivated through a long and intense educational experience. The compensation, therefore, which the Rabbi receives, is a necessary ingredient for personal fulfillment and the fulfillment of the ambitions of the Rabbi's family.<sup>125</sup>

The goal of pension and security has been extremely important to the rabbis over the years, for they take quite seriously and literally the words of Pirke Avot: Im ein kemach, ein Torah.

Job security has been almost as important to the CCAR Presidents as their financial security. It was not only security which the rabbis discussed in these speeches, but fairness and ethics in the job as well. The first mention of problems relating to the rabbis being employed was in Wise's last speech, in 1899.

May I be permitted to suggest that there are two important points which the conference ought to take into consideration, and establish some ethical principles to guide us:

1. What rights has a minister, the observation of which every congregation ought to respect?

<sup>124</sup> Jacob Weinstein, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1967, p. 6.

<sup>125</sup> Jerome Malino, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1980, p. p.6.

2. Has any rabbi a right to apply for a position in any congregation in which another minister is officiating?<sup>126</sup>

Wise thus previews the two protections rabbis strive for in order to achieve peace of mind in their jobs: protection from the congregation and protection from each other. The crux of the issue is how rabbis and congregations can secure rabbinical employment in both a fair and ethical manner.

Joseph Silverman, in 1900, raised specific objections to the then prevailing method of hiring rabbis. The problem was

the question of filling vacant pulpits so as to abolish the competitive system, with its obnoxious trial sermon, now in vogue. The prevailing method of hearing candidates is demoralizing to the pulpit and the congregation, as well as unsatisfactory to both.<sup>127</sup>

Apparently, the fault was not entirely the congregations'. In 1916, William Rosenau made a plea for "personal dignity among preachers"<sup>128</sup> in this regard.

However, it was difficult to find a solution that went beyond mere verbal chastisement. Rosenau did attempt to set up some sort of formal structure wherein length of service would at least be recognized as an important criterion, a sort of primitive seniority placement plan.

I would recommend the Conference's acceptance of the proposition made by its Arbitration Committee, that the Conference keep a record of the men, not only willing to make a change of pulpit but also deserving of promotion to more important positions, and that congregations be importuned to consult such record whenever congregations are known to want to fill pulpit vacancies.<sup>129</sup>

Unfortunately for many of the rabbis of the time, the idea was not mentioned again until 1931, where it appears that the Depression was driving rabbis to unethical tactics once again.

<sup>126</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1899, p. 29.

<sup>127</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1900, p. 25.

<sup>128</sup> William Rosenau, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1916, p.178.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, 1917, p. 206.



With a group of unemployed rabbis in the field and fairly large classes of young men preparing for entrance into the ministry, the scene is being laid for an unholy scramble for pulpits far more undignified and disgraceful than it has ever been before in our American rabbinate. There will be bidding and underbidding on the part of hard-driven colleagues, perhaps with families to support, and there will be all the playing of one rabbi against another on the part of congregation, with wire-pulling and trial sermons thrown in for good measure.<sup>130</sup>

His specific recommendation was a Pulpit Placement Bureau done in cooperation with the UAHC. Like most measures in the CCAR however, it was no easy sell. It took years before it became a reality. Emil Leipziger brought it up again in 1940, when he reported that a joint committee had indeed been established.<sup>131</sup> Coming up with a plan that would be approved, though, was another matter, for James Heller referred to the problem again in 1943.

The manner in which many congregations seek occupants for their pulpits, and sometimes too the expedients to which these practices reduce our men, have been distressing and patently deleterious. It penalizes the man of quiet probity, the scholar, the pastor. It tends to put a premium on wire-pulling, on pulpit-presence. Its evils have been patent to us for many years. We have tried to move promptly and effectively in the matter.<sup>132</sup>

The key word there is try. The CCAR continued to appoint people to the committee, but the committee did not succeed in formulating an actual plan for some time.

The CCAR tried again in 1950, as Jacob Rader Marcus once again gave a recommendation and an accompanying rationale:

No rabbi can do an effective job in the field of education, or in any part of his ministry, unless he is reasonably secure. We are in the process of creating a Placement Bureau, which, if it accomplishes nothing else, will at least present the names of "forgotten men" when rabbinical posts are open. The initial act, of course, is to secure a

<sup>130</sup> David Lefkowitz, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1931, p. 189.

<sup>131</sup> Emil Leipziger, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1940, p. 210.

<sup>132</sup> James Heller, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1942, p. 221.



position; the next is to hold it with security and dignity.<sup>133</sup>

The recommendation by Marcus became a formal proposal, but it was defeated by a vote of the UAHC Biennial Assembly in 1950. As Philip Bernstein put it:

Perhaps the lay congregational leadership has not understood the important role played by the sense of insecurity in the desire of so many rabbis for an authoritative Placement plan.<sup>134</sup>

A provisional committee was created at that time representing the UAHC, the CCAR and HUC-JIR, but without the services of a full-time director.<sup>135</sup> That next step was proposed in 1961 in the new comprehensive plan pushed by then President Bernard Bamberger. According to Elliot Stevens it was "finally adopted in 1963 after vigorous debate within the Conference and the Union,"<sup>136</sup> and one can sense the tremendous relief and joy the CCAR felt when it was finally approved in the remarks of the 1964 President Leon Feuer:

I am pleased to be able to report that after several years of discussion, planning, and negotiation, the Rabbinical Placement Plan adopted by our membership by a more than two-thirds majority in a written referendum, is ready for implementation in substantially the form in which it was adopted.<sup>137</sup>

Since 1963 the Commission has provided placement and counseling services for the members of the CCAR, established a guideline of placement ethics, adopted a system of congregational classification and guidelines for eligibility, created rules for in-house promotion and provided contract guidelines and advice.<sup>138</sup> The only question which raised any serious discussion by the CCAR Presidents after that time was the question of "in-

<sup>133</sup> Jacob Rader Marcus, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1950, p. 242.

<sup>134</sup> Philip Bernstein, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1951, p. 215.

<sup>135</sup> Stevens, p. 33.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Leon Feuer, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1964, p. 5.

<sup>138</sup> Stevens, p. 33.

house" promotion , where an Assistant Rabbi at a particular congregation, where he would otherwise not have enough years in the field, can be promoted to Senior Rabbi at that congregation in the event that the Senior Rabbi should leave or die. This issue was discussed during the 1976 and 1977 Conventions. The only other instances where various Presidents mentioned the Placement Plan as a "goal" were either in the way of "fine-tuning" or support for the Plan. Essentially, the plan has changed little since 1961.

The Placement Plan was not the only way the CCAR tried to secure job security for the rabbis. Other more specific ideas were also proposed by the rabbis as "goals." There were suggested arbitration procedures between rabbis and congregations presented in 1906 and the calling by David Philipson in 1909 for an official Board of Arbitration.

It would appear advisable to have a Board of Arbitration before whom any dispute between congregation on the one hand or a rabbi on the other, or both, so desire. As a matter of course this Board could have no power other than advisory, but it might prove the means of securing fair treatment for the aggrieved party, be it the congregation or the rabbi...<sup>139</sup>

A National Conciliation Commission, formed jointly between the UAHC and CCAR, was adopted in 1959 to formalize these needs.

There was the encouragement of the use of "lifetime contracts" by Samuel Schulman in 1913.

We suggest to the congregations in the land that the custom of electing for life, which is growing up in the land, should be encouraged. In thus encouraging this procedure, congregations will do very much to lift the status of the ministry in small places, and in not a few large congregations, and will immeasurably increase the moral authority of the Rabbi and will render a solid service to Judaism.<sup>140</sup>

Between 1948 and 1952 the CCAR Presidents spoke of a tenure program for rabbis. As Abraham Feldman put it in 1948:

<sup>139</sup> David Philipson, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1909, p. 211.

<sup>140</sup> Samuel Schulman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1913, p. 217.

The rabbi should have security of tenure. College professors have such tenure. Such tenure would give a new dignity to the rabbinate and would be a factor in encouraging others to enter it.<sup>141</sup>

Despite its mention and heavy discussion in the five year period which followed, no formal tenure program was ever adopted by the congregations. On the other, hand, the CCAR Placement Committee does use seniority as a criterion of the rabbinical placement process.

Congregational autonomy, as usual, has prevailed, but the goal of improving rabbinic/congregation relationships in a formal way has not disappeared. It often appears in other forms, such as congregational pressure for rabbis to take particular stands on particular issues. One such issue has been officiating at mixed marriages. A rabbi's stance on this one issue often determines the relationship between congregation and rabbi and even whether or not that rabbi will be hired. Jack Stern pointed out the dangers of this problem in one of his goals as recently as 1986.

What is at stake here, I believe, it [sic] not only rabbinical independence but the integrity of our Reform movement. Thus my proposal: that this Conference call upon the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to assume its rightful responsibility through whatever mechanism it deems best, to urge its member congregations not to pressure rabbis, and not to discriminate against rabbinical candidates because of their refusal to officiate at mixed marriages or their insistence upon following the dictates of their own conscience.<sup>142</sup>

Whatever form it takes, solving grievances between congregations and rabbis will continue to appear as a major goal in the coming years.

Not unrelated to the issue of job security was one particular type of rabbinic job which received especial attention in so many of the speeches--that of military chaplain. The first official call for chaplains was made by William Rosenau in 1917 for World War I.

<sup>141</sup> Abraham Feldman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1948, p. 186.

<sup>142</sup> Jack Stern, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1986, p. 9.

We, as servants of the Lord, are peculiarly exempt from carrying arms. Notwithstanding this exemption, has not the minister a definite place in the battle and in the camps? Hence there exist both opportunity and reason for the appointment of Jewish chaplains who are to lead Jewish soldiers in their religious devotion, cheer them in their disheartenment, comfort them in their suffering and attend them in their death.<sup>143</sup>

World War II brought on new calls for military chaplains from the ranks of the Reform Rabbinate as well as the new problem of placement and fairness because many of these men vacated their pulpits in order to serve. Solomon Freehof spoke to the goal of "fairness" for these men in his 1945 speech.

Our colleagues in the armed services can rely upon their colleagues at home that our desires for justice and fair dealing will translate themselves into proper opportunities for the chaplains when they return.<sup>144</sup>

During the Korean War the Rabbis established the Chaplaincy Equalization Fund to achieve the goal of financial equity for those rabbis serving as military chaplains. According to the plan the members of the CCAR agreed to contribute half of one percent of their annual salary to the Fund. President Philip Bernstein spoke of this fund with pride in his 1952 speech, quoting a letter from an unnamed Chaplain in the Far East.

I want to tell you how proud the CCAR Chaplains in Korea are of their Conference. First, the spirit of fair play and honor which informed the discussion on the draft program. Now the Equalization Fund. It is not the prospect of possible financial assistance. It is the warming knowledge that the military Chaplaincy is regarded as a common responsibility and privilege.<sup>145</sup>

The goal of responding to the need for chaplains also applied to the Vietnam conflict. The CCAR, in 1967, affirmed both the need for rabbis to serve and the position of conscientious objector status for those who chose that route. In the same speech Jacob Weinstein reported "gladly" that

<sup>143</sup> William Rosenau, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1917, p. 183.

<sup>144</sup> Solomon Freehof, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1945, p. 185.

<sup>145</sup> Philip Bernstein, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1952, p. 287.

students and applicants for admission to HUC who attest to conscientious objector status were indeed exempt from the Chaplaincy.

Most of us believe that regardless of the barbarity of war, and of this war in particular, men who serve in the Armed Forces are still children of God, still human beings, and they should not be denied the ministrations of their faith.<sup>146</sup>

Weinstein managed to walk a wire between whether or not he felt which was the right thing to do. Though there are still several Reform Rabbis serving in the US Military as Chaplains, there has not been a "call for chaplains" or even the mention of chaplains as a specific goal in any of the speeches since 1967.

In addition to job security and ethics in seeking a job, the CCAR Presidents have shown a concern for ethics once in the job. Rosenau's aforementioned plea for "personal dignity among preachers" was not only in reference to finding a pulpit but for behavior and attitude while serving a pulpit. A formal code was adopted in 1926<sup>147</sup> but was not mentioned as a goal in any of the speeches of the time. The first formal mention in a speech was by HG Enelow in 1928 when he recommended that the Conference create a standing committee on Professional Conduct,

whose function it shall be to receive inquiries and complaints, whether signed or anonymous, bearing on the subject of the conduct of rabbis in the pursuit of their profession, and to publish its opinions far and wide, in order to educate the public on what is right and what is wrong in rabbinic conduct.<sup>148</sup>

The published code and the work of the committee apparently was not working well by 1938, for then President Max Currick referred to problems in rabbi/congregational relations, rabbi/rabbi relations and ethical conduct of the rabbis themselves. He asked that the Committee

<sup>146</sup> Jacob Weinstein, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1967, p. 6.

<sup>147</sup> Stevens, p. 31.

<sup>148</sup> HG Enelow, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1928, p. 182.



give some attention to the Constitution of the Conference and the code of ethics and decide whether it is ready to recommend a revision of one or more of its articles or the addition of a new one...In all these matters the final question will be whether the Conference desires to establish anything like disciplinary procedures to meet extreme situations.<sup>149</sup>

In 1940 Emil Leipziger used a part of his speech to promote David Lefkowitz' plan for a Code of Ethics.<sup>150</sup> In 1962 Albert Minda called for a "re-examination, a reformulation, that shall make it definitive and brought up to date."<sup>151</sup> This code was adopted in 1964 and then revised again in 1975. The most recent mention of rabbinic ethics and conduct, by Samuel Karff in 1990, is perhaps the one which puts the problem most clearly in perspective for rabbis.

The yetser is stronger than we had ever imagined and appears in many guises. Our need for chesed, love and forgiveness, is more amply understood with each passing year. Still there is a yetser tov. We are both chastened and validated by the manner in which the teaching we proclaim is embodied in the life we live.<sup>152</sup>

In addition to ethics and security, the rabbis have clearly been interested in the quality of their jobs and lives. This "quality" issue has taken two general paths over the years, (1) education/professional development and (2) personal satisfaction and peace of mind.

The issue of continuing rabbinic education and professional development was first raised by Joseph Silverman in 1902. Specifically, he asked the Convention Body to consider holding a "Summer School for theological and rabbinical studies."<sup>153</sup> Though such an institute never came into being it was clear that continuing education was a legitimate need for the rabbis of the CCAR. In 1916 William Rosenau brought up a more

<sup>149</sup> Max Currick, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1938, p. 180.

<sup>150</sup> Emil Leipziger, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1940, p. 210.

<sup>151</sup> Albert Minda, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1962, p. 13.

<sup>152</sup> Samuel Karff, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1990, p. 6.

<sup>153</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1902, p. 34.



easily achievable goal—that of adding a shiur to the program of the CCAR conventions.

The average rabbi has not, on account of his multiform duties, much time for the continuation of rabbinical disciplines after once he has gotten into office.<sup>154</sup>

In 1919 Louis Grossman suggested rabbinic education in a specific area, education that included the "socializing function" of the rabbi.<sup>155</sup> The goal of the rabbi's continuing professional development was mentioned on-again and off-again in the succeeding decades. For the most part it has been regionalized and is included more on regional conference agendas than on national CCAR Conference agendas. It is seen not only as useful for a rabbi's duties, but helpful in a rabbi's personal satisfaction as well. As Gunther Plaut admonished in 1984:

The rabbi who does not study fails to unite the inner and outer worlds, and most likely will become stuck in the morass of the outer world, or despair in the isolation of the inner realm. My colleagues, I ask you to set time aside for study. It is not one of the priorities that you have, it is the priority, and our Jews know it in their hearts.<sup>156</sup>

This isolation, or the more general rabbinic malaise alluded to by Plaut, is also a recurring theme in the CCAR Presidential speeches. It is first mentioned as a problem, a goal to be solved, by Joseph Silverman in 1901. He listed several causes, including poor treatment by congregations, poor compensation and lack of appreciation, that

contribute to create that disordered state of mind that oft impels men to give up the cherished ideals of youth for some other walk of life. It is timely that this subject be fully investigated by this Conference...<sup>157</sup>

Felix Levy's 1937 speech blamed the misuse of the rabbi by people as the reason for the rabbi's lack of prestige and resulting malaise.

<sup>154</sup> William Rosenau, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1916, p. 176.

<sup>155</sup> Louis Grossman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1919, p. 126.

<sup>156</sup> Gunther Plaut, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1984, p. 7.

<sup>157</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1901, p. 35.

I suggest that the Conference go on record that it be the sense of this gathering, that the rabbi's services are not a marketable commodity that any individual may purchase, but that he serves the congregation and that unaffiliated members of a community that can afford to support a congregation and do not do so, shall not be entitled to the services of the minister. Such action would not only strengthen congregations but would raise the prestige of our office.

The rabbinic malaise was further narrowed into a problem of "loneliness" in both 1959 and 1989. This lack of prestige, the "decline in influence and esteem within the Jewish community," was called "the most critical issue facing the Rabbinate" by 1973 President David Polish.<sup>158</sup>

Indeed the problem was mentioned as a goal to be solved in several speeches. However, proposed solutions proved to be a much rarer commodity. The increasing emphasis on regional conferences was one such solution, but an altogether different idea was proposed by Albert Minda in 1962. Minda asked the question "who is the rabbi's rabbi?" The rabbi needed help with more than just his placement and his congregational arbitration.

He who gives so much himself to his congregants in various situations and circumstances, finds on occasion in his rabbinic and personal life the need of counsel and communication which can only be provided by a colleague. I, therefore, recommend that the Conference establish a committee on Consultation consisting of men located in areas geographically available, to serve the aforementioned purposes.<sup>159</sup>

Most recently 1989 President Eugene Lipman raised the issue once again. He mentioned that the question of why rabbis were leaving the rabbinate was asked all the way back in 1901 and determined that

we must study the problem of widespread malaise among us. I suggest that we must be more zealous in determining what more we can do as a Conference to make the congregational rabbinate more secure and more fulfilling.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>158</sup> David Polish, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1973, p. 4.

<sup>159</sup> Albert Minda, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1962, p. 12.

<sup>160</sup> Eugene Lipman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1989, p. 9.

Regardless of how zealous the CCAR becomes, the fact that curing the "malaise" has been around as a goal since 1901 indicates that it is inherent to being a rabbi in the United States. The reality is that there is little the Conference can do to achieve the goal of reducing the malaise, though there is no doubt they will continue to try.

Not only have the CCAR Presidents been concerned with their own education, but with the education of their future colleagues as well. Support and/or concern for the Hebrew Union College was mentioned as a specific goal 20 times between 1900 and 1976 as well as on several other occasions in brief. For the most part the goal was just to support the college, though occasionally there was a more specific twist, such as supporting the merger between HUC and JIR, supporting the Jerusalem campus and securing formal representation on HUC's board. Though the relationship has been murky at times, the number of times it is listed as a goal speaks to how important Hebrew Union College has been to the Central Conference of American Rabbis over the years.

While the CCAR may not be able to do anything about the malaise or the prestige of the rabbi they can at least protect the title of "rabbi." As early as 1897 the President of the CCAR warned against charlatan rabbis who were embarrassing the Jewish people.

You might also take into consideration the unpleasant fact that the American Rabbinate is frequently disgraced before the public by the small, often ridiculous misdeeds, which the press innocently reports as committed by this or that "Rabbi," of whose claim to this title nobody has any knowledge...Perhaps, brethren, in your wisdom, you can propose means to protect the American Rabbinate against the shame heaped upon the just fraternity by unjust interlopers and pretenders.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1897, p. xii.

Similar warnings were issued by Joseph Silverman in 1900 and Max Currick in 1938, and Edward Calisch urged the protection of the rabbinical title in 1923 as well. The issue received no other mentions in the speeches but may again in the near future, as "Messianic Judaism" and "Jews for Jesus," who use this title without any authority to do so, continue to grow in numbers.

A final issue which should be mentioned in connection with rabbinical employment is the issue of women in the rabbinate. The issue was first discussed in 1922, when Martha Neumark requested ordination. Though it was not mentioned in the speech of that year, the CCAR did endorse the right of women to be ordained.<sup>162</sup> Their endorsement was overruled by the Board of Governors of HUC. Barnett Brickner, in 1955, brought the issue up once again as a goal. "Is there anything in our missing Reform *Shulhan Aruch* that prohibits us from ordaining women?" Brickner asked. "Does it not accord with our liberalism?"<sup>163</sup> Apparently, Plaut did not convince the rest of the CCAR to pursue the goal after another rejection by the HUC Board of Governors, as the record is silent after a positive committee recommendation in 1956. The issue of women in the rabbinate was not brought up in connection with a goal until 1980, when Jerome Malino spoke candidly about some of the problems women in the rabbinate were facing.

I would call upon every male member of our Conference to labor without rest until all distinctions based on sex have been removed. Every one of us is diminished when our female colleagues fail to receive the respect and the opportunity which we would aspire to for ourselves.<sup>164</sup>

<sup>162</sup> Eugene Lipman, "Tanu Rabbanan," 1990, p. 44.

<sup>163</sup> Barnett Brickner, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1955, p. 13.

<sup>164</sup> Jerome Malino, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1980, p. 11.

This issue figures to get more press in the near future with the continued increase in the number of women being ordained.

### **Scholarship and Publication**

The final group of goals within the rabbi category is that of scholarship and publication. As previously mentioned, one of Wise's first three goals was to publish a yearbook for the CCAR. This first yearbook was "to make known to all whom it may concern the resolutions, decisions, suggestions or counsels of the Central Conference."<sup>165</sup> The Yearbook quickly expanded to include not only the business of the Conference but also various scholarly essays and articles by the rabbis. In fact the goal of publishing for the rabbis was really three-fold: (1) to encourage scholarship as an important activity in itself for rabbis, (2) to lead and educate congregants and (3) to give the CCAR badly needed revenue.

The CCAR Yearbook represented only the first of many publications revolving around scholarship that the CCAR would eventually produce. It is fairly clear that the idea of "scholarship" *lishma* was an important one in the early days of the CCAR. Wise mentioned the encouragement of scholarship during the very first speech in 1890.

The united rabbis in conference assembled should annually give fresh impulses and new encouragement to the study of the literature of Israel, especially by giving out select subjects for investigation and research to individuals or committees, to be worked up in essays, treatises, reports, sermons or lectures, to be published in the Year Book of the Conference, in magazines or pamphlets and books.<sup>166</sup>

The second president, Joseph Silverman, also emphasized its importance in his first goal in 1901.

In brief, without further outlining this plan, I propose that this

<sup>165</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1890, p.12.

<sup>166</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1890, p. 20.



Conference assume more the character of the great scientific or academical societies whose members meet for the purpose of learning from one another on special lines of inquiry and research, of comparing notes, revising their opinions and gaining more practical and theoretical knowledge for their particular duties.<sup>167</sup>

This interest in scholarship included helping out in the efforts of the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* and the Jewish Publication Society's Bible translation. The CCAR Presidents were proud of their association with these two endeavors and mention them frequently as their own goals in their speeches. Volumes of selected sermons, emphasis on specific scholars such as Maimonides in 1930 and Baruch Spinoza in 1932, and Institutes on various topics such as "God and Man" in 1950 and "Psychiatry and Religion" in 1952 were also listed as specific goals in the area of scholarship by the Presidents of the CCAR. In addition, the CCAR Presidents listed fundraising for scholarship on several occasions, particularly throughout the 1930's. Emil Leipziger's remarks in 1940 are illustrative of this phenomenon.

Let this Conference call upon the leaders in our seminaries to counsel further concerning this obligation blended with opportunity to the end that there be an expansion of this project which gives impetus to the creative scholarship in Israel.<sup>168</sup>

However, this trend seemed to end in the 1940's with the last mention of scholarship for rabbis as a specific goal in Solomon Freehof's 1944 speech. This was perhaps due to the fact that the rabbi was no longer the most educated person in his congregation, and therefore the congregants no longer looked to their rabbi to provide them with scholarly information. The trend continued to the point where scholarship is somewhat rare for congregational rabbis today, for as Michael Meyer put it:

With the proliferation of academic Jewish studies in the 1970's, few rabbis could claim the highest level of expertise even in their own domain.<sup>169</sup>

<sup>167</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1901, p. 24.

<sup>168</sup> Emil Leipziger, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1940, p. 208.

<sup>169</sup> Meyer, p. 370.



Publications did not decrease, however, as a result of the decline in scholarship. Rather the priority of publication shifted to that of leading and educating congregants. From the beginning this was the goal of creating a unified prayer book. According to Wise:

The united rabbis of America have undoubtedly the right and the duty to produce a uniform form of worship for all our houses of worship.<sup>170</sup>

This goal led eventually to the *Union Prayer Book* and its several revisions. Early on the CCAR also took on the duty of publishing the *Union Hymnal* and *Songster*, the *Pesach Haggadah*, the *Book of Private Devotion*, a *Catechism*, a *Confirmation Manual*, a *Rabbi's Manual*, a *Sabbath Manual*, a *Book of Meditations and Prayers*, tracts on specific topics, and the *Liberal Judaism* and *CCAR Journal* (now the *Journal of Reform Judaism*) periodicals. Later on, with the invention of the official CCAR Press in 1977, CCAR publications have focused on the "Gates of..." series, which encompasses an entire range of liturgical and educational materials for both synagogue and home use. In addition to this literature the CCAR has published Reform Responsa literature, special holiday literature and other miscellaneous works relevant to the goals of educating and unifying reform congregants. Clearly the effects these publications have on congregants, those of education and unity, remain important goals for the CCAR.

These publications also help achieve the third and final goal the rabbis intended for this literature—badly needed revenue. In 1904 Joseph Krauskopf urged the CCAR to undertake many more publishing endeavors as a major source of revenue.

The sale of the *Union Prayer Book* and of the *Hymnal* has been and is a splendid source of revenue. What these have done other needed

<sup>170</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1890, p. 11.

literature might do for us. There is an urgent need of a modern Hagadah that would find a ready sale among nearly all the members of congregations represented in this body. There is need of proper Sabbath School literature, which ought to be created and owned and sold by this body, and which would prove a considerable source of revenue.<sup>171</sup>

Publications still provide a major source of revenue for the CCAR and will continue to do so in the future. The need for clear and practical Jewish literature will continue to increase as the Jewish community strives to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

It is time now to ask the three questions which will help crystallize the goals in this category even further: (1) were these goals descriptive or prescriptive, (2) what were the rhetorical strategies used to accomplish these goals and (3) how successful were the rabbis in accomplishing their goals?

### **Descriptive or Prescriptive**

The goals which primarily affected the rabbis are clearly prescriptive rather than descriptive. The goals of CCAR organizational maintenance, financial/job concern and publication were all ideals which the CCAR Presidents hoped to achieve. The Presidents may have described the realities they faced as rabbis, but their goals definitely prescribed the ideal rabbinic situation. Better organization, greater job security, pension plans, job satisfaction and publication opportunities were all things for which the rabbis hoped, and they expressed these hopes in concrete goals in the speeches.

### **Rhetorical Questions and Strategies**

In terms of goals that affect the rabbis, the primary audience, the rabbis, is really the only audience. The goals listed are specifically

<sup>171</sup> Joseph Krauskopf, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1904, p. 35-36.

intended for those in attendance as well as other rabbis who may not be attending the conference. This proximity gives the CCAR Presidents a luxury with these goals that they do not have for goals intended for the Reform movement, K'lal Yisrael or general society. Because the audience is so immediate, the majority of appeals are logos appeals (logically based). The rabbis know well the problems they encounter in their rabbinic duties. Indeed it takes little effort to convince rabbis they need better retirement plans, bigger pensions or even ethical conduct codes with more teeth. A simple appeal to logic is enough to convince the rabbis to support the particular goal a particular President is promoting. In terms of the category of the rabbis themselves, the logos appeal appears to be most effective.

### Success or Failure?

Just how effective have the CCAR Presidents been over the years in accomplishing their goals in the category of the rabbis themselves? For the most part, they have been very effective. Though some of the goals took several years or even decades to accomplish, the rabbis have achieved nearly everything for which they have pushed. The Conference structure, at the Centennial in 1989, included 12 different regional groups, 27 standing committees, 26 joint commissions, 16 ad hoc committees, an Executive Vice President, a Director of Placement, a Director of Publications, an Administrative Secretary and several administrative staff members. Several resolutions were passed over the years which gave the rabbis greater benefits, security and status. The rabbis themselves have an equitable placement plan, a pension plan and even relatively high salaries. According to Hebrew Union College President Alfred Gottschalk,

"generally, rabbinic salaries provide a rabbi with a very comfortable life-style."<sup>172</sup>

Despite all these successes and accomplishments, the rabbinate was and is far from perfect or even content. Particularly in the 1960's, the Reform rabbinate was plagued by a general malaise. According to the Lenn Report, published in 1971, only a bare majority of Reform rabbis said they would choose the rabbinate if they could start their careers over.<sup>173</sup> A lengthy resolution of the 1966 Convention developed a ten point plan to help "solve some of the persistent problems that work to the disadvantage of our sacred calling."<sup>174</sup> The problems included: rabbinical security, rabbinical representation in the larger Jewish community, professional advancement, financial protection, congregational structure, rabbinical ethics, adequate job placement for older colleagues, professional growth, upgrading the rabbinate of non-congregational rabbis and congregational conduct toward the rabbi. Despite their many successes, the rabbis, on the whole, were not satisfied with their jobs.

Perhaps some of the malaise results from the fact that rabbis have so many different roles to play at once. Jacob Shankman listed several of these roles when trying to pinpoint the problem in his 1965 essay "The Changing Role of the Rabbi:" scholar, teacher, preacher, man of affairs, pastor, counsellor [sic], organizer, administrator, fundraiser, psychiatrist, priest, handshaker, master of ceremonies, joiner, book reviewer and visitor of the sick.

These are by no means all the tasks which he is expected to undertake. To discharge them he must possess not only highmindedness, dedication and superlative gifts of mind and heart, but also the physical energies that

<sup>172</sup> Alfred Gottschalk, *To Learn and to Teach*, 1988, p. 13.

<sup>173</sup> Theodore Lenn, *American Reform Rabbinate*, 1971, p. 102.

<sup>174</sup> *CCAR Yearbook*, 1966, p. 100.

would tax a perfectly conditioned athlete and the psychic equilibrium of a saint... This is why he is so freely criticized and this is why he is often harassed, frustrated and unhappy.<sup>175</sup>

The modern rabbi clearly has a lot to think about and a lot of potential for encountering problems.

The number and variety of problems notwithstanding, however, the rabbis of the CCAR have been vastly successful in terms of accomplishing their goals. The CCAR has given them the structure and the power to achieve goals they set for themselves. Just because achieving the goals has not made the rabbis "happy" as a group does not mean they have failed to achieve their goals. Rather, in contrast to the other categories in this study, when the CCAR Presidents have set goals for the rabbis themselves, they have generally been successful in accomplishing them.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, the original "rabbi-centered" goals listed by Isaac Mayer Wise in that first speech, that of organizational maintenance, financial/job concern and publication, have remained the goals of the CCAR right through the early 1990's. The rabbis have achieved modest success in each of these areas, though the purpose of the last area, publication, has changed over the years. Though the forms have varied, the needs of the rabbis as reflected in the Presidential speeches have not changed fundamentally from the first goals listed by Wise in 1990.

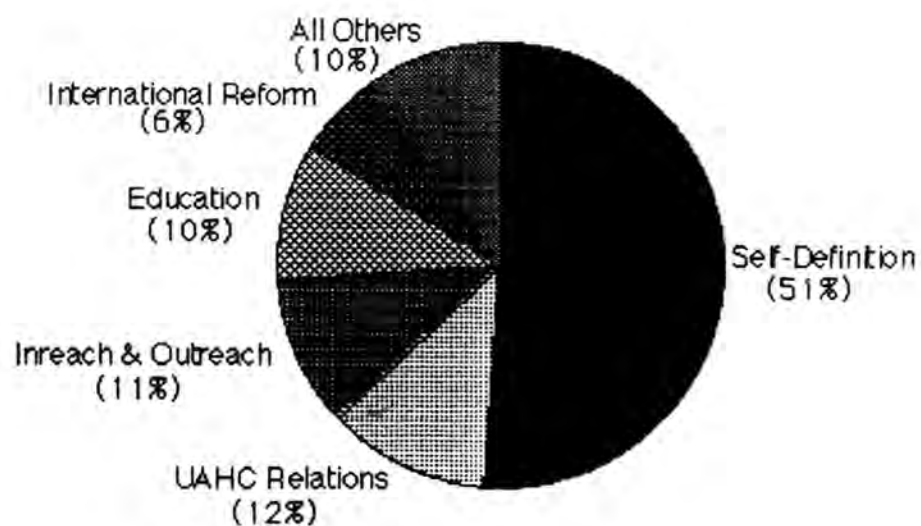
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<sup>175</sup> Jacob Shankman, "The Changing Role of the Rabbi," 1965, p. 233.

# CHAPTER 4

## THE REFORM MOVEMENT

### REFORM CATEGORY BREAKDOWN



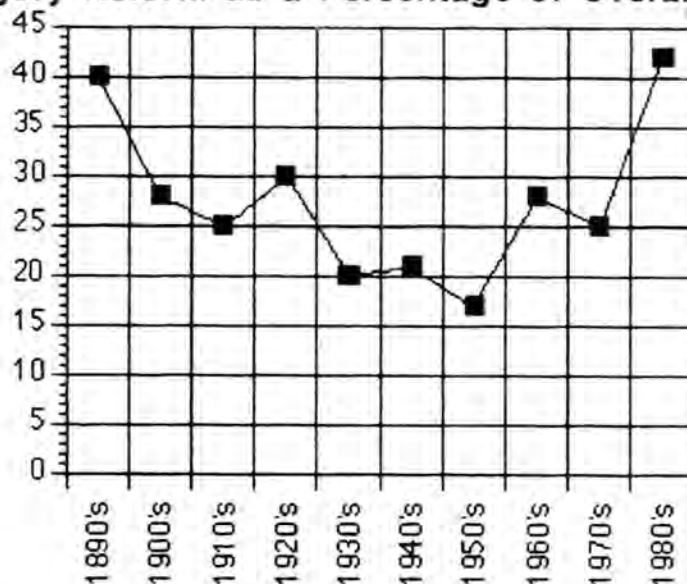


## CHAPTER 4

# THE REFORM MOVEMENT

The next set of goals to be analyzed are those goals which affect the Reform movement as a whole. As indicated earlier, the category of "Reform alone" was very high in the early part of the CCAR's history, average to low in the middle of the twentieth century, and then high once again in the eighties and nineties. The line graph shows the shape of an inverted bell curve.

**Category Reform as a Percentage of Overall Goals**



Apparently, this inverted bell curve has been directly related to how secure the rabbis felt in their own definition of Reform Judaism. In general, the percentage this category of goals made up of the overall total of goals rose and fell with this specific goal of "self-definition." Where there was a great need to define what Reform Judaism was, as was the case in both the infancy stages of the CCAR and during the ongoing "malaise" of the last

several decades, the percentage of the category "Reform alone" was quite high. When the rabbis were concentrating more on external events as in the middle of the twentieth century the percentage sank quite low. Defining what Reform Judaism is, clarifying theological principles, deciding whether Reform should become more "traditionally-oriented" or more oriented toward prophetic Judaism and the Jewish mission were among the recurring issues which received attention in this category. Guides, codes, synods and tractates were formulated and emphasized so that Reform Jews could abide by some of these self-definitions. However, the specific goal of self-definition and, therefore, much of this category, has already been analyzed in detail in Chapter Two of this thesis. Nevertheless, even in its earliest years the CCAR Presidents pursued several other goals specifically centered on the Reform movement which also warrant attention here. Among the most significant of these are education, missionizing (both within Judaism and outside it to prospective converts), International Liberal Judaism, relations with the UAHC, intermarriage officiating and unity within the Reform movement itself.

### **Religious Education**

First and foremost among these goals was educating the members of Reform congregations, particularly but not exclusively the youth. Wise mentioned this goal of education during his very first speech to the CCAR in 1890.

The united rabbis have furthermore the duty to provide a catechism for the Sabbath-schools on the same principle with the ritual...Hitherto we have given a number of such text-books resting on the authority of individuals, which critical minds do not consider the authorized expression of Judaism...We ought not allow the rising generation to depend on individual views and opinions in so important a matter as

is American Judaism to us and the cause of humanity.<sup>176</sup>

Apparently not only was education important, but it was also a means to the espousal of a specific point of view, one that would unify Reform Jews across the United States. Wise expanded that project to a *Manual of Religious Instruction* in 1895. As expected, Wise's manuals were not the last words on education. Already in 1907 President Joseph Stolz complained of problems in the quality of Jewish education being given to young Jews in Reform Congregations.

We need more schools and better schools, more competent teachers, better text and reading books, better pedagogical methods and, not the last of all, more time devoted to religious instruction.<sup>177</sup>

That sentence just about covers the entire gamut of educational needs that can exist. Apparently, Reform Jewish Education needed help in every aspect. In future years, some of these aspects were stressed on an individual basis. Publishing new text books was mentioned as an explicit goal in 1910 and 1911. In 1914 and 1915 the emphasis was on teacher training and getting the kids enrolled in the schools.

By 1918 and 1919 the whole process of Sunday School was being reevaluated. President Louis Grossman called for a "reorganization" of education in his 1919 speech.

The unrelievable flaw in the Sunday School is the implication that religion and its pieties are detached and isolated facts...and the problem for us is to restore Judaism to the centre [sic] of the educational life of the Jewish child and educational interest into the centre of the Jewish community.<sup>178</sup>

Despite the obvious problems inherent in Sunday Schools, Reform Rabbis were not yet ready to make the leap to "day schools." As Michael Meyer put it:

<sup>176</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1890, p. 20.

<sup>177</sup> Joseph Stolz, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1907, p. 167.

<sup>178</sup> Louis Grossman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1919, p. 118.

For Reform Jews, deeply committed to the public schools, to the separation of church and state, and to educational integration, day schools represented a far more controversial issue. For a long time rabbis and laity remained sharply divided.<sup>179</sup>

President Joseph Fink expressed his official opposition to independent day schools in his 1954 speech. In the very next year, however, Barnett Brickner presented the encouragement of the "limited" day school as one of his goals. Specifically he encouraged the "Foundation School" on the model of the Conservative movement, where the child goes to this progressive all-day private school from pre-school through the second grade and thereafter goes to public school.<sup>180</sup> More extensive Reform Day Schools were not supported officially until 1968, when the joint UAHC-CCAR Commission on Jewish Education declared their official encouragement.<sup>181</sup> This position was not specified as a goal in the CCAR Presidential Speech of that year, however.

A major step for the Reform movement was the hiring of Emanuel Gamoran by the UAHC, who took charge of Reform's educational program and "dominated it for thirty-five years."<sup>182</sup> Gamoran was mentioned in Abram Simon's 1924 speech as part of the emphasis the Reform movement would be placing on Jewish education. Despite his efforts and successes, solving the problems of Reform Jewish education for youth continued to be a goal in speeches up through the present. Solving problems in Reform Jewish education brought up explicitly as a "goal" in 1929, 1932, 1934, 1939, 1946, 1950, 1957, 1963, 1974 and most recently in 1989. Despite the best efforts and intentions, many problems still exist. According to Eugene Lipman in 1989:

<sup>179</sup> Meyer, p. 378.

<sup>180</sup> Barnett Brickner, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1955, p. 14.

<sup>181</sup> Meyer, p. 378.

<sup>182</sup> Meyer, p. 289.

I still record my conviction that our area of greatest weakness as a movement and the area of least success for us as rabbis is in the field of Jewish education. In spite of everything that has been undertaken, we produce confirmands and high school graduates (our she-ar yashuv) who are subminimally educated to function as serious Jews.<sup>183</sup>

Not only was education mentioned several times as a general goal, but specific groups and topics within the general goal of education also received special attention. In terms of topics, emphasizing Hebrew was most often mentioned by the Presidents. Its first mention as a specific goal appeared in 1912 by Samuel Schulman.

Let me make as strong a plea as I possibly can for the return to the instruction in Hebrew in our religious schools... Not at all, as a national language, but as a language of religious culture, should our children learn it.<sup>184</sup>

His reference to why it should be taught seems to be to preempt arguments from certain Classical Reformers who may have thought that the teaching of Hebrew went against the grain of what they were trying to do. On the contrary, Schulman argued, learning Hebrew best served the Classical Reformers' purposes since the prophetic texts could be studied in their original language. Indeed there is not one argument against emphasizing Hebrew in Jewish education in the speeches, but there are several more speeches which made it a priority, particularly in the 1930's. What can be concluded from this is that it was not primarily the rabbis who objected to the study and use of Hebrew in the synagogue, but rather, the laypeople.

In terms of "groups," teens, college students and adults all were singled out for special educational emphasis. For teens, the "confirmation manuals" have already been mentioned. In addition, NFTY received special support as a goal in 1949 and 1950 as well as brief mention in

<sup>183</sup> Eugene Lipman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1989, p. 9.

<sup>184</sup> Samuel Schulman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1912, pp. 248-249.



several other years. College students were singled out in both 1920 and 1965, though this domain has generally been left to B'nai B'rith Hillel. Special educational programs for prisoners, farmers, laborers, the deaf and the sick were also identified in goals, specifically by Joseph Stolz in 1907.<sup>185</sup>

After children, adults, by far, received the most educational attention by the CCAR Presidents. Wise first brought adult education up in his recommendation for an Adult Summer School in the 1895 speech. However, schools were not the only means of educating adults. Disseminating "practical" Bibles, establishing Young People's Congregations," and publishing the aforementioned tracts, guides and journals all had the goal of educating adults in the Jewish way of life. The need for this adult education was perhaps put most eloquently by HG Enelow in 1929.

Back to education! This, as I conceive it, is our greatest need. Back to the Torah, in its broad and comprehensive sense! And by this I do not mean merely the children or the youth, about whom we hear so much nowadays in connection with religious education, and who seem to be regarded as our vicarious burden-bearers in matters of religion. I mean the adults, the grown men and women, the members and the officers of our congregations, the trustees of our religious schools, the parents of those little ones for whose spiritual growth and welfare we profess so lively a concern.<sup>186</sup>

His words could just as easily have been spoken today.

### **Missionizing, Inreach and Outreach**

The early Reformers' definition of Judaism as a "missionary" religion is well-known to us. It was articulated in the Pittsburgh Platform in 1885. What is not as clear is to what extent the Reform movement meant to "missionize," both within Judaism and in the external world.

<sup>185</sup> Joseph Stolz, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1907, pp. 169-173.

<sup>186</sup> HG Enelow, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1929, pp. 184-185.



Isaac Mayer Wise himself was uncertain as to what extent the Reform movement should go in that direction. "Should we or should we not introduce and recommend a mission system," he asked in his 1895 speech, "and how should it be arranged and carried into effect?"<sup>187</sup>

According to his successor, Joseph Silverman, that mission should be carried out quite aggressively.

Other religions make propaganda for the spread of their doctrines, their beliefs and practices. They are proselytizing religions, some are militant churches. Judaism alone is content to grow from within and to wait until those without voluntarily accept its doctrines. I believe the time has come for us to adopt a more aggressive policy. Without criticizing any religion, without opposing any church, let us adopt such means of argument and publication as will bring our doctrines more readily to the attention of a world that is open to conviction.<sup>188</sup>

In the majority of speeches when the concept of the Jewish "mission" is brought up it is to teach the world about Judaism and the Jewish prophetic ideal, as was the case in the 1908, 1911, 1918, 1924, 1934, 1939, 1965 and 1981 speeches. This is not the concept to which Silverman was referring. Rather, he was speaking about active "missionizing," the proselytization of non-Jews. This idea has often been considered foreign to Judaism and indeed was not often promoted by the CCAR Presidents. However, with the continued increase in the intermarriage rate, a sort of backdoor method of non-Jewish proselytization was encouraged under the banner of "outreach." Though active conversion is not the goal of the outreach program, which is run by a joint UAHC-CCAR commission, at the very least the purpose is to teach Judaism to non-Jewish partners and involve them in the process of raising Jewish children. Jack Stern spoke of the success of this program in 1986.

In the few years of its history...the Commission on Outreach...has

<sup>187</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1895, p. 11.

<sup>188</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1901, p. 33.

enjoyed a stunning record of success, which testifies to the reality of the need. It has reached out not only to those 33 percent who become Jews by choice but to the 45 percent group, the mixed marriages, and has helped those non-Jewish partners to find a welcoming place and sympathetic response in the Jewish community. It has encouraged them to educate and identify their children as Jews regardless of which parent is Jewish.<sup>189</sup>

Outreach to those non-Jews involved with the Jewish community remains a priority for the entire Reform movement. Furthermore, UAHC President Alexander Schindler's speech to the 1993 UAHC Biennial suggested that the Reform movement may go beyond "outreach" to the kind of "missionizing" Silverman encouraged back in 1901. As of this writing no official response had come from the CCAR, but it is clear that the concept is still alive and well.

More common in the speeches than outreach to those people who are not Jewish was "inreach" to those Jews who are not affiliated. This particular goal was mentioned thirteen times, as early as 1900 and as recently as 1986. Joseph Silverman was the first to raise the problem, which has not changed fundamentally since the beginning of the century.

The problem of bringing the masses who are unaffiliated with congregations, the so-called "unchurched," with the influence of congregations and communal life,...is a question arising in every community, and better results might be obtained if it were considered by this body.<sup>190</sup>

Indeed the body did consider it and used several different strategies to address the issue. The aforementioned "tracts" were one such strategy. Another strategy used early on was the creation of "People's Reform Synagogues." In 1904 Joseph Krauskopf recommended creating these to reach the thousands of Eastern European Jews who were immigrating to the United States. Krauskopf did not speak of the "ghettoes" in which they lived kindly, referring to them as places of "seething masses" given

<sup>189</sup> Jack Stern, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1986, p. 6.

<sup>190</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1900, p. 25.

frequently to "unbelief and moral degeneracy." He felt that the emphasis on their physical needs had been receiving too high a priority at the expense of religious belief.

We have done next to nothing to convert their infidelity into an uplifting God-Belief...True, the Ghettoes have their synagogues. But we know what these synagogues are and what purpose they subserve. They are administered in the spirit of Eastern Europe and Asia. There is seldom if ever a discourse of the kind that appeals to the spiritual needs and moral wants of the people of whom I speak. I speak of the religious needs of a new generation that has arisen, a generation that has imbibed, to a considerable degree, the American spirit...and who, to be attracted and interested and benefited, must have a decorous, uplifting, intelligible service...<sup>191</sup>

The idea was excellent, but because the cost outweighed the benefits, "people's synagogues" run by the funds of the CCAR were dropped from the agenda.

In 1914 Moses Gries suggested commissioning a survey to figure out how to reach the unaffiliated. Good questions may have been formulated, but no solutions were found. In 1923, Edward Calisch's first goal was to start a "Back to the synagog" campaign.

The number of the unaffiliated is large. The indifference of great numbers even among the affiliated is a thing that cannot be glossed over...We, the spiritual leaders, the responsible guardians of the moral and religious life of our people cannot be less concerned. There must be some definite rallying point for the scattered hosts of Israel, some battle-cry that, welling from the depths of a convinced faith, they can fling full-throated to the heavens.<sup>192</sup>

Most recently, Jack Stern, in the same 1986 speech where he spoke of the success of Reform "outreach," warned that rabbis should not ignore the needs of born Jews.

The caution is that the program of Outreach should not dominate and should not be perceived as dominating our movement. The caution is that the success of Outreach should not deflect us from an essential purpose of our movement, which is to help Jews grow up with a

<sup>191</sup> Joseph Krauskopf, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1904, pp. 33-34.

<sup>192</sup> Edward Calisch, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1923, p. 104.

sense of their own Jewish connection and with their own Jewish convictions...Before we arrive at the need for Outreach, how do we reach into the lives of Jewish families and forge those bonds of connection and conviction?<sup>193</sup>

This question, inextricably tied to education, remains a goal and an "issue" for the CCAR.

### **International Liberal Judaism**

Extending Reform Judaism's reach beyond the bounds of Jews in the United States to the rest of the world has also been an oft-mentioned goal in the Presidents' speeches, a goal which has been raised more and more frequently in recent years. The first mention of this as a goal in the speeches was by Max Heller in 1910. In conjunction with Claude Montefiore, the times presented an excellent opportunity to spread the message of Reform Judaism abroad. It was a perfect time, according to Heller, to seek "to acclimatize the Reform movement in different parts of the world."<sup>194</sup> In 1925 Abram Simon declared his enthusiasm for an upcoming conference in London involving liberal synagogues from all over the world.

The growth of liberal thinking among our people in countries across the Atlantic is most encouraging...A promising way is open to us...<sup>195</sup>

Part of the resolution read:

...it (the CCAR) welcomes the international opportunity of uniting in associate endeavors with our brethren in all lands for the advancement of Reform Judaism and Jewish culture.<sup>196</sup>

International Reform became institutionalized a year later with the founding of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. Support for this organization, today headquartered in Israel and which links liberal Jewish

<sup>193</sup> Jack Stern, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1986, p. 7.

<sup>194</sup> Max Heller, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1910, p. 162.

<sup>195</sup> Abram Simon, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1925, p. 227.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid*, p. 229.

movements around the world, has been a frequent goal of the CCAR Presidents. This support was mentioned explicitly as a goal in 1928, 1931, 1949, 1955, 1960, 1962, 1980 and 1989.

Though part of the International movement, Liberal Judaism in Israel has had its own set of issues and is therefore considered as a separate goal in this study. Just one year after the birth of the modern State of Israel, President Abraham Feldman reported that Liberal and Reform Judaism in Israel were already running into problems.

Whilst they offer assurances of complete religious freedom to Christians of all denominations and to Moslems, they assure religious freedom only to those Jews who are sharing in the theological views and convictions of the Chief Rabbinate, but refuse to give religious freedom to the Liberal Jewish communities in their midst.<sup>197</sup>

As a result of this problem, Feldman laid out a specific recommendation.

I urge and recommend that the incoming Executive Board be instructed to take effective measures through its appropriate committees, to advance the cause of Liberal Judaism in Israel, and if possible, in cooperation with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.<sup>198</sup>

The CCAR continued to work toward this goal, as it is mentioned frequently in the fifties, seventies and eighties. Perhaps the abundance of military conflict and the establishment of an essentially American institution, the Hebrew Union College Jerusalem campus, put the issue of the progressive movement in Israel on the back burner in the sixties.

However, the problems were hardly solved.

Indeed the Reform movement in Israel still runs into many problems with both the Orthodox movement and the official government (influenced heavily by the Orthodox). In an essay entitled "Ten Questions About the Future of Reform Judaism in Israel," Richard Hertz pointed out that the Reform movement's relationship with the State of Israel is still plagued by

<sup>197</sup> Abraham Feldman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1949, p. 205.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.



two problems. First, few Israelis have even heard of Reform Judaism. Secondly, the little the Israelis do know is usually the position of Classical Reform on Zionism.<sup>199</sup> These are major handicaps to overcome. So despite the fact that the movement has grown, it still can hardly be judged a success. However, since it requires support from American Jews it will continue to be mentioned as a specific goal by the CCAR Presidents.

### UAHC Relations

24 separate goals over the years focused on the relationship between the CCAR and the UAHC in years ranging from 1912 to 1977. The UAHC has also been mentioned in passing in dozens of other goals over the years. Most of these goals simply urge cooperation between the two groups to achieve mutual goals. The first mention in 1912, by Samuel Schulman, epitomizes the kind of attention this goal was to occupy over the years.

While we thus take a large view of co-operation, we must specially call attention to the co-operation with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, of which the Committee will report, but which is only a small beginning.<sup>200</sup>

General cooperation is the UAHC related goal that appears in the majority of the speeches, though occasionally, the goal was to address a specific issue such as a joint peace resolution mentioned by Max Currick in 1938 on the eve of World War II.<sup>201</sup> Several joint commissions have been formed over the years on topics such as social action, education and rabbinic placement. Abraham Feldman, in 1948, listed expanding the number of these commissions as a specific goal. During that year the two bodies had just created the joint Social Action Commission. Feldman saw this as a base for several more commissions.

<sup>199</sup> Richard Hertz, "Ten Questions About the Future of Reform Judaism in Israel," 1970, p. 1

<sup>200</sup> Samuel Schulman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1912, p. 249.

<sup>201</sup> Max Currick, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1938, p. 180.



I believe that the cooperation between The Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis may be extended...I believe that several new joint committees should be established.<sup>202</sup>

The two groups also have gotten together for combined fundraising efforts. The "combined campaign" was mentioned as a distinct goal in 1948, 1958, 1960 and 1963, which included asking the rabbis to donate personally. Cooperation, either in a general sense or on specific issues, has been the general rule.

Occasionally, however, there has been confusion and even conflict over the role each group is to play. In 1937 Felix Levy pointed out the needless overlap in the various branches of the Reform movement.

Our religious agencies such as the Seminaries and the Union often do work and engage in activities that overlap or are identical. Several bodies are all doing tasks without regard for one another. I recommend that a co-ordinator be appointed who shall co-ordinate the work of the schools, the Conference and the Union. Much time, energy, and money will be saved, let alone acrimony.<sup>203</sup>

The duplication continued and led to confusion, spoken about by Jacob Rudin in 1958.

Perhaps the time has come for a reevaluation of what we are to each other. I do not mean just the setting down on paper and the spelling out of separate responsibilities, as important as that may be. What are we to each other and what do we mean to each other.<sup>204</sup>

In 1964 Leon Feuer complained not only of duplication and confusion but also of territory infringement.

I have also been troubled by the apparent evolution of the Union into what at times lends the appearance of a rival rabbinical structure.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>202</sup> Abraham Feldman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1948, p. 185.

<sup>203</sup> Felix Levy, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1937, p. 189.

<sup>204</sup> Jacob Rudin, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1958, p. 10.

<sup>205</sup> Leon Feuer, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1964, p. 11.

Feuer went on to explain that since the UAHC continued to hire rabbis to lead its various branches, they were taking away some of the uniqueness of the CCAR. Though his assertion may have been correct, at least some of the dust has settled since that time. There has been little mention, at least as a direct goal, of either rivalry or confusion as to the roles of each group since the 1960's. Even cooperation between the two has been mentioned scarcely in recent years. It seems that both the CCAR and UAHC have adjusted to their various spheres, though the CCAR has accepted some of the limits which troubled Feuer.

### Intermarriage

Very few issues have been as divisive as this one has been over the years both within the Reform movement and within K'lal Yisrael. It is being discussed here as part of the Reform movement category because it is only within the Reform movement that this issue could even be an issue.

The CCAR passed its first resolution on mixed marriages in 1909, though it was not mentioned in the speech of that year! The resolution read as follows:

The CCAR declares that mixed marriages are contrary to the tradition of the Jewish religion and should therefore be discouraged by the American Rabbinate.<sup>206</sup>

The issue was not discussed formally by the CCAR until 1947, when the CCAR passed a resolution which affirmed the 1909 resolution verbatim. Once again the issue was not discussed in the Presidential speech! In fact the first mention of mixed marriage as an issue in a Presidential speech was not until 1961! All President Bernard Bamberger did in that speech was

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<sup>206</sup> *CCAR Yearbook*, 1909, p. 170.

state that "we ought probably to take another long hard look at the vexed problems of mixed marriage."<sup>207</sup>

The issue was discussed often throughout the 1960's, both in and out of the CCAR. Several of the Presidents referred to solving the problem as a specific goal. It came to a head once again in 1971, when Roland Gittelsohn and David Polish jointly declared:

Many times in the past this Conference has considered the problem of mixed marriage. We do not propose a resumption of the substantive debate now. We do recommend most urgently, however, that we amend the only official statement we have ever adopted on this issue.<sup>208</sup>

The amendment eventually passed in 1973 basically reaffirmed the 1909 and 1947 stands, but added the following.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis recognizes that historically its members have held and continue to hold divergent interpretations of Jewish tradition.

In order to keep open every channel to Judaism and K'lal Yisrael for those who have already entered into mixed marriage, the CCAR calls upon its members:

1. to assist fully in educating children of such mixed marriages as Jews;
2. to provide the opportunity for conversion of the non-Jewish spouse; and
3. to encourage a creative and consistent cultivation of involvement in the Jewish community and the synagogue.<sup>209</sup>

This amendment is still the official position of the CCAR, but it has certainly not been the last word on the issue.

This position of the CCAR and whether or not individual rabbis have followed it has led to other issues in the speeches. The goal of forcing congregations not to hire and fire rabbis based on whether or not they officiate at intermarriages has already been discussed. In addition, Jack Stern suggested that discouraging intermarriages to the congregants should be a goal of the CCAR.

<sup>207</sup> Bernard Bamberger, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1961, p. 11.

<sup>208</sup> Roland Gittelsohn and David Polish, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1971, p. 15.

<sup>209</sup> *CCAR Yearbook*, 1973, p. 97.

What we as rabbis can do is communicate that message and that plea to parents and their children--that our sons and daughters should "limit their field of eligibles," that the strength of their Jewish convictions and the strength of their Jewish connections should lead them to life partners who, by birth or by choice, will share those convictions and connections.<sup>210</sup>

As statistics continue to rise the goal of doing something about the intermarriage problem will continue to be prominent in CCAR Presidential speeches.

### Miscellaneous Issues

There were also several goals which were primarily connected to the category "Reform alone" but which do not fit into any sub category. These goals were mentioned in only a few of the speeches, but they were nevertheless very important or controversial during their time.

**Sunday Service.** One of the earliest issues which fits this description was that of the Sunday service. By the time the CCAR was established very few rabbis were in favor of "changing" the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday. However, having a major "weekday service" on Sunday was still a common practice in many places. Joseph Krauskopf asked the CCAR to study what effects having the Sunday services were producing.

If the additional Sunday Service be found hurtful to the Saturday-Sabbath Service then let us condemn it with all our might. If it be found helpful, then let us not only commend but urge its introduction at the earliest moment possible.<sup>211</sup>

Samuel Schulman stated his position on the question in no uncertain terms in 1913.

Do we or do not care for the preservation of the Jewish Sabbath? We should, with searching of hearts, ask ourselves. Sunday can never become a Jewish Sabbath...It means nothing for the fostering

<sup>210</sup> Jack Stern, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1986, p. 8.

<sup>211</sup> Joseph Krauskopf, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1905, p. 197.

of distinctive Jewish individuality. Our Sabbath is not merely for us a day of rest. It is a day of sanctification. It is the symbol of our religion. If he cannot observe it perfectly, he must observe it to the best of his ability.<sup>212</sup>

Despite these remarks and virtually no support for a Sunday Service by the CCAR Presidents, the problem was still around during Felix Levy's term in 1936.

I should like the Conference to strengthen the hands of the rabbis who are making the effort to preserve the Sabbath and its worship by unequivocally stating that Reform Judaism has not abolished the sacred day, as some individuals imagine.<sup>213</sup>

The Sunday Service eventually faded as an issue among CCAR Presidents, though it was more because of apathy toward synagogue attendance than it was increased numbers at Sabbath services. Virtually all Reform Jews in this day and age affirm that Saturday is the one and only Jewish Sabbath day; far fewer observe this sacred day.

**Home Observance.** Whether or not observance should even be centered around the synagogue was also brought up in a few of the speeches. The alternative view was for rabbis to encourage home observance. Many of the publications, such as *Gates of the House*, the *Shabbat Manual* and the elusive all-encompassing "guide" that was never produced, were geared toward accomplishing this goal. Home observance was also explicitly mentioned twice, once very early, by Joseph Stolz in 1907, and once quite recently, by Gunther Plaut in 1985. According to Stolz:

Like the Prophet we must plant as well as uproot, build as well as destroy; and we must begin again with the Home, the nursery of our religion, and bend our energies, that it become once more the place where the word of prayer is uttered, the word of God is read, the Sabbath and Festivals are kept and such ceremonies are observed, as will weave the veil of poetry about the home and associate with

<sup>212</sup> Samuel Schulman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1913, pp. 210-211.

<sup>213</sup> Felix Levy, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1936, p. 157.



our religion the sweetest experiences of life.<sup>214</sup>

Plaut, nearly 80 years later, knew that the encouraging of home observance at the possible expense of synagogue observance would indeed be an "uprooting." "Hold on to the hats you're not wearing," Plaut warned.

The chief mitzvah of a Jew is not "Come to the synagogue;" the chief mitzvah of the Jew is lead a Jewish life." If we want to reintroduce prayer into the halls of Reform it probably can no longer be done on Friday nights...Prayer and a Jewish lifestyle belong first and foremost where the individual lives. I believe we have the most daring and capable group of rabbis ever assembled in any organization. I dream of your spending your extraordinary energy on having your members reintroduce a meaningful Friday night experience in the home.<sup>215</sup>

**Homosexuality.** Despite the overwhelming controversial nature of the subject as well as the amount of attention it garnered in the press, the issue of homosexuals in the rabbinate was given only a brief mention in the speeches. In his 1990 Samuel Karff mentions deciding a position on the issue as part of the larger context of "boundary issues."

We are now grappling with another boundary issue. Shall we formally validate the homosexual rabbi? We do well to ponder all boundary issues prudently and deliberately.<sup>216</sup>

A resolution of relative support passed, and the issue was not even mentioned in Karff's speech the next year.

### **Unity Within Reform**

A final goal which should be mentioned in connection with the category "Reform alone" is unity within the Reform movement as a whole. Many of the attempts to limit autonomy, to come up with a unified theology or a unified set of principles were for the purpose of achieving this goal. Unity was referred to more explicitly in the seventies. It was a special concern of 1975 President Robert Kahn. He acknowledged that

<sup>214</sup> Joseph Stolz, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1907, p. 167.

<sup>215</sup> Gunther Plaut, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1985, p. 6.

<sup>216</sup> Samuel Karff, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1990, p. 3.



between Reform Jews' differing views on Israel, ritual observance versus prophetic ideals, and whether Judaism was a peoplehood or a religion, there was a great deal over which to argue.

There are deep divisions in Reform Judaism today, and particularly in the Reform rabbinate—wounds that are rubbed raw, lesions that may soon be beyond healing...I should like to use an expression of our day, to "cool it," to call for a moratorium on inflammatory remarks and personal attack.<sup>217</sup>

The deep divisions continue, although the inflammatory remarks have settled down. Perhaps there is even more diversity within the movement now, but the divisions are either more accepted or swept a little deeper under the carpet. After all, the Centenary Perspective of 1976 glorifies the concept of "diversity within unity." Despite all this diversity, the movement does need some kind of direction and voice to remain strong. This was perhaps summed up best by the same Robert Kahn in 1974.

What we need to look toward, even as we experiment with varieties of religious experience, is the redevelopment of a movement, a movement with a defined philosophy, a cohesive program, with norms and commitments to which both Rabbis and congregations can give loyalty.<sup>218</sup>

Until such a program is found, the amount of goals which fall into this category of "Reform alone" will continue to grow.

### Descriptive or Prescriptive

For the most part, goals which primarily affected the Reform movement as a whole were prescriptive, for through these goals the rabbis have laid down what they hope will be norms within Reform Judaism. They are not describing what the situation is, but rather, what they hope it will be through efforts often initiated by the CCAR itself. In addition,

<sup>217</sup> Robert Kahn, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1975, p. 5,7.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*, 1974, p. 10.

because of their leadership role, the CCAR actually does have certain abilities to effect the changes and ideas they prescribe.

Education is certainly a prescriptive goal, for through it the rabbis have tried to teach the kind of Judaism to which they subscribe.

"Missionizing," whether within or outside Judaism, has been similarly prescriptive. The whole idea of missionizing, reaching out to non-Jews and "in" to unaffiliated Jews, has meant taking leadership to promote Reform Judaism rather than reacting to events as they come up. The promoting and encouraging of Liberal Judaism on the International front has likewise been a prescriptive goal.

Only relations with the UAHC, intermarriage officiating and unity within the Reform movement itself can be considered somewhat "descriptive." Though the goals in each case have also been to work toward certain ideals, they have only come up as reactions to particular problems and events. Clarifying the CCAR's relationship to the UAHC was done in hopes of creating a better relationship, but part of the goal was just to describe the relationship itself. Officiating at intermarriages, or rather, not officiating at them, was a prescriptive goal, but the fact that the rise in intermarriages across the country forced the issue made it a descriptive reaction. Finally, the attempts at unity have started with a description of disunity. There has been no prescription to this goal other than to stop infighting and become unified as a movement.

In conclusion, then, the goals for the Reform movement have been primarily prescriptive, though partially descriptive. In general, when it comes to goals for the Reform movement, the CCAR Presidents have taken the initiative rather than reacting to specific events.

### **Rhetorical Questions and Strategies**

Goals for the Reform movement are generally intended for the extended audience of Reform congregants. After the rabbis, the immediate audience of the members of the CCAR, the congregants are the next most likely group to receive any of the messages. The hope is that rabbis will agree with the Presidents' messages and filter the messages down to their congregants.

In terms of appeals, it is difficult to categorize them into one specific type. Ethos, pathos and logos were all used by different Presidents to help them achieve their specific goals. If pressed to pick one which was used slightly more than the others in this category it would be pathos, the emotional appeal. Particularly missionizing, intermarriage officiating and unity are emotionally charged issues which demand emotionally charged appeals. Indeed Robert Kahn's plea for rabbis to "cool it" for the sake of unity speaks to the kind of intense rhetoric that was being used in arguments within the Reform movement. Overall, though, it is difficult to point to any specific rhetorical trends in goals which were intended primarily for the Reform movement.

### **Success or Failure?**

The answer to this question depends, of course, on the specific goal. The goal of improving Reform Jewish education to a significant degree was not achieved. Despite nearly a dozen or so recommendations over the years which dealt with the subject of improving religious education, it is debatable whether the status of Reform Jewish education has improved at all over the years. As mentioned earlier, Eugene Lipman called it "our area of greatest weakness as a movement."

Missionizing is almost impossible to judge as a success or failure. If one looked strictly at the numbers, one might think that the Reform movement has succeeded in terms of non-Jews, since the numbers of non-Jews joining synagogues has increased, and failed in terms of unaffiliated Jews, since the numbers of Jews leaving Judaism has increased. However, these statistics tell little, if anything, of the story. Obviously assimilation and intermarriage rates drive these numbers far more than efforts by Reform rabbis at inreach and outreach. As the 1978 resolution on outreach phrased it:

Rapid demographic change is doing much to affect the future of American Jewry. Among the significant and critical demographic trends are: the growth of mixed-marriage, the decline of the Jewish birth-rate relative to the general population, and an increase in the numbers of non-Jews converting to Judaism. These trends require our profound, serious and continuing attention.<sup>219</sup>

That same resolution called for intensifying both formal and informal educational programs within the Reform synagogue, planning effective Outreach programs to seek out mixed married couples and the appointing of a special task force to help implement the program. The UAHC has made both inreach (to unaffiliated Jews) and outreach (to non-Jews) a significant priority, committing time, money and resources to both. In that sense, the CCAR Presidents have succeeded, since their priority has become an important priority for the rest of the movement as well.

The success of the Reform movement internationally is likewise difficult to measure. With the help of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, a semblance of Reform Judaism continues to be sustained in Israel, Russia and Europe, but the movement has not grown to the level the

<sup>219</sup> UAHC Commission on Outreach, *Outreach and the Changing Reform Jewish Community*, 1989, p. 91.

CCAR Presidents expected. Walter Jacob summed up the disappointing state of International Liberal Judaism in his 1993 speech.

What has happened to Liberal Judaism on the Continent? There are seven hundred and fifty thousand Jews in France, but only a handful of Liberal Congregations. What will happen to the growing German Jewish community which by now must number well over a hundred thousand? What about the Jews in the East who may number several million? There are no Liberal Jewish communities because our movement in America has not done what it should have done?<sup>220</sup>

In terms of Reform in Israel specifically, the movement exists but can not be called successful. Already mentioned were Richard Hertz' explanations about how most Israelis have never heard of Reform and what they have heard of was Classical Reform's initial antagonism to Zionism. Moreover, the majority of Reform Jews in Israel are transplants from the United States, England or South Africa. Reform has failed to take root among native Israelis. As Hertz put it:

Reform Judaism, I believe, can only thrive if it is the real thing, if it offers the modern Israeli something he doesn't have and needs, some spirit, some attitude, some commitment that will do something for his spiritual situation.<sup>221</sup>

The Reform movement in Israel has not found a way to address those needs as of yet. Some work has been done, but not enough to call it a success.

Relations with the UAHC have been clarified, so in that sense the CCAR Presidents have succeeded in accomplishing their goal. However, the clarity in this relationship has been achieved at the expense of influence. This tradeoff will be taken up later in Chapter 6 on goals for general society, but in brief, the CCAR Presidents have given up much of their responsibility for broader societal goal setting.

Whether or not the CCAR stance on officiating at intermarriages can be called successful in any sense requires an entire thesis in itself.

<sup>220</sup> Walter Jacob, *A Selection of Sermons and Lectures*, 1993, p. 18.

<sup>221</sup> Hertz, p. ????



Certainly their stance of recommending but not enforcing that rabbis do not officiate has not halted intermarriage. The numbers continue to climb. Whether or not their stance on this issue has any effect whatsoever on congregants' decisions to intermarry is another matter. This study can not attempt to answer the relative success or failure of this goal.

### Conclusions

The issues in this category over the years have been education, missionizing, International Liberal Judaism, relations with the UAHC, intermarriage officiating and, finally, unity. One can call the goal of unity either a success or a failure. The inflammatory remarks have been toned down, so in that sense it has been successful. On the other hand, the Reform movement still has little direction on many issues. There is simply too much diversity. The Centenary Perspective praises this "diversity within unity," but in reality, the diversity implies that there is a lack of unity. Allan Tarshish viewed this lack of direction and unity as a stumbling block to influence and success.

Certainly at the present time there is no hope that American Reform will dominate World Jewry or even American Jewry. In fact, many of our own colleagues feel that even were this possible, it should not be attempted, for these other patterns play important roles in the total panorama of Jewish living.<sup>222</sup>

As a result, neither the CCAR nor the UAHC nor any of the prayerbooks contain the word Reform in their title. According to Tarshish, in the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the word "Central" has come to refer to the direction the Reform movement is headed. Tarshish's complaint that the Reform movement was moving to the right was written in 1960, yet others then and now are apt to claim that the Central

<sup>222</sup> Allan Tarshish, *How Central is the CCAR*, 1960, p. 29.

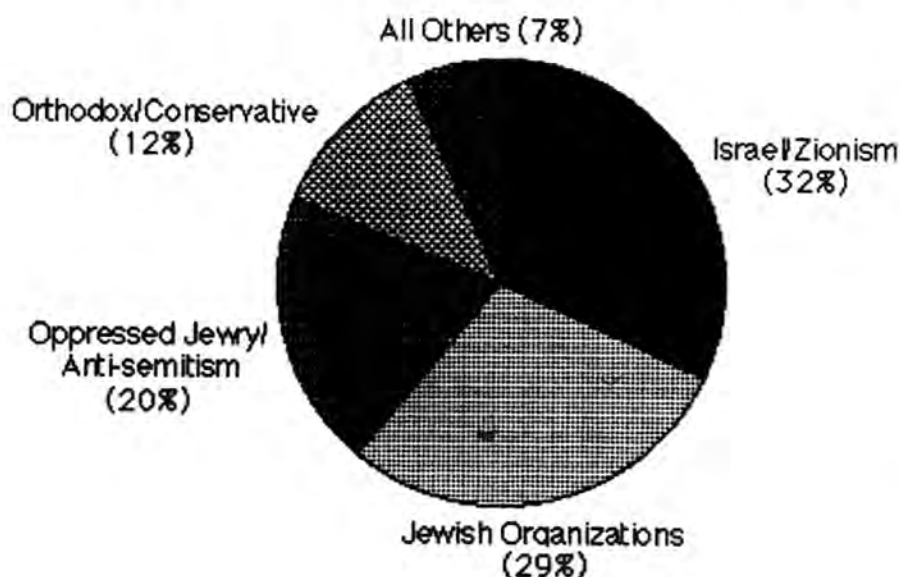


Conference of American Rabbis is too liberal. Indeed, whether the issue is education, missionizing, International Liberal Judaism, relations with the UAHC, intermarriage officiating or unity within the Reform movement itself, the Reform movement continues to wrestle with itself. Such is the nature of the beast, however. The majority of Reform rabbis gladly put up with disunity and diversity since it means holding on to their independence.

# CHAPTER 5

## K'LAL YISRAEL

### K'LAL CATEGORY BREAKDOWN



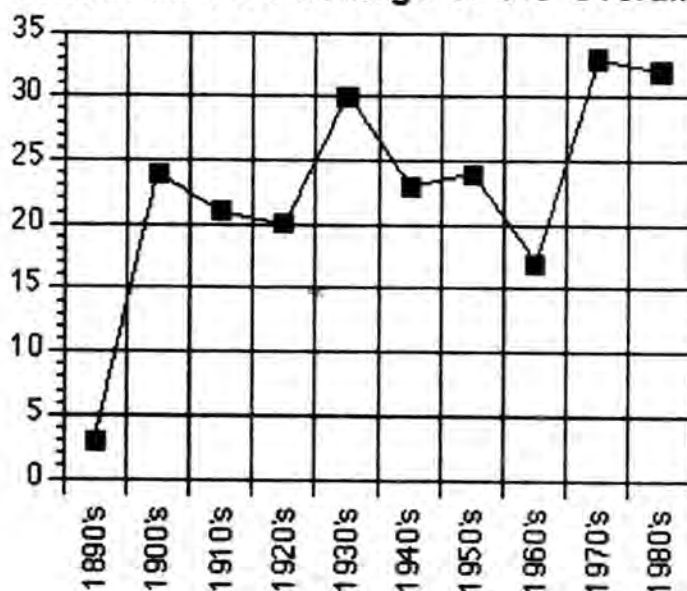
## CHAPTER 5

# K'LAL YISRAEL

It is not always easy to determine which goals fit into the category Reform alone and which ones more properly fit into the category K'lal Yisrael. A CCAR President's position, though often unique to the Reform movement, has an effect on the larger Jewish community. There is a large gray area as a result of this phenomenon. Nevertheless, there were several issues in this category which stood out, including relations with other organizations within the Jewish community, relations with the Orthodox, Zionism/State of Israel, and oppressed Jewry and immigration.

The percentage of goals in the K'lal Yisrael category has been growing over the years, as one can see in the graph below. Despite this upward trend, the pattern has not been consistent by any means.

**K'lal Yisrael as a Percentage of the Overall Goals**



The low number in the first decade causes the growth to look exaggerated. One should not be deceived by the jump, because the 3% in the 1890's was statistically insignificant. Discounting that first number, the graph shows peaks and valleys, with an especially high peak of over 30% in the two most recent decades. These numbers can be compared to the overall average of the K'lal Yisrael category--24%. The greater number of goals in this category in recent years have been driven by two specific Reform relationships--the relationship of Reform to the State of Israel and the relationship of Reform to the Orthodox movement.

The phenomenon of significant peaks and valleys is probably due to the fact that this category appears to be more descriptive than prescriptive. The CCAR Presidents were generally forced to react to and describe events occurring in the Jewish community rather than set prescriptive goals for the overall Jewish community. What confuses the picture even more is that since it is the amount rather than the importance of the different events which is charted here, the presence of an extremely important and dominant goal could actually lower the percentage of the category. For example, the debate over Zionism was of supreme importance for several decades, but since this goal overshadowed other "K'lal Yisrael" goals, the statistics in that category during those decades were low. It was an extremely important issue, but it was only one issue nevertheless. The issues in the last two decades may not be as controversial, but there are more of them being discussed. It is time now to turn to the actual issues.

### **Relations With Other Jewish Community Organizations**

Perhaps the most "K'lal" of all the "K'lal Yisrael" goals is the relationship the CCAR had to other organizations within the Jewish

community, including such organizations as the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, the General Jewish Council, B'nai B'rith and others. Some of these goals were for cooperation with specific organizations for specific purposes, while sometimes it was to unify several of the organizations together. Most of the time the purpose was to cooperate with these organizations, but occasionally there was a conflict over spheres of influences.

The first time one of these cooperation goals was mentioned was in 1900 by Joseph Silverman, and it was for a general form of cooperation. Silverman pointed to:

the need of a closer co-operation between synagogues and lodges, particularly in smaller communities. The fraternal orders have performed a great service to American Israel and to-day [sic] have a potent influence upon the masses. They constitute an organized force when, if in some way working together with the synagogues could become a means for higher spiritual life...<sup>223</sup>

Lodges primarily meant the B'nai B'rith, and cooperating with the B'nai B'rith was mentioned in two other explicit goals, both of which were for the more specific aim of fighting anti-semitism. Such was the case in both 1920 and 1931; B'nai B'rith was better equipped than the CCAR to handle the task of fighting anti-semitism. As a result, the CCAR showed support for what was already being done rather than trying to conquer the task by itself.

That aim, of combating anti-semitism, was the focus of the majority of goals that urged cooperation with other organizations. When it came to fighting anti-semitism or helping oppressed Jewry abroad, the CCAR generally realized that they had more power when helping umbrella organizations than they did alone. Consequently, the CCAR tried many

<sup>223</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1900, p. 25.

times to push for one umbrella national organization which could act as a legitimate representative of the Jewish people.

Silverman spoke to this need in his 1903 speech. After expressing his regret at the existence of "so many associations pursuing independently similar objects," he made the following recommendation:

It must, therefore, be patent to all that our greatest need is organization, a united Israel—a central authoritative body that in crises and emergencies shall have the indisputable right to speak and act for all Israel. The Kishineff massacre and other events of a similar nature have demonstrated our lack of organization and it is high time that steps be taken toward a solution of this growing problem.<sup>224</sup>

His more specific suggestion was a Central Board consisting of the Executive Committees of the various orders and national organizations.

By 1911 no such organization had been formed, but then President Max Heller again urged cooperation with the other national organizations that did exist. He helped appoint a committee of the CCAR which should "co-operate with the three organizations above named towards safeguarding the civil and religious rights of our brothers both here and abroad."<sup>225</sup>

In 1915 Moses Gries was still arguing for that one national organization with the power to act.

The hour has struck to end the confusion, the disorganization and the over-organization in American Israel. Shall every crisis find us unready and unprepared? They must unite to create *one committee*, which shall be *permanent*—and *thoroughly representative*—and *duly authorized*, with the right and the power to speak and to act on behalf of all the Jews of America.<sup>226</sup>

The first major attempt at such an organization was the American Jewish Congress, and it was called to achieve the overall goal of combating discrimination against Jews. This was not exactly what the CCAR had in mind, so in 1917 President William Rosenau asked the CCAR body

<sup>224</sup> Ibid, 1903, p. 26.

<sup>225</sup> Max Heller, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1911, p. 134.

<sup>226</sup> Moses Gries, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1915, p. 143.



whether or not they wished to participate in the American Jewish Congress of that year. The Congress was to be held for the

purpose of defining methods whereby, in co-operation with the Jews of the world, full rights may be secured for Jews of all lands and all laws discriminating against them may be abrogated.<sup>227</sup>

The CCAR voted against sending delegates to the Congress. The same question came up sixteen years later regarding the World Jewish Congress. The situation for European Jews was becoming intolerable, so Morris Neufeld asked the same question.

I therefore beg leave to recommend that the Central Conference of American Rabbis, after careful consideration, declare at this session its stand on the proposed holding of a World Congress.<sup>228</sup>

They did not make a decision at that convention, but they did appoint a committee, ironically chaired by William Rosenau. The next year they voted to participate in it.

In between the two conferences the CCAR did vote to cooperate with the B'nai B'rith in protesting the Boston Public Library's display of two paintings from the Sargent Collection, "The Church" and "The Synagogue." "The Church" was portrayed as a beautiful young woman with Jesus under her feet supporting her. "The Synagogue" was portrayed as a cruel old woman with her head turning away from the light. Leo Franklin recommended in 1920 that the CCAR use the legal system, "if possible in co-operation with other national institutions, to get the picture removed."<sup>229</sup> Two years later Edward Calisch reported that the CCAR had finally succeeded in accomplishing the goal. However, significant damage had clearly been done in the two year run of the painting. Although the incident may appear small in retrospect, the CCAR Presidents certainly

<sup>227</sup> William Rosenau, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1917, p. 196.

<sup>228</sup> Morris Neufeld, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1932, p. 153.

<sup>229</sup> Leo Franklin, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1920, p. 166.

gave it significant attention between 1920 and 1922. The rest of the 1920's were fairly silent in regard to working with other Jewish organizations, with the exception of those which had to do with Israel, which will be discussed later.

In the 1930's, just after the convening of the World Jewish Congress, 1934 President Samuel Goldensen expressed fear that the CCAR was becoming too dependent on the outside agencies.

May I suggest that coupled with the fashion to accentuate uncritical solidarity is the tendency in our midst to look overmuch to outside agencies and external instrumentalities for help? We are getting into the habit of looking mostly to official bodies and to public pronunciamientos for relief from our difficulties. This is a mark of naiveté which is always expressive of the incapacity to think clearly, critically, and realistically.<sup>230</sup>

Goldensen, an anti-Zionist and a proponent of Classical Reform in every sense of the word, appeared to be quickly becoming a part of the minority, especially when it came to working toward a national authoritative organization.

The majority of the CCAR wanted to look to an "official body" that had the power to make "pronunciamientos," and they took up the issue again in the late 1930's and 1940's. This latest attempt was the creation of the General Jewish Council, which was made up of representatives from the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Labor Committee. Although the CCAR gave the Council its support it was understandably perturbed that there was no "religious" organization officially represented on it. The CCAR decided to adopt the statement of the Synagog Council in protesting this lack of representation. That statement read as follows:

No Jewish organization can be comprehensive and fully representative of American Jewish life unless it includes adequate representation of

<sup>230</sup> Samuel Goldensen, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1934, p. 154.

the religious organizations of our people.<sup>231</sup>

A year later religious organizations were given some representation on the Council--one rabbi from each of the professional Assemblies. However, this was not very significant considering that each of the other professional assemblies had five representatives apiece. Once again the CCAR was faced with a decision, according to President Emil Leipziger:

Again a grave dilemma challenges and depresses. Shall we refuse this sop to the Synagog, call upon far flung groups in Israel to do that which will destroy the General Jewish Council, or shall we accept the proffered finger tip of recognition and suffer a loss of prestige for the sake of maintaining a limping unity?<sup>232</sup>

The compromise they came up with was to endorse the Council but continue to protest their lack of equivalent representation.

The General Jewish Council was superseded in 1944 by two different organizations, the Common Committee and the American Jewish Conference. The Common Committee was made up of the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee and B'nai B'rith and was formed for the purpose of coordinating efforts to combat anti-semitism. CCAR President Solomon Freehof, similar to the actions his predecessors had taken with the General Jewish Council, gave his support to the Committee while at the same time urging representation of the Jewish religious bodies. The CCAR did not emphasize this point, however, because it was more concerned with the more general and inclusive American Jewish Conference. This was to be the broad, unifying body for which they had hoped so long.

Under the stress of these vast problems the need for a United American Jewry has long been felt. Representatives of our Conference have participated from the very beginning in the formation of the American

<sup>231</sup> CCAR Yearbook, 1939, p. 241.

<sup>232</sup> Emil Leipziger, CCAR Yearbook, 1940, p. 194.

Jewish Conference and have continued to cooperate as members in its proceedings.<sup>233</sup>

The CCAR continued to give its support to this group through World War II.

In 1947 the American Jewish Conference discussed whether or not a more permanent overall representative Jewish Agency should be established. 1948 CCAR President Abraham Feldman expressed his support of the potential American Jewish Assembly, though he did "not believe that the time is now when such a body might come into being."<sup>234</sup> It turned out he was right, though the goal did not cease to exist. 1950 President Jacob Marcus observed that watching the rise and fall of the American Jewish Congress, the General Jewish Council and the American Jewish Conference had been very "discouraging" and one of his goals was to help in the creation of the National American Jewish Assembly which "shall speak and act with authority for American Jewry."<sup>235</sup>

Though more limited in scope, discussions in 1953 centering around the National Community Relations Advisory Council were no less controversial. Specifically, Professor Robert MacIver of Columbia University had recommended, after detailed study, that specific agencies should specialize in specific tasks rather than continue to do the variety of activities in which they were then engaged. As a result, the ADL of the B'nai B'rith and the American Jewish Committee withdrew from the NCRAC. 1953 President Joseph Fink endorsed the MacIver proposals and pleaded for unity amongst the different national organizations in support of the NCRAC.

<sup>233</sup> Solomon Freehof, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1944, p. 167.

<sup>234</sup> Abraham Feldman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1948, p. 193.

<sup>235</sup> Jacob Rader Marcus, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1950, p. 244.

American Jewry should implement the recommendations of Dr. MacIver, rather than impede them. We regret that some of our national organizations whose policies are in conflict with the MacIver Report have withdrawn from the NACRAC. Asu nevalah beYisrael. Their withdrawal has been injurious and weakening to all American Jewry.<sup>236</sup>

Despite this emphasis on community the issue of that umbrella national organization or national agency had still not died. In 1965, Leon Feuer expressed the hope that there would be a Conference of American Jewish Organizations. He was hoping that changes in the Presidents' Conference, the latest attempt at bringing national Jewish organizations together, would result in less duplication and better representation of mass American Jewry. The current scenario was less than satisfactory to him.

We joined with the Presidents' Conference because it was the only instrumentality available, because we wanted to indicate our determination to stand firmly by our fellow Jews in difficult circumstances, and in the hope already partially realized that other Jewish religious and secular groups would follow our example. I must confess that I am not entirely satisfied with the present organizational structure.<sup>237</sup>

In 1971 Roland Gittelsohn expressed a similar hope in relation to the Presidents' Conference. While giving it the support of the CCAR, he, too, expressed dissatisfaction over its limited scope. Unlike the American Jewish Conference at least it had attained tenure as an ongoing organization, but it was still not enough.

What is required is a body expanded beyond the consultation of Presidents alone, and the calling of emergency meetings in Washington. What is required is a structure in which decision making would be shared by the Presidents with communities from which the richest resources from our academic disciplines, from our communal leaders, from our youth would also be drawn.<sup>238</sup>

Alas, this was the last mention of the goal of this national umbrella organization. By 1989 the CCAR was back to where they began--

<sup>236</sup> Joseph Fink, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1953, p. 19.

<sup>237</sup> Leon Feuer, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1965, p. 7.

<sup>238</sup> Roland Gittelsohn, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1971, p. 6.



cooperation with existing organizations rather than creating an all encompassing organization. To make his point Eugene Lipman quoted Fink's 1953 address:

Be it known that we rabbis, speaking from the position of the synagogue which has still in its voice the old ring of authority concerning the welfare of our people everywhere, call upon our people to effect unity within the ranks and within the leadership of those organizations of American Israel that are working for the defense and the welfare and the happiness of the Jews of America.<sup>239</sup>

There are several other organizations with which the CCAR cooperated over the years and for which the CCAR expressed their support. These include the American Jewish Historical Society, listed in 1901, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, listed as a goal in 1929, the National Council of Jewish Women, the United Jewish Appeal and the Jewish Chautauqua Society, listed in 1963, and the Soviet Jewry President's Conference, listed in 1964. In addition, there were several goals aimed at supporting the Joint Distribution Committee, which will be discussed later within the issue of Zionism, and the Synagogue Council, which will likewise be discussed later within the issue of relations with the Orthodox. Goals related to these various organizations were primarily goals of support and cooperation.

However, there were two important organizations with which the CCAR conflicted which need to be mentioned. The first was the American Council for Judaism, and it will be discussed later under the topic of Zionism. The second group was the Jewish Federation. Samuel Goldensen's 1934 remarks about how the CCAR was becoming too dependent upon outside organizations have already been brought up. What he feared was not that the CCAR was losing control over its own sphere,

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<sup>239</sup> *CCAR Yearbook*, 1989, p. 13.



but that the sphere of religion itself was being relegated to a secondary role in Judaism. Conflicts with the Jewish Federation echoed that fear. Many of the CCAR rabbis, from the earliest days right through the 1980's, expressed this fear in their self-definitions that Judaism was primarily a "religion." These expressions have already been quoted in Chapter 3. Ely Pilchik's remarks in 1978 confronted the problem head on and are illustrative of many of the feelings over the years.

To serve the welfare of the members of this Conference your leaders have agonized over the lack of progress in resolving our Synagogue-Federation conflict. The problem grows. The Federations press harder and deeper. From all over the land we hear of increasing encroachments by the Y's and Centers and Federation on the programs and the activities and the economic and human resources of the Synagogue. The burgeoning Federations move toward relegating the Synagogue to something of an insignificant "shetel" performing ancient life-cycle rituals...<sup>240</sup>

1987 President Jack Stern suggested that the CCAR should not take this relegation lying down.

What should we do about it in the synagogue of the '80's? What we should not do is surrender so passively. Our concerted attempt, I submit, should be to seek out from within our congregations some of those same very best and those same very brightest, not to pirate them away from the shrines of their Civil Religion but to fill in the gaps which their Civil Religion does not presume or pretend to fill.<sup>241</sup>

For the most part, however, the Synagogue and Federation have worked in partnership, albeit an uneasy one, a goal of partnership which Arthur Lelyfeld stated clearly:

What is demanded by the times is, therefore, a new and vital partnership between the Synagogue and the Federation...<sup>242</sup>

The words were spoken in 1976, but they remain true in the 1990's.

<sup>240</sup> Ely Pilchik, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1978, p. 7.

<sup>241</sup> Jack Stern, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1987, p. 10.

<sup>242</sup> Arthur Lelyfeld, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1976, p. 6.

### Relations with the Orthodox and Conservative Movements

It is time to turn to relations between the CCAR and secular Jewish organizations to the relationship the CCAR has had to the two other major Jewish movements within Judaism--the Orthodox and the Conservative. The Reconstructionist movement, despite its close affinity to Reform on certain issues, was not considered major enough to be mentioned in any of the speeches as its own goal.

Relations between the CCAR and the Conservative movement as presented in the speeches were surprisingly and overwhelmingly positive. All the references to the Conservative movement were characterized by mutual respect and good will. Cooperation with the Conservative movement was mentioned both in general and as it related to specific issues. In 1942 James Heller even suggested that the CCAR and the Rabbinical Assembly, the Conservative movement's equivalent rabbinical body, hold their convention in the same city!<sup>243</sup> The 1976 and 1977 speeches list the goal of offering associate memberships in the CCAR for Conservative Rabbis. In 1978 the two movements found themselves working together on recognition for both in the State of Israel. The kind of public relationship the CCAR has had with the Conservative movement was summed up well by 1951 President Philip Bernstein.

Friendly consultation has been the rule, as of course, it should be. From every point of view, this cooperation represents a healthy trend in American Jewish life.

Though private feelings may differ, and they clearly do, the public relationship has been surprisingly healthy and helpful over the years.

Relations with the Orthodox have been a different matter. Most of the time tension has been a part of the relationship, though not exclusively

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<sup>243</sup> James Heller, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1942, p. 224.

so. In fact a specific trend is difficult to determine. Primarily the relationship depended on the individual President's opinion and what events were affecting the Jewish community.

The first time the Orthodox were mentioned in a speech rings with optimism for future relations. Joseph Silverman, in 1902, reported:

The past year has also become memorable because of certain tendencies and movements that have led to a better understanding between Reform and Orthodoxy...It is now accepted almost as axiomatic that at least two general interpretations of Jewish law and practice are possible and permissible—one in the light of the past, the other in the light of the present.<sup>244</sup>

Unfortunately, it was not as axiomatic as Silverman thought. That "better understanding" soon turned to "misunderstanding," for in the very next year Silverman sadly reported a turnabout in Reform/Orthodox relations.

A year ago we expressed the belief that a better understanding had been reached between the opposite wings of Judaism, but even during the past year there have been evidences of intolerance on the part of Orthodoxy against Reform. We trust that the leaders of Orthodoxy will repudiate the pernicious influence exercised by some small minds who enroll themselves under their banner...<sup>245</sup>

This reversal would occur several more times throughout the years, and the cause, according to the CCAR Presidents, was usually intolerance on the part of the Orthodox against the Reform. Occasionally, though, Reformers would go on the attack against Orthodoxy, as was the case with David Philipson in 1909.

Although the interpretation of Judaism that obtains in the Russian Pale of Settlement, in Galicia and in Roumania, has been transplanted hither it can not and will not thrive in the free atmosphere of this country. The older generation that grew up under its influence continues the observance of the religion as of yore, but the younger generation educated in American schools and reared in the American environment is drifting away from the faith as practiced by their fathers. So called orthodoxy does not and can not hold them.<sup>246</sup>

<sup>244</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1902, p. 29.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid*, 1903, p. 20.

<sup>246</sup> David Philipson, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1909, p. 199.

The difference between Philipson's attack on Orthodoxy and the Orthodox's attacks on Reform is that he was attacking the concept rather than the movement. He was arguing that the Orthodox approach to Judaism would not work in America, not that Orthodox Jews were destroying the fabric of Judaism. It should also be pointed out, however, that Philipson was clearly wrong, for the Orthodox movement has not disappeared in this country and has even been showing some signs of growth in the past twenty years.<sup>247</sup>

For the next forty years, Orthodox/Reform relations were relatively positive as far as the CCAR was concerned. This was due, in large part, to the creation of the Synagogue Council of America in 1925, which included rabbinic representatives from the Reform, Conservative and Orthodox movements. This organization was founded at the instigation of CCAR President Abram Simon, who, after meeting with representatives from the Conservative movement's equivalent body, the United Synagogue, expressed his hope for an organization which would include all the major movements in his 1924 address.

I am only thinking out loud, and pouring forth in more or less restrained and coherent language the hopes of my heart for unity in the Synagog of America. Am I too optimistic in trusting that some day representatives of the Rabbinical Assembly may meet with us, and vice versa? The Central Conference of American Rabbis can yet take the lead in welding the rabbis of the land together into a stronger, finer fellowship.<sup>248</sup>

Simon's thinking out loud led to loud action, for his dream took on reality in the next year. In his 1925 speech he excitedly read a resolution from the meeting which took place between representatives of the three movements at the Harmonie Club in New York in June of that year.

<sup>247</sup> Council of Jewish Federations, *Highlights of the CJF 1990 National Jewish Population Survey*, p. 32.

<sup>248</sup> Abram Simon, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1924, p. 154.

We, representatives of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the United Synagogues of America, the Rabbinical Assembly, and the Union of Orthodox Congregations, recognizing the fundamental spiritual unity which binds us as Jews, believing that the Synagogue is the basic and essential unit in Jewish life, and believing in the desirability of taking counsel together for the purpose of preserving and fostering Judaism in America, recommends to the organizations represented at this meeting, that a Conference composed of national congregations and rabbinical organizations of America be formed for the purpose of enabling them to speak and act unitedly in furthering such religious interests as all these constituent national organizations share in common.<sup>249</sup>

Ironically, the aforementioned David Philipson, the same man who went on the attack against Orthodoxy as a concept, was the Reform representative! It appears that the rabbinic leadership of the three movements were able to get together to fight two common enemies--anti-semitism and secularism. World War II made them all agree on the need to rescue European Jewry from the throes of persecution and death, and the growth of "secular Judaism" similarly bound them together through mutual interest. Cooperation and support for this organization was expressed consistently as a goal in the speeches for the next forty years or so. The only question that came up in regard to the SCA was how much authority it should have to act, as was the case in Solomon Freehof's 1945 address.

Is it correct, for example, is it within the terms of its original reference for the Council to come into direct contact with the individual communities? Was it not the original intention that the Council should deal only with referred actions rather than initiate actions of its own accord? Was it not the intention that the Council should be a consultative organization rather than an executive organization, coordinating the activities of its constituent bodies when a request for coordination is made rather than be an independent, executive organization originating Jewish religious action?<sup>250</sup>

The 1950's saw a return to strains in the relationship. Once again the cause, for the most part, was intolerance by the Orthodoxy against Reform. As Barnett Brickner put it in 1956.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1925, p. 226.

<sup>250</sup> Solomon Freehof, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1945, p. 187.



There are Orthodox rabbis who do not deign to recognize Reform and Conservative rabbis as rabbis and who refuse to cooperate in any communal undertaking in which Reform and Conservative rabbis participate.<sup>251</sup>

The question the CCAR Presidents faced was how to react.

In the 1960's and 1970's the CCAR Presidents were apt to respond to the attacks and even to fight back. 1965 President Leon Feuer's speech reflected that approach.

Let the leaders of Orthodox Judaism, lay and rabbinical, be warned, however, that our patience with their recent intemperate public attacks on Reform Judaism in Israel and in the United States is not inexhaustible and if continued, will make useful and fruitful co-operation with us difficult if not impossible.<sup>252</sup>

Specific issues made the problems even more "difficult." Recognition of the Israeli Reform movement by the Orthodox was one such problem, previously discussed in Chapter 4 on Reform. Another such issue was Chabad's missionary efforts within the Reform movement and their "intolerance of non-Orthodox Judaism,"<sup>253</sup> as discussed by Arthur Lelyfield in 1977. The Israeli Orthodox's attempt in 1975 to amend the "Law of Return" to prevent the automatic citizenship of those Jews who had been converted by Reform and Conservative Rabbis continued to heighten the tension. By the time some Orthodox authorities were blaming Reform Judaism for instigating the Holocaust, 1979 President Ely Pilchik's had heard enough.

Orthodoxy is pointing its accusing finger at us in the Reform movement for having pushed the finger of God against our people, for having perpetrated the Holocaust. It is incumbent upon us to answer.<sup>254</sup>

<sup>251</sup> Barnett Brickner, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1956, p. 6.

<sup>252</sup> Leon Feuer, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1965, p. 8.

<sup>253</sup> Arthur Lelyfield, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1977, p. 11.

<sup>254</sup> Ely Pilchik, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1979, p. 7.



By the 1980's the CCAR Presidents were pleading with the Orthodox to stop their attacks while at the same time asking Reform Jewish leaders to "reject their rejection." As 1980 President Jerome Malino put it:

Cease your anger with us. Know that beyond the differences that divide us are all our shared hopes for the world of harmony and peace. Be done with discrimination against fellow Jews; look generously and with gentleness on those who differ from you.

Let us desist from our defensiveness and our strident rhetoric. Are we rejected by our Orthodox co-religionists? Let us reject the rejection and open our arms in embrace.<sup>255</sup>

Even when the issue of patrilineal descent came up, an issue which the Orthodox clearly would not support or even tolerate from the very beginning, CCAR President Jack Stern was still pleading for at least some kind of mutual tolerance.

My proposal, therefore, is that all of us--Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform--consider the approach that has served the three presidents so well during this past year: that when the difference between positions is perceived as so major as to be irreconcilable, then the task at hand is how to walk around the differences rather than to resolve them. In the face of such issues, what we tried to avoid was rhetoric; what we tried to be was pragmatic.<sup>256</sup>

Indeed the patrilineal descent issue further complicated the Israeli Law of Return as well as relations with the State of Israel in general. Nevertheless, these most recent CCAR Presidents have looked for ways to bridge the gap rather than fight back as was the practice in the 1970's. In 1988 some Orthodox rabbis even participated in the reading of a "Statement of Unity," a statement signed by over 3500 rabbis across the movements within Judaism, on Shabbat HaGadol. President Stern, reflecting on this momentous event, commented that Reform and Orthodox were bound by a "Covenant of Fate" if not a "Covenant of Faith."<sup>257</sup> Perhaps this is where

<sup>255</sup> Jerome Malino, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1981, p. 10.

<sup>256</sup> Jack Stern, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1986, p. 3.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid*, 1987, p. 1

the future of relations between the CCAR and the Orthodox movements will go.

### The CCAR and Zionism

The one issue which has been characterized by more tension than relations with the Orthodox has been that of Zionism and Israel. The CCAR's relationship to the State of Israel, both before and after it came into existence, has been the single most divisive issue in the Presidential Speeches over the years. The goals stated in these speeches have been vastly different, depending upon the President's individual opinion. Since these opinions have encompassed such a broad range over the years, it is a common misconception that the CCAR was fundamentally anti-Zionist until long after the State of Israel was an established fact. In fact, the number of goals which urged either compromise on the issue or support for Israel as a haven for persecuted Jews far outweighed those which could be termed "anti-Zionist." Harold Caminker's 1978 rabbinical thesis identified three different periods in Reform's relationship to Zionism before 1948. Between 1890 and 1917 the Conference was primarily anti-Zionist. Between 1917 and 1937 the Conference was mixed in terms of its members, but officially took the position of "non-Zionism." After 1937 the CCAR almost unanimously embraced Zionism, with "increasingly strong ties between world Reform Jewry and the independent Jewish State."<sup>258</sup>

The first time Zionism was mentioned in a speech, though, the goal was indeed to oppose anti-Zionism. This may be where some of the misconceptions that the CCAR was fundamentally anti-Zionist come from,

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<sup>258</sup> Harold Caminker, *Reform Judaism in the United States and its Relationship to Zionism*, p. 53.

since that first response to Zionism was uttered by Isaac Mayer Wise himself.

The so-called "Friends of Zion," chovaveh Zion, who revive among certain classes of people the political national sentiment of olden times, and turn the mission of Israel from the province of religion and humanity to the narrow political and national field, where Judaism loses its universal and sanctified ground and its historical signification.<sup>259</sup>

The Conference overwhelmingly voted to oppose political Zionism. This attitude, that Zionism conflicted with the Classical Reform Jewish "Mission," is the one that most people associate with early American Reform Judaism.

What most people overlook is that the majority of these same American Classical Reformers also attempted to aid the colonization of Palestine as a haven for Jews escaping pogroms. Wise's successor, Joseph Silverman, tried to clear up this misconception in 1901.

I am not unmindful of the fact that this Conference has set itself on record as being opposed to political Zionism—that is, to the founding of a Jewish State, but I also do not ignore the fact, that we, at the same time, favored the colonization of Jews.<sup>260</sup>

Silverman asked the rabbis to call upon their congregations to contribute financially to help achieve this goal and to support an international conference to that effect. However, the CCAR President's Message Committee did not vote to approve the international conference.

None of the speeches in the next eighteen years mention Zionism or any response to it as a goal, despite the Presidencies of several major Classical Reformers, including Joseph Krauskopf and David Philipson. Many of them promoted the "Mission" of Israel, but there was neither support nor criticism of Zionism as a movement. Apparently, though, quite a bit of vicious debate had been going on outside the official domain

<sup>259</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1897, p. x.

<sup>260</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1901, p. 30.

of the conference. Grossman asked that the tone of the debate be toned down for the sake of United Israel.

One of the sinister dangers on both sides of the Zionist-Reform dispute is in the after effect, the intolerance and affectation of the spirit. Against this the Jewish communities should be protected and the hillul hashem it provokes on the public at large should be averted.<sup>261</sup>

Grossman himself managed to walk the tightrope and support aspects of both sides. While he restated the previous CCAR position that the "Zionistic utopia" was "not practicable nor founded on a true conception of Judaism,"<sup>262</sup> he did express quite romantic appreciation for General Allenby's capture of Jerusalem. As far as the CCAR official position went, it was restated during the President's Message Committee statement. That statement expressed grateful appreciation of the Balfour Declaration while affirming that the rabbis of the CCAR

do not subscribe to the phrase in the declaration which says, "Palestine is to be a national homeland for the Jewish people."<sup>263</sup>

Surprisingly, the goals in the Presidential speeches in the 1920's were primarily characterized by support and compromise. In 1920 and 1924 support was expressed for the physical reconstruction of Palestine. Abram Simon, already mentioned for his groundbreaking work with the Orthodox and Conservative movements, also worked for compromise on the Zionism issue.

The recognition of the words "Zionist" and "non-Zionist" is an acknowledgment that there are at least two points of view in the philosophy of Jewish life and destiny. This gives an avowed status to the non-Zionists, and organizes them for the first time into an effective unit.<sup>264</sup>

<sup>261</sup> Louis Grossman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1918, p. 174.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid*, p. 173.

<sup>263</sup> Eugene Lipman, "Tanu Rabbanan," p. 58.

<sup>264</sup> Abram Simon, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1925, p. 231.

While he still reaffirmed the position of the aforementioned 1918 President's Message Committee which stated that the CCAR did not support Palestine as the actual "national homeland" of the Jewish people, this was quite a turnabout from even Grossman's position that Zionism was not "founded on a true conception of Judaism." Here the Zionists within the CCAR were being given official recognition. Simon even advocated the CCAR's involvement in the process of creating a non-political Jewish Agency for Palestine.

The next two successors, Louis Wolsey and HG Enelow, likewise supported a compromise position, but they came from a personal perspective which was clearly less friendly to Zionism than their two predecessors. Wolsey, one of the founders of the soon-to-be-formed American Council for Judaism, supported a compromise and even pressed for financial support for a Liberal movement within Israel. On the other hand, his emphasis was on the idea that

we do not subscribe to the phrase in the Declaration which says "Palestine is to be the national home of the Jewish people."<sup>265</sup>

Another Classical Reformer, HG Enelow, expressed similar notions in 1929.

What Reform Judaism could not accept was what has come to be labeled as "the ideology" of the new Palestinianism. It could not accept the representation of the Jews of today as a separate nation whose proper homeland is Palestine.<sup>266</sup>

Therefore, I recommend that the Convention go on record as being opposed to the attempt made in some quarters to represent Palestine as the only homeland of modern Jews, seeing that wherever Jews live and enjoy the rights of citizenship—of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—there is their homeland.<sup>267</sup>

<sup>265</sup> Morris Neufeld, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1926, p. 142.

<sup>266</sup> HG Enelow, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1929, p. 170.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid*, p. 174.



It should be pointed out that Enelow encouraged support for the ORT Jewish agricultural movement and the Agro-Joint in Israel, though he wanted to make clear his position that Israel was not *the* Jewish homeland. The final result, compromise, was the same, but the focus was entirely different. That focus depended on the individual President's opinion.

The same was true in the 1930's. David Lefkowitz emphasized support for the Jewish Agency in 1930 and the general financial support of Palestinian Jewry in 1931. 1933 President Morris Neufeld asked the CCAR to support the Joint Distribution Committee as well as to "heartily endorse the appeal of the Jewish Agency for adequate means to promote the settlement of large numbers in Palestine."<sup>268</sup>

Samuel Goldensien's 1934 and 1935 speeches were the last that expressed any anti-Zionist notions, though he, too, clothed them in compromise. He did state that German Jews in danger should go to Palestine if it could "offer a safe haven,"<sup>269</sup> but he made it clear that this was not to be done as a Jewish form of "nationalism." He made his position even clearer in his 1935 speech, where he vigorously defended the point that those who are not Zionists are no less passionate for their Judaism. There is a tendency, he said,

on the part of the advocates of what they call a Jewish Palestine to regard those who do not associate themselves with the Zionist movement as lacking in Jewishness. Even those who devote themselves entirely and exclusively with the classical and traditional Jewish spiritual ideals are now regarded as pale Jews, since they are not participants in the movement. But I fear that the outcome is to give to Judaism as a religion a lesser place in the scheme of Jewish purposes.<sup>270</sup>

As the Jew has never believed in vicarious spiritual life, so we today must not make of Palestine an intermediating surety for our continued

<sup>268</sup> Morris Neufeld, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1933, p. 132.

<sup>269</sup> Samuel Goldensien, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1934, p. 154.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 1935, p. 148.



life and for the fulfillment of our destiny.<sup>271</sup>

Though many members continued to be less than sympathetic to Zionism for several more years, to put it mildly, he was the last to express these notions publicly from the CCAR Presidential forum.

Just two years later President Felix Levy referred to Israel as the "ancestral homeland." It seemed that the current plight and blight of European Jewry was enough to convince most of the rabbis that the debate needed to come to an end.

The whole burden of my message is a plea for a return to Israel in all consciousness of a common history, fate and task. We have passed beyond the stage of quarreling over the place of Palestine in Jewish life and are deeply interested in its fate. As the suffering of Polish Jewry unites [sic] us, as the hostility of Hitler closes our ranks, so the present juncture in Zion must bind us together. Now is the time to prove to the world that American religious Jewry is one in regard for Palestine.<sup>272</sup>

Unfortunately, Levy was just a bit premature in his statement that the CCAR was "beyond the stage of quarreling." While the CCAR joined together as one in 1939 to protest the British White Paper pleading that they keep the pledge of the Balfour Declaration, the group split apart once again in 1942 when debating whether they should support the right of Palestine to establish their own military force. According to Lipman the debate was "long and heated,"<sup>273</sup> but the CCAR voted to approve the establishment of the military unit by a 64 to 38 margin.

The majority of CCAR Rabbis were in favor of establishing the State of Israel, but the minority was not a silent one by any means. Many of the members joined the American Council for Judaism when it was founded later that year. The Council began as a specific protest to the establishing

<sup>271</sup> Ibid, p. 150.

<sup>272</sup> Felix Levy, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1937, p. 188.

<sup>273</sup> Lipman, "Tanu Rabbanan," p. 60.

of this Jewish Army in Palestine.<sup>274</sup> The American Council for Judaism received even harsher treatment from the now Zionist majority than the Zionists had from the non-Zionists just a few decades earlier. In one sense the condemnation was justified, since their activity came at a time when Jews were being slaughtered all over the world with no place else to go. The tone with which they were condemned, though, was surprisingly bitter. 1943 President James Heller did not mince words.

I assert that the American Council for Judaism tends and will tend to create deep division within our Conference; that there is only one good solution: namely, for it to disband...This is not all! What is the wisdom, and where the sense, of organizing an anti-Zionist society at this precise juncture, of calling into being a Council dedicated to combating the ideas of "a Jewish State, a Jewish Flag, and a Jewish Army," and propagating an exclusively "universalistic" interpretation of Jewish life.<sup>275</sup>

Clearly most of the CCAR agreed with Heller, but the American Council for Judaism did not disband, and the goal of opposing their activities is mentioned by the Presidents as late as 1954.

For the most part, though, the goals between 1943 and 1948 were very supportive of Israel and its endeavors. The Presidents during that period listed goals of helping secure refugee passage to Palestine, offering financial support to the refugees as well as the land, protesting the White Papers of 1943 and 1947, and putting an end to the Zionism debate once and for all. Not surprisingly, the 1949 speech by Abraham Feldman contained a very hearty congratulations to the new nation, asking the CCAR to draft an official message to Israel

expressive of our joy and happiness over their admission to membership in the United Nations and offer also our proud felicitations upon the achievements of our brethren as they advance toward the fulfillment of their destiny in the spirit of prophetic idealism and our religious ethic.<sup>276</sup>

<sup>274</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Volume 2, p. 819.

<sup>275</sup> James Heller, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1943, p. 188.

<sup>276</sup> Abraham Feldman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1949, p. 204.

Now that the new State was created, the focus shifted from Zionism/anti-Zionism to the "relationship" between American Jewry and Israel. To what extent should American Jewry be responsible, financially and otherwise, for the state of Israel? Do American Jews have the right to criticize Israel's policies? To what extent should American Jewry become involved in the Israeli-Arab conflict? Does Israel have a Jewish responsibility to act as a "light unto the nations" or are they to be like any other nation? What responsibility does Israel bear for strengthening its own liberal Jewish movement? What effect do Israel and its actions have on the Jewish identity of American Jews? These were some of the questions that the CCAR Presidents asked in the years following the creation of the modern State. The responses were as varied as the presidents' opinions.

The question of Liberal Judaism in Israel was already discussed in Chapter 3 on Reform, but the other questions are no less important and need to be addressed as well. Financial support for Israel was expressed as an explicit goal in 1951, 1952, 1955, 1956, 1967, 1969, 1973 and 1974. The most salient characteristic of these years is that they were in times of Israeli crisis, including the 1956 Sinai Campaign, the 1967 Six Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Several of these years list specific financial support for Defense, a goal which obviously worked given the four billion dollars the United States still sends to Israel in foreign aid every year. In 1967 this stance was especially difficult to defend given the CCAR opposition to the Viet Nam War. Yet 1967 President Jacob Weinstein defended the CCAR's right to do so.

We must beware of package deals. We must not be embarrassed by the charge that we are doves on Vietnam and hawks on Israel, that we believe in universal truth and international co-operation until our

tribal interests are touched and that then we become as parochial and self-centered as any other nationalistic group. We must not be moved.<sup>277</sup>

When Israel was in danger American Jewry and the Reform Rabbis rallied together in common cause. Financial support and statements of "general support" were not the only ways the CCAR showed their support for Israel. The setting up of a campus of the Hebrew Union College was a sure sign of support for Israel as was the move of the World Union for Progressive Judaism's headquarters there. The CCAR Presidents also mentioned enlisting friendly Christian clergy to make positive "propaganda" for Israel, strength against negative propaganda by the Arab community, public relations efforts, and lobbying the American government as specific goals to help Israel. The majority of speeches before 1980 expressed specific notions of support for the State of Israel. The scene changed somewhat in the 1980's, as the growth of Israeli military power, the Lebanon conflict and the Intifada caused the focus to shift more to the "light unto nations" and the "relationship" issues.

That Israel has a special obligation to act morally was stated very early on by Jacob Marcus in 1950.

There are some who say that Zionism is dead, but I say unto you that there is a higher Zionism and that has only begun, and that is the task of again making Israel a Holy Land, a land of books and ideals, a land where new psalms will once more be written...Our task is to be sure that Israel never betrays herself and that once more she will rise again in Zion.<sup>278</sup>

1953 President Joseph Fink argued that Jews had a right to expect a higher standard of Israel.

The standards of other states cannot be applied to Israel. We have the right to expect a greater measure of justice, righteousness, understanding, and even lovingkindness, from a Jewish state than any other

<sup>277</sup> Jacob Weinstein, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1967, p. 9.

<sup>278</sup> Jacob Rader Marcus, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1950, p. 246.

kind of state in the world.<sup>279</sup>

That notion took wing again in the 1980's. Most likely moved by the events of the Lebanon crisis, President Herman Schaalman spoke to the problem Israel was encountering with their use of power.

The crucial and most difficult immediate issue facing the State of Israel is the use of power. A virtually unknown experience for nearly 2,000 years, the application of power as the constant opportunity and obligation of national autonomy poses profound and delicate dilemmas. The State of Israel, to be truly Jewish and continuous with the main thrust of Jewish tradition, more than any other national entity needs to discover and test how to be a model of the dynamic interaction between morality and power.<sup>280</sup>

This "dynamic interaction" has been no easy task, particularly with the Intifada in the late 1980's and early 1990's. American Jews tend to cringe when they encounter news reports portraying Israel as an oppressor and the Palestinians as victims. The conflict is real, and the solution is not easy. All American Jews want Israel to act as that "light unto nations," but practicality does not always allow such a luxury. As Samuel Karff put it:

Here we come face-to-face with the conflict between the nobler impulses of the Jewish heart and the circumstances of living in a tough neighborhood.<sup>281</sup>

The next question that naturally comes up is if Israel does not act in accordance with our ideals, to what extent can we or should we criticize those actions? For the most part, the CCAR Presidents have affirmed the right of American Reform Rabbis to criticize Israel. The first time the criticism issue was dealt with head on was in 1971, by President Roland Gittelsohn.

But because Israel the State is part of Israel the people, and because all of us, one people, are interwoven in destiny, we will speak as freely to the leaders of the State as do its citizens...It might be tempting for rabbis to invoke a rule of cloture on such issues for American

<sup>279</sup> Joseph Fink, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1953, p. 13.

<sup>280</sup> Herman Schaalman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1983, p. 4.

<sup>281</sup> Samuel Karff, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1991, p. 9.



Jewry, on the grounds that this might divide us and disrupt our effort in behalf of Israel. For ill or good, it is too late for this kind of reasoning, because the issue has already been joined, and it would be better for us to confront it than to forfeit the field to the Noam Chomskys and the Uri Davises.<sup>282</sup>

One of the few voices in the speeches that felt the Reform movement was going too far in its criticisms of Israel was Arthur Lelyveld in 1976. Lelyveld went so far as to criticize even the CCAR Commission on Social Action for what he called a "lamentable lack of understanding both of Jewish history and of the contemporary history of the Middle East."<sup>283</sup> He was referring specifically to a statement they made that the Jews should move out of Hebron because their residency was provoking the Arabs.

It goes beyond criticism, however, and becomes irresponsibility when we join the jackals who are tearing at Israel's body, as when we enact one-sided resolutions accusing the government of Israel of provocation when it has been acting with exemplary moderation both in the instance of prayer on the Temple Mount, and in regard to demonstrations in behalf of the right to settle in Judea and Samaria.<sup>284</sup>

However, Lelyveld's view is a minority one. The more common view was that American Jews should indeed criticize Israel if it was justified, a view articulated well by 1980 President Jerome Malino, albeit phrased a little stronger than most.

Our voices must be raised as well against every violation in Israel, by government, party or people, of the exalted ethical teachings of Judaism. Of what use is a State of our own if it bear testimony, not to righteousness and the pursuit of peace, but to expediency and maneuvering for political advantage. Whether in its domestic operation or its relationship to the Arab population, within and outside Israel to profess to be *kechol hagoyim* or to be content to be, "like any other nation," is a betrayal of the Zionist dream and a denial of God.<sup>285</sup>

Malino was arguing that we not only should be critical of Israel, but that we are obligated to be so if the situation demands it.

<sup>282</sup> Roland Gittelsohn, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1971, p. 7.

<sup>283</sup> Arthur Lelyveld, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1976, p. 8.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> Jerome Malino, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1980, p. 11.



To be fair, however, it should be pointed out that while accepting and even encouraging legitimate criticism for Israel, Malino and most of the other Presidents certainly showed sympathy for the reality that Israel was under special and often unfair scrutiny from the rest of the world in everything they did. The crux of the problem, according to Malino in his 1981 address was that

The fact that the state of Israel has become almost an object of faith to Jews has led to a continuing tension and an unresolved debate as to whether Jew outside of Israel may be critical of Israel.<sup>286</sup>

Others might argue that it is not because Israel is an object of faith for American Jews but that American Jews do not live there, serve in the reserves until they are fifty years old or send their children off to war. Whatever the reason for the tension, it remains unresolved.

Even more of an issue to the CCAR Presidents than whether or not they should criticize Israel's actions was the relationship of the American Jew to the State of Israel. How does it affect his identity was the question they asked, and clarifying this relationship was their goal. The first mention of the relationship as a problem was by Barnett Brickner in 1956. He was responding to Dr. Nahum Goldmann's keynote address to the World Zionist Congress, where Goldmann argued that Israel represented the only hope of keeping the spark of Judaism alive due to the rapid assimilation of American Jewry. Brickner certainly did not agree with the prognosis, but he did agree there was a need for action and clarification. Consequently, he made the following recommendation.

Colleagues, while we affirm our faith in Israel and in the future of the American Jewish community, the time has come for this Conference to clarify and spell out its attitude toward Israel. I would recommend that next year's Program Committee be directed to devote a whole

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid, 1981, p. 7.

session to this subject.<sup>287</sup>

1972 President David Polish's speech echoed these struggles.

Now that the State of Israel is an indisputable reality, now that we have empirically demonstrated the viability of particularism and universalism as embodied in the nation and in the Galut, we must seek a synthesis of both, rather than the liquidation of one by the other.<sup>288</sup>

Similar thoughts were echoed throughout the speeches of the 1980's as well. Perhaps much of the insecurity the CCAR Presidents have shown on this issue is because of the fact that the Reform movement is often accused of being anti-Zionist at its roots. As a result, a few of the rabbis took special pains to argue that this was not the case. Roland Gittelsohn pointed out that there had been Zionism in Reform since Max Heller in 1910, and 1989 President Eugene Lipman pointed out that Reform had undergone a "deep change in the meaning of the word Zionism and its implications."<sup>289</sup>

Still, the relationship continues to be somewhat cloudy, a cloudiness expressed metaphorically by 1982 President Herman Schaalman.

There is a truer symbol to describe the relation between the State of Israel and North American Jewry, as perhaps also of other segments of the Jewish people. It is the ellipse formed around two foci, two central points, held in tension over against each other with neither claiming nor possessing an inherently permanent priority of status. It points to the inevitable mutuality and necessary reciprocity between the two focal points.<sup>290</sup>

The metaphor is an apt one, for it describes the fact that though neither point possesses an inherent superiority, they are held in constant tension over against each other. They need each other yet are not always aware of it. From anti-Zionism to non-Zionism to Zionism, from support to criticism to relationship, the foci metaphor accurately describes the ultimate relationship between the CCAR and the State of Israel.

<sup>287</sup> Barnett Brickner, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1956, p. 11.

<sup>288</sup> David Polish, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1972, p. 10.

<sup>289</sup> Eugene Lipman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1989, p. 14.

<sup>290</sup> Herman Schaalman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1982, p. 5.

### Oppressed Jewry and Immigration

So far it has been shown that the CCAR had much interaction, both positive and negative, *with* other groups within the broader Jewish community, from secular Jewish organizations to the Orthodox community to the State of Israel. In addition, the CCAR Presidents, along with the Reform movement, often acted *for* groups within the broader K'lal Yisrael community.

The group that comes up the most in the goals of the CCAR Presidents is oppressed Jewry. From the Kishinev pogrom in 1903 to the rescue of Soviet and Ethiopian Jews in the 1990's, a major goal of the CCAR has been to offer help to persecuted Jews around the world. Not only did the CCAR work with the various umbrella organizations formed specifically to solve these problems, but they often set goals for themselves which would help relieve oppressed Jewry. The first time such a goal was mentioned was by Joseph Silverman in 1901. He was asking that the rabbis fundraise for the colonization of Palestine, not in support of Zionism but to "permanently relieve the over-crowded Jewish districts of at least Russia and Roumania."<sup>291</sup> In 1903, in response to the nearly unprecedented Kishinev Pogroms, he called for an international conference to consider the problem of how counteract the persecution and oppression as well as a petition to be sent to the Czar.

However, it did not necessarily take such a drastic pogrom to be motivated to action. Helping oppressed Russian Jews was also mentioned as a goal in 1906, 1910 and 1911. Supporting Falashan Jews was mentioned in 1908, helping other "lost tribes" such as the Chinese Jews and the Benei Israel of India was discussed in 1910, and support for recently discovered

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<sup>291</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1901, p. 31.

"Marranos" was offered in 1928. In 1922 a goal was set to protest anti-semitism occurring in Hungary, and in 1925 a call for financial support for the Jews of Eastern Europe was made. Specific institutes and agencies which were threatened by anti-semitism abroad were also given explicit support in CCAR Presidential goals, such as the Alliance Israelite Universelle in 1929, the Yiddish Scientific Institute of Wilna in 1929 and the Vienna Rabbiner Seminar in 1930. Other years where there were specific goals set by the CCAR to aid oppressed Jewry "in general," without the help of any other national organization, included 1912, 1916, 1917, 1921, 1925, 1931, 1932, 1936 and 1938.

Also during those years, the CCAR went on record several times opposing immigration restrictions, which, much to their chagrin, eventually won the day in the United States Congress. 1921 President Leo Franklin summed up the grounds for this opposition quite well.

We believe that it would be contrary to the spirit in which our republic was conceived and subversive of the principles upon which it was builded [sic] by the fathers, to close the doors of this country in the face of those who, as victims of political oppression or religious persecution, come hither seeking an opportunity to live their lives as men, in freedom and under equal laws, and who, in return for the blessings which here they expect to receive, are eager to accept every duty and to make every sacrifice which American citizenship implies.<sup>292</sup>

Clearly pre-World War II CCAR Presidents were extremely concerned with what happened to their brethren in foreign lands.

This concern only increased with the Holocaust, and 1943 President James Heller was already calling for making mourning over the victims of Nazi terror into a special observance as a part of the Yom Kippur service. Between 1943 and 1950 nearly all the CCAR Presidents turned almost all their oppressed Jewry and international attention to the founding of Israel,

<sup>292</sup> Leo Franklin, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1921, p. 107.

but by the early 1950s, the status of Soviet Jews was beginning to become an issue. Specifically, the members of the CCAR, like many other Americans, were concerned that the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union was destroying religious freedom for its Jews. Moreover, 1953 President Joseph Fink warned, "even anti-Semitism is not too ugly a weapon for them to employ, when temporarily useful."<sup>293</sup> He was concerned for both the Soviet Jews' freedom and their lives. In the 1960's the Presidents showed a similar concern.

Surprisingly, though, in the 1970's, when most Soviet Jews were struggling to emigrate, and in the early 1990's, when the floodgates had finally opened up, there is no more than a passing mention of Soviet Jewry in the speeches! All the energy so many Reform congregations spent writing letters to their Congressmen urging United States pressure, all the absorption centers, free congregational memberships and clothing donations that have come up as a consequence of the massive immigration to both Israel and the United States, surely these could not have passed right by the CCAR Presidents! These events obviously had a great effect on the Jewish community; the fact that they received so little attention from the CCAR Presidents indicates that the CCAR has abandoned these issues to other domains. The CCAR as a body still makes plenty of resolutions on issues which affect K'lal Yisrael. In the years between 1975 and 1992 the CCAR made no less than 12 and as many as 50 resolutions each year on a great variety of topics. But the resolutions and the ideas they represent were, generally speaking, only given passing mention in the Presidential speeches of those years. Moreover, within the Reform movement the Religious Action Center handles the political issues and the UAHC the

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<sup>293</sup> Joseph Fink, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1953, p. 11.



practical ones. Outside the Reform movement Federations and Community Relations Councils have taken primary responsibility for immigration and absorption. The CCAR Presidents have left these issues of anti-semitism and aid to oppressed Jewry to these other groups. The relationship between the CCAR and these other bodies has been more or less clarified. The CCAR in general and the President in particular have concerned themselves more with opinions and "meaning," and they have given up the tachlis of putting that meaning into action to the Religious Action Center, the UAHC and the Jewish Federation.

On the other hand, the CCAR continues to be concerned with their "relationships" to other groups within the totality of K'lal Yisrael. Difficulties in Reform's relationship to the State of Israel and to the Orthodox movement have kept the percentage of goals in the category K'lal Yisrael relatively high. Since 1970, the CCAR President's K'lal Yisrael goals have generally been goals which show an attempt to resolve the ambiguities in Reform's relationship with Israel and Orthodoxy rather than immigration, oppressed Jewry or anti-semitism, as had been the case in previous years.

### **Prescriptive or Descriptive**

For the most part this category has been characterized by descriptive rather than prescriptive goals. The reason for this is that the CCAR Presidents have been forced to react to events and groups within the Jewish community rather than prescribe their ideal sense of Jewish community and K'lal Yisrael. Their many attempts to form or support umbrella governing organizations help tell this sad story. With no central body determining policy for the Jewish community as a whole the CCAR has had to spend too



much of their time struggling to react to events without any formal structure. Formal structure would have helped the CCAR clarify their relationship to the State of Israel. Formal structure would have helped the Reform movement deal better with the Orthodox movement. Formal structure would have given the CCAR Presidents better means to prescribe priorities for K'lal Yisrael. Instead, the CCAR has had to "react" to K'lal Yisrael issues rather than lead.

### **Rhetorical Questions and Strategies**

K'lal Yisrael was and is the extended audience of the speeches rather than the immediate audience. These K'lal Yisrael goals have been made by the CCAR Presidents in hopes that they would eventually reach this audience, but they certainly had no guarantees. The means of getting this message out to rest of the Jewish community are not as effective as the means of getting messages to the Reform movement or the Rabbis themselves. The delivery system for the Reform movement and the Rabbis themselves are more accessible and, therefore, more effective. The Rabbis themselves are the easiest group to reach, since they are the immediate audience. To reach them all one has to do is make sure they listen. Reaching Reform congregants is slightly more difficult. They get the messages through the filter of their own rabbi and that rabbi must choose to deliver the message to their congregants. Still, it is at least somewhat likely that a congregational rabbi will discuss issues brought up by the CCAR in his or her own congregation.

Getting messages to K'lal Yisrael is another story. They get them through the filter of the press, and then usually through their own press with their own biases. An Israeli figure is not likely to read the entire text

of a CCAR Presidential speech. If he gets any wind of it, he usually gets the highlights as reported in Israeli press. An Orthodox Rabbi is likely to read highlights of the speech as reported by his Orthodox periodical. These highlights are usually described with commentary by the periodical's editors and are, therefore, inherently biased toward that editor's views. Similarly, Federation and B'nai B'rith leaders who do not belong to a Reform Congregation are apt to read about a CCAR Presidential message in their own internal newsletters if they read about it at all. The general rule is a two-fold one. The further you are from the source of the speech, (1) the less likely you are to receive the message at all and (2) the more likely you are to receive it with a biased filter. With all these built-in stumbling blocks it is quite difficult for a CCAR President to get his goal to reach his intended K'lal Yisrael audience.

What kinds of appeals did the CCAR Presidents use with the hopes that their message might eventually get there? The K'lal Yisrael goals were generally characterized by ethos appeals, appeals to the character of the speaker or movement. In order to legitimately make a suggestion which affected an external entity, K'lal Yisrael, the rabbis felt compelled to prove that they were legitimately qualified to do so. 1980-81 President Jerome Malino provided two clear examples of ethos based appeals, both of which were quoted earlier in this study. Concerning Reform's relationship to Israel Malino declared. "Our voices must be raised...on the basis of the exalted ethical teachings of Judaism." According to Malino the teachings of Judaism made the CCAR's rabbis qualified to criticize Israel on those grounds. Concerning the Orthodox he asked the Reform rabbis to "reject their rejection." By being more "rabbinical," Reform rabbis could prove that they were qualified to speak with authority for the Jewish people.

Both of these examples represent good uses of the ethos appeal, the appeal to the character and qualifications of the speaker and what he represents. The majority of goals the CCAR Presidents made for K'lal Yisrael were characterized by this ethos appeal.

### Success or Failure?

Despite the problems in reaching the extended audience of K'lal Yisrael, it appears that the CCAR Presidents were moderately successful in stirring a reaction in the groups they were trying to reach. On the other hand, they were largely unsuccessful in achieving their goals.

Several times the CCAR was successful in stirring enough of a reaction in the Jewish community to play a vital role in forming a central governing organization for the American Jewish community. The CCAR played a vital role in the creation and execution of the American Jewish Conference, the General Jewish Council and the Presidents' Conference. The CCAR succeeded in helping them get off the ground. They failed in getting them to work in the way they desired. The Synagogue Council of America, formed in 1926 at the instigation of 1925 President Abram Simon, was a successful venture and does still exist, but it has relatively little power. No such organization with the power to act exists today, nor does there appear to be one on the horizon.

In terms of tension with other organizations such as the Federation, it still clearly exists. Jack Stern's aforementioned 1987 speech mentioned how there was still a problem with the Federation taking the best lay leaders away from the Congregation. In addition, the CCAR has abdicated much of the role they previously played with oppressed Jewry to the Federation. On the other hand, there have been several calls for closer

cooperation between Synagogues and Federations, and in some ways both the CCAR and the Jewish Federation are more comfortable with their current roles. Overall, though, the problem most of the CCAR Presidents' had with Federations was that they encouraged overly secularized Jewish identity. That problem still exists. One can not say, then, that the CCAR Presidents have been successful in reaching their goals in this area.

A similar point can be made about the CCAR's relationship to the Orthodox. Clearly the Orthodox do receive many of the Reform messages, despite the fact that they are far removed from hearing the actual speeches. The Orthodox certainly have had strong reactions to Reform positions on issues such as patrilineal descent, the Law of Return, Homosexuality and others. Again, the CCAR has succeeded in getting messages to the Orthodox. Improving the relationship with them has failed, however. Orthodoxy and Reform are more distant today than ever. Though much of the reason for this has been Orthodoxy's continual move to the right, the fact is that all the attempts by the CCAR to improve the relationship have basically failed.

The CCAR's relationship to Israel can be judged as both a success and a failure. The Reform movement, including the CCAR, has official contact and influence with leaders of the Israeli government. In addition, several CCAR Conferences have been held in Israel itself. On the other hand, the Reform movement is still plagued by some of their early positions on Zionism. Furthermore, the debate over whether an American Jew has the right to criticize Israel continues to rage, and the relationship of American Jewry to Israel as an entity is still quite murky, to say the least. Clarifying this relationship and showing Israel support continue to be important priorities for the CCAR. There have been a half a dozen or

more resolutions at each Conference in the 1990's relating to Israel. The 1992 Conference alone listed resolutions on the 25th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem, reforming Israel's economy, reforming Israel's electoral system, securing loan guarantees, encouraging aliyah, creating a Reform Zionist think tank and the Israeli-Arab peace process. But the fact that there have been so many resolutions, and many of them repeated year after year, is really a sign of failure, not success. In the final analysis, the resolutions have not really resolved anything.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, the way the CCAR has related to K'lal Yisrael has been characterized by diversity and variety. The issues which dominated this category included other Jewish community organizations, the Orthodox community and Israel. The way the CCAR related to these other groups, other movements, other countries and various miscellaneous K'lal issues usually depended on the issue, the time and the individual President. If there was one commonality here it was in the general hope rather than the specific goal. That general hope can be summed up in one word--unity. It was and is the hope that one day there will be harmony at least within Israel's own house. As David Polish put it in 1973

If we expect to influence Jewish life, we must be ready to share in the processes which shape Jewish life. In isolation, we are not only a narrow ecclesia, which is an un-Jewish concept, but we are unqualified to pass judgment on Jewish affairs.<sup>294</sup>

That is the hope, anyway. Whether it is actually achievable is another question entirely.

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<sup>294</sup> David Polish, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1973, p. 5.

# CHAPTER 6

## GENERAL SOCIETY

### SOCIETY CATEGORY BREAKDOWN





## CHAPTER 6

# GENERAL SOCIETY

The final category to be analyzed in depth is that of "General Society." The CCAR rabbis saw themselves as guardians of the ethics and morality of general society. They spoke from the tradition of the ancient prophets, and in doing so they were following in the tradition of Abraham Geiger and "Prophetic Judaism." As Michael Meyer explained:

The message of Israel's ancient Prophets, universalized beyond its original context, became for Geiger, as for the Reform movement, the most viable and important component of Judaism.<sup>295</sup>

The rabbis of the CCAR saw themselves as part of that chain, and the speeches are filled with allusions to the prophetic literature and social criticism of the society in which they lived. Samuel Schulman summed up this rabbinic role in his 1912 address:

The Synagogue should be an active leader and a progressive moral force in the country. It should seek to combine the fearlessness of the Prophets with the strict justice of the Judge. The modern Rabbi should hark back to both traditions, which were so beautifully embodied in the office of Rabbi, for many centuries.<sup>296</sup>

Reform leadership has always wanted Reform Judaism to be known as the movement of prophetic values and social justice. It was specifically the "Reform rabbinate, not the laity, which agitated for the transition to social activism."<sup>297</sup> The CCAR speeches are filled with references to the prophets and applied social justice. "Reform Judaism especially has placed itself on the line," 1966 President Jacob Weinstein said, "by its major emphasis on the moral and ethical values of the prophets of Israel."<sup>298</sup> Calling these

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<sup>295</sup> Meyer, p. 95.

<sup>296</sup> Samuel Schulman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1912, p. 251.

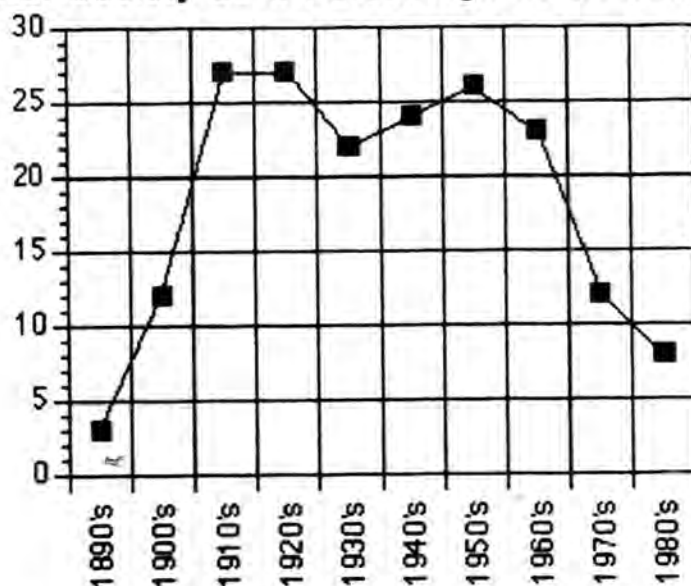
<sup>297</sup> Meyer, p. 288.

<sup>298</sup> Jacob Weinstein, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1966, p. 7.

values the "mission of Israel" or the responsibility of the Jewish people to be a "light unto the nations" were really just additional ways of expressing that idea.

As important as using prophetic Judaism and bettering general society have been to the Reform movement and its rabbinic leaders, they have not been as strong a factor in CCAR Presidential goal-setting as one might have guessed. In fact, the broad statistics show that there have been fewer goals in the "general society" category than in any of the other three categories: the Rabbis themselves, the Reform movement alone, or K'lal Yisrael. General society's overall figure of 20% ranks the lowest among the four. The graph below shows how the numbers played out over time.

**General Society as a Percentage of Overall Goals**



The percentage of goals in this category started extremely low in the 1890's and 1910's, rose to a high of 30% in the 1920's, and then gradually decreased until it reached just 8% in the 1980's. As stated earlier, its trend runs opposite to the category of "Reform," sustaining low levels when the

Reform movement was questioning and concentrating on itself and high levels when the movement was secure enough in its self-definition to allow for concentration on the broader problems of society. Specifically, the goals for general society were highest during and between the great World Wars, when the CCAR was naturally concerned with reacting to the momentous world events of the time. In addition, their optimism led them to believe that they could have an effect on what happened in general society.

Indeed war and peace was one of the major areas in which CCAR Presidents showed their concern and set goals for broader society. Besides this category of "war and peace," the other goals they had for general society can be subgrouped into the following categories: Social Justice and Other Societal Issues, the Separation of Church and State, Interfaith Relations, and Hope.

### **Social Justice and Other Societal Issues**

The very first references to prophetic values and social justice were in connection with helping oppressed Jews around the world, and this goal (relieving overcrowded Russian Jewish ghettos in 1901) and many others were discussed in detail in the chapter on K'lal Yisrael . The first time a social justice issue outside the purview of the Jewish people was mentioned was in 1907. During that speech Joseph Stolz asked the rabbis for continued support for victims of the San Francisco Earthquake. Aid for these victims was an important step on the road to specific applied social justice, but it was clearly a non-controversial one.

Not surprisingly it was David Philipson who was the first CCAR President to enter more controversial social justice arenas. In 1908, Philipson spoke out against child labor legislation.

If there be one subject among the many of a high moral nature that are now agitating our American people and which possibly more than any other requires some sympathetic and encouraging word from every religious organization it is that of child labor.<sup>299</sup>

At first glance this does not appear to be that controversial either. Even if an individual felt that rabbis were over stepping their bounds by getting involved in a political issue, who could disagree with the abolition of such a cruel practice as child labor? A closer look reveals that there were many Jewish manufacturers whose income depended on it.

Many of our co-religionists are large employers of children in the various lines of trade and manufacture; our privilege and our duty it is to represent the child's side to such as are not already conscious of their responsibility in the matter.<sup>300</sup>

The following year Philipson took a stand on the issue of white slave traffic. Again such a position would not appear to be as bold as it was. Who among Jews, and liberal Jews at that, would engage in such barbaric practices? The facts, once again, told a different story.

The Jewish world has been stirred from center to circumference by the recent disclosures of the part Jews have played in the pursuance of the white slave traffic. Though there be many non-Jews engaged in this nefarious business, still that there should be any Jews whatsoever in these well nigh incredible transactions is so at variance with our traditions that it had been strange indeed if this chilul hashem had not called forth a cry of horror and condemnation from many places.<sup>301</sup>

Max Heller reiterated the abolition of white slave traffic as a goal in his 1911 address.

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<sup>299</sup> David Philipson, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1908, p. 158.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid*, 1909, p. 210.

The decade of the 1910's was an extremely active one for the CCAR in terms of social justice. Samuel Schulman's 1912 speech, already alluded to for its description of the rabbi as both prophet and judge, was also clear in its push for specific legislation to solve the social justice problems of society.

The Synagogue, through its leaders, should inspire progressive social legislation, which shall protect every man, woman and child in the land against exploitation, against untoward conditions, and which shall, by protecting the national resource in the life of the child, keep it out of the workshop as long as possible, and which shall give the adult the greatest equitable opportunity for unfoldment and the obtaining of just reward for service.<sup>302</sup>

He went on to suggest that rabbis perhaps should act as mediators between laborer and employers, calling it a great "Kiddush Hashem." He also recommended that the name of the Committee on Synagogue and Labor be changed to the Committee on Synagogue and Social Justice, thus widening the boundaries of where the CCAR should be involved. In 1913 he pressed for this committee once again, emphasizing that social justice is "the central virtue and ideal of Jewish ethics."<sup>303</sup> The following year Moses Gries' goal was to make it clear to all just how "Jewish" the concept of social justice was.

Why do we not make clear the Jewish contribution to the social ideals of mankind, in order that we hold our rightful place as creative leaders and appear not as imitative followers. It is more than accidental, that so often Jews have been the leaders in the world's great social movements. Is it not resultant of the compelling power of our tragic history and of our age-long life-experience of struggle for right and justice?<sup>304</sup>

The decade climaxed with the CCAR's Declaration of Principles, the first social justice platform of the CCAR. It was drafted in 1918 and approved in 1920. It included a more equitable distribution of profits, minimum

<sup>302</sup> Samuel Schulman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1912, p. 251.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid*, 1913, p. 213.

<sup>304</sup> Moses Gries, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1914, p. 180.



wage, eight hour day, the abolition of child labor, workmen's compensation, health insurance, labor's right to strike, mediation, proper housing and more.

In the decade of the 1920's the CCAR presidents continued the trend of promoting social justice in general. Abram Simon expressed it well in 1924 with allusions to the classical prophets.

Society's challenge to the Church and the Synagog is to realize the social vision which appears on the horizon. Moses in Egypt and Amos at Bethel tied up our religion to a program of social-mindedness. The Jew enters the arena of social betterment with an amazingly fine equipment of prophetic fervor, principles and historic experiences. The Conference, having adopted a social program, has no greater task than to direct Judaism and the obligations of religion into the expanding life-experience of the Jew.<sup>305</sup>

In 1927 Louis Wolsey described the resistance the rabbis were getting from many of the laypeople in regard to the social justice issue. He reported to the CCAR that a recommendation at the UAHC Executive Board Meeting calling for the establishment of a Bureau of Information that would collect facts and disseminate information on social problems was defeated. Moreover, it was defeated primarily on grounds that social justice was not a "Jewish question."

It is of course entirely clear to all of us that Justice is a fundamental and essential principle of our religious point of view.<sup>306</sup>

Since not all the laypeople (and several of the rabbis) agreed he recommended that a paper be prepared for the next Conference detailing the Jewish aspect of the "social problem." One of the results of the paper was a new platform and the suggestion by President HG Enelow that the committee expand the scope of the by changing the committee's name to the

<sup>305</sup> Abram Simon, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1924, p. 152.

<sup>306</sup> Louis Wolsey, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1927, p. 227.



Commission on Economic, Industrial, and other Social Relations. The name change failed but the platform was nonetheless established.

Before moving on to the 1930's it is important to mention one other social issue to which the rabbis were forced to react, that of prohibition. The 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution, adopted in 1919, despite its good intentions, led to many crime-related problems in the 1920's. The rabbis had to weigh these factors and come up with a position. Despite the difficulties the Presidents affirmed their support of this amendment in both 1922 and 1924. In 1922 President Edward Calisch even recommended that the CCAR

voluntarily renounce the specific privilege granted us by the prohibition regulations permitting us the use of sacramental wines.<sup>307</sup>

The CCAR went with the Conservative movement's halachic responsa that wine did not have to be fermented to be usable for religious purposes. 1924 President Abram Simon affirmed that the CCAR supported prohibition because "we stand for this law as part of our Constitution."<sup>308</sup> The fact that it was a law was reason enough for the CCAR ("the law of the land is the law"), and they dropped the subject when the amendment was repealed in 1933.

By 1931 the social justice program being advocated by President David Lefkowitz was becoming increasingly more radical.

And even more loudly must we protest against a system which in the most approved laissez faire fashion of the Manchester school engenders periodically a most tragic culmination of a moderate but continuous unemployment condition.<sup>309</sup>

This attitude was a natural reaction to the Great Depression. The despondency led some of the rabbis to look to socialistic tendencies for

<sup>307</sup> Edward Calisch, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1922, p. 109.

<sup>308</sup> Abram Simon, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1924, p. 145.

<sup>309</sup> David Lefkowitz, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1931, p. 184.

solutions. A 1932 statement by the Commission on Social Justice actually sounded like a platform for socialism.

We therefore advocate immediate legislative action in the direction of changes whereby social control will place the instruments of production and distribution as well as the system of profits increasingly within the powers of society as a whole.<sup>310</sup>

The situation was not hopeless to them; it just required even more social programming effort. Not all Reform rabbis endorsed the platform, but a majority of them did. The lay leaders, on the other hand, were quite embarrassed, and the UAHC did not voice any similar approval. What the rabbis did agree on in regard to the depression, however, was that they needed to continue to offer words of comfort to their congregants during the depression. Lefkowitz urged the rabbis to do so.

One of the last of the truly classical Reformers, Samuel Goldensen, took the Presidency in 1934 and 1935, and he made social justice, particularly in industry, a central goal of his term. When speaking of the many successes that Jews had achieved in America he warned:

Our bankers, commercial and industrial leaders, movie magnates, doctors, lawyers, scientists, and artists, should in their respective fields so conduct their affairs as to body forth some added benefaction to our neighbors. In a word our very Jewishness would commit us to every program of social justice and our commitment would be evidenced in the conduct of our personal lives and in the management of our public affairs.<sup>311</sup>

In 1935 he reminded the rabbis of their sacred task.

Because the major passion of Israel's teachings throughout the ages has been for social righteousness, many of our people are already identified with this general trend. Upon us Rabbis, however, rests a special obligation in this matter.<sup>312</sup>

<sup>310</sup> *CCAR Yearbook*, 1932, p. 10, p. 97.

<sup>311</sup> Samuel Goldensen, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1934, p. 155.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid*, 1935, p. 150.

For the remainder of the decade and the early 1940's the "prophetic" goals of the CCAR Presidents shifted to working for peace and helping oppressed Jewry in the face of World War II. The only major happening in relation to social justice in the CCAR during that time was that the Commission on Social Justice was combined with the Commission on Peace. They were considered part and parcel of the same problem.

Just two years later, however, the CCAR split them into two again and even engaged a permanent Executive Secretary for the Social Justice Commission. In 1948 they created a Joint CCAR/UAHC Social Action Commission to further increase their practical strength when it came to Social Justice. Abraham Feldman's 1948 speech quoted the entire charter of this joint commission, four pages long! From Feldman's action, one can see how important a priority social action was to the CCAR. Ironically, though, as a result of the work of the Joint Social Action Commission, the separate social justice related goals of the CCAR dropped off. The Joint Social Action Commission did most of the specifics, and the CCAR Presidents were left to speak about broad principles rather than the specific actions.

In the 1950's the social justice goals of the CCAR switched from the specific economics to the broader principle of personal freedom. The CCAR clearly felt the influence of McCarthyism. Without mentioning him by name, 1951 President Philip Bernstein warned the CCAR of the dangers he presented.

The growing danger of militarization and war will place our civil liberties in jeopardy. Reactionary forces are prepared to seize the opportunity for an assault on social gains and the established freedoms of American life. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. At this moment such vigilance is needed more than ever.<sup>313</sup>

<sup>313</sup> Philip Bernstein, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1951, p. 221-222.

The rabbis did not support communism, however, by any means. In fact Bernstein's 1952 speech specifically mentioned that Communism was "clearly the foe of the free man's life and must be resisted" and that he supported the policy of the United States Government to "localize and resist aggression."<sup>314</sup> Nevertheless, the main priority was protecting freedom of speech in the United States. 1953 President Joseph Fink spoke out on behalf of freedom of speech and set a goal for the rabbis to protect that freedom in the clergy.

Of all groups in our land, the one group most concerned with freedom of speech must be the clergy. Its members have not only the privilege as citizens, but also the professional duty as ministers of God, to speak their hearts freely and courageously and constantly.<sup>315</sup>

He expanded this goal in 1954 to include Christian clergy encountering the same problems, many of whom had been asked to take an oath of loyalty. In addition, he pressed for the repeal of the McCarran-Walter Immigration Law, since "racial prejudice is obviously central to this law."<sup>316</sup> President Truman agreed and vetoed the law which smacked of police-state tactics, but Congress passed it over his veto.

The 1955 speech by the socially minded Barnett Brickner mentioned a few concepts that were unique only to it. He mentioned as goals studies of both juvenile delinquency and automation, the only times these two issues are mentioned in specific goals throughout the 103 speeches. More importantly, though, he was the first to broach the subject of general civil rights. Celebrating the demise of McCarthyism, he asserted that "America seems to be coming back to her senses."<sup>317</sup> However, that was not enough. Reform rabbis and congregations needed to take a proactive role.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid, p. 294.

<sup>315</sup> Joseph Fink, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1953, p. 5.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>317</sup> Barnett Brickner, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1955, p. 8.

I am proud to see our Reform movement in this all-out battle for civil rights. I want to commend the courageous and forward-looking statements and resolutions on Social Action adopted at the recent Biennial of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. I cannot too strongly urge the members of this Conference to do everything in their power to implement in their congregations the formation of Social Action Committees on behalf of civil rights.<sup>318</sup>

From this statement one can see that the Reform rabbinical leadership was allied with civil rights activists very early on in the movement. The question of civil rights and racial discrimination continued to be emphasized in the speeches of the late 1950's and throughout the 1960's. In 1956 Brickner set the goal of working with other clergy toward desegregating the south, suggesting a religious summit conference to work out a *modus operandi* on the issue of desegregation.

Now that desegregation has become *dina demalchuta*, it remains for all engaged in molding public opinion to help Americans integrate the law into their way of thinking and acting. This is an inescapable responsibility which we as rabbis share with all others who mold public opinion.<sup>319</sup>

At the 1960 Convention civil rights legislation was made a vital goal of the new Social Justice Platform. 1961 President Bernard Bamberger used the centennial observance of the Civil War to work toward the goal of civil rights.

The war was in vain, the celebration is a blasphemy and disgrace, if a century later the Negro's right to full equality may still be limited by prejudice enacted into law or perpetuated by custom. There ought to be one central theme and objective of the centennial celebration—the elimination of all officially, legalized, racial discrimination before the observance ends in 1965. I recommend that the Central Conference adopt a resolution to that effect.<sup>320</sup>

Support for the Civil Rights march in Washington was encouraged by 1964 President Leon Feuer, and several other Presidents mentioned the goal

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid, 1956, p. 11.

<sup>320</sup> Bernard Bamberger, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1961, p. 7.



specifically in their speeches in the 1960's and early 1970's, specifically in 1965, 1966, 1968, 1969, 1971, 1972 and 1974. Not that the racism disappeared afterward, but the CCAR's active involvement in the process did, if one is to judge by the Presidential speeches.

Another pressing problem which the rabbis harbored on in the 1960's as well as the 1970's was that of poverty. The problems seemed to be similar to those of the 1930's, a comparison which was not lost on 1961 President Bernard Bamberger. No lasting solution was found back then, though, and Bamberger offered no solution for the 1960's either. The only thing he could affirm was that it would take an entirely new approach.

Such an approach requires both the reorganization of our society and the reorganization of our thinking. It will require great expenditures of intelligence, courage, and energy.<sup>321</sup>

Helping to solve the problem of poverty was also mentioned as a goal in 1963, 1965, 1966, 1968 and 1969. Levi Olan's remarks in 1968 were fairly typical.

Consider the presence of poverty in our land on a scale which is shocking. Thirty million people live below decent standards, many millions of these on the brink of starvation. We must and we certainly shall declare ourselves unequivocally against such moral obtuseness. This we do in concert with all men who are sensitive to the pain of the poor.

These economic problems continued and even intensified in the 1970's. Inflation and "stagflation" represented new and confusing challenges. As Robert Kahn put it in 1975:

Meanwhile, the whole world walks the cliff edge of economic crisis. Inflation, re-evaluation, unemployment, recession threaten the welfare of us all. This crisis, for the most part, is beyond the control of the rabbinate, but there are avenues of action open to us through our Social Action Commission, and there is an important role we can play in responding to worldwide hunger. Whatever we can do, we

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid, p. 9.



should do with all our might.<sup>322</sup>

There were several miscellaneous social justice issues and goals mentioned on a one-time basis as well in the 1960's and 1970's. Some of these topics included studying Judaism and medicine in 1962, analyzing what was happening to the American family in 1963, getting involved in labor/management negotiations like they had in the 1920's and 1930's in 1963, discussing euthanasia and health issues in 1968, looking at the quota system in 1972, denouncing corruption in government in 1973 (motivated by the Watergate scandal), and showing concern for the environment in 1979. What is noticeably missing from the speeches is any response to the counterculture so popular in the 1960's and 1970's. Drugs, Woodstock, communes and other concepts so often associated with the late 1960's and early 1970's were conspicuously absent from the CCAR Speeches. Only the Vietnam War drew serious response from the CCAR Presidents. It appears that the counterculture that affected general society either did not affect the Jewish community specifically enough to warrant comment, or that it unwittingly passed the rabbis by. Whatever the reason, the rabbis were moved neither to action nor to words by the counterculture. Despite the fact that the counterculture was not a part of their agenda, the CCAR Presidents were very active in terms of social action goals in the 1960's and 1970's.

However, the 1980's told a different story. There are very few specific social justice goals mentioned in the speeches in this decade, and at first glance it looks as though the CCAR Presidents were unconcerned with these issues. Rather than a lack of concern, however, what it really shows is that the CCAR has abdicated much of their responsibility to other

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<sup>322</sup> Robert Kahn, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1975, p. 5.

organizations. This abdication has not been to Federations or any agencies external to Reform, but rather, to the UAHC and the Religious Action Center. In 1962 the CCAR helped establish the Religious Action Center in Washington, DC to help institutionalize and increase the power of social justice in Reform Judaism. The 1961 speech mentioned this new Center with pride, and 1966 President Jacob Weinstein sang its praises and successes. Now that this institutional presence is there the CCAR tends to leave the concrete issues to them, while the CCAR concentrates on defining the scope of Reform Judaism. Moreover, though the CCAR itself passes many resolutions on social justice issues, they are handled by the committee and not usually even mentioned by the President. These divisions of responsibility have a price, though, for they naturally make the members of the CCAR, the rabbis, less personally responsible for social justice issues. The individual rabbis then tend to concentrate on that which is familiar, and that means that social justice gets reflected less in their rabbinate. This is particularly true with the more specific issues, though Walter Jacob, in the most recent speech, that of 1993, set reestablishing the normative Jewish family as an explicit goal.

Our monogamous family took a millennium of rabbinic effort to create. It was difficult; there was much opposition. We struggled with the surrounding world and with our own people. Now we find the family beginning to collapse and in trouble. New lifestyles have developed and as liberals many of us feel that we should recognize those life styles and proclaim them agreeable to us...We know they exist and we recognize that fact, but there is an enormous difference between accepting them and declaring them a Jewish ideal.<sup>323</sup>

Jacob's stand was quite controversial. His position could even be called a "conservative one," new territory for the CCAR, but just because it does not come from the left wing of the political spectrum does not make it a

<sup>323</sup> Walter Jacob, *A Selection of Sermons and Lectures 1993*, p. 15.

social concern. More common have been general expressions of social justice, of "tikkun olam," along the lines of that which were expressed by 1984 President Gunther Plaut.

Thus, the betterment of the world is our task because it is God's task. It is our task here in the Diaspora; It is our task in Israel.<sup>324</sup>

Eugene Lipman, too, in 1989, expressed his hope for more social justice action by the CCAR.

We are being pressed by the Commission itself to take a larger role in forming policy and in carrying it out, far beyond passing appropriate resolutions and permitting Joe Glazer to expend a lot of his incredible energy in working for us in a variety of social arenas. I am confident that our Justice and Peace Committee will respond, and that the CCAR will become an ever-more powerful symbol of Jewish ethical principles in action.<sup>325</sup>

As one can see from Plaut and Lipman's remarks, social justice is still important to the rabbis as a general concept. Whether it will be recaptured in concrete terms, as Jacob tried to, remains to be seen.

### War and Peace

The issue of war and peace is closely related to that of social justice. As mentioned earlier, the CCAR combined the two concepts into one commission for a few years. Still, war and peace presented its own set of unique goals and problems for the CCAR Presidents. The goal in nearly all these speeches is, of course, for peace. However, peace is an ideal, and the way it worked out specifically sometimes differed from speech to speech.

Obviously, goals relating to issues of war and peace generally revolved around the wars themselves. That is why the first mention of a "peace" goal occurred just before the United States entered World War I in

<sup>324</sup> Gunther Plaut, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1984, p. 4.

<sup>325</sup> Eugene Lipman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1989, p. 16.

1915. In that year Moses Gries presented two separate goals: first, keep America out of the war and second, stop the war itself. Regarding the first goal he said:

Let all true Americans unite to hold America to Peace. America, unselfish in purpose, noble in national ideal, loves Peace and pursues justice.<sup>326</sup>

Regarding the second he reminded the rabbis of their ethical obligations.

What is our ethical duty? If two men be fighting and are at death-grips, do we question about neutrality or ethics? We stop the fight!<sup>327</sup>

It appears that the rabbis, like the many other Americans who elected the pacifist Woodrow Wilson to the Presidency in 1916, favored staying out of the war over world involvement.<sup>328</sup> Despite powerful propaganda efforts from both the British and the Germans, the CCAR resisted the pressure and continued to fight to keep Americans out of the fight. 1916 President William Rosenau even recommended that the CCAR communicate their support for this stand to Wilson himself.

In this connection, therefore, let me recommend that the Central Conference of American Rabbis communicate to the President of the United States its endorsement of every effort leading to the maintenance of peace between the United States and the belligerent nations, because such peace is an important element in Israel's mission.<sup>329</sup>

Unfortunately, neither Wilson's nor the CCAR's hopes came to fruition, and the United States did enter World War I on the side of the allies. The CCAR immediately turned its stance to one of support. They supported peace, but when America decided to enter war out of necessity, they supported America and its troops. In all wars the CCAR has responded with efforts to promote rabbinic chaplaincy, and World War I was when

<sup>326</sup> Moses Gries, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1914, p. 147.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>328</sup> Bailey and Kennedy, *The American Pageant*, p. 659.

<sup>329</sup> William Rosenau, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1916, p. 192.

these efforts began. The role of the rabbi as a military chaplain was discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Beyond that role, the rabbis specifically supported American action that would make the world "safe for democracy." As 1918 President Louis Grossman put it:

As citizens we are committed forever to the cause and the motive of this war. Life must be democratized...even in the tragic hardships of war, tragic for the refinements of our ethical faith, Judaism and Americanism are identical, as in times of peace so now in these ordeals of blood.<sup>330</sup>

In addition, Grossman praised the American troops for their bravery and restraint and specifically supported President Wilson as "the spokesman of the American people, of the nations and of the faith of Mount Sinai and Isaiah."<sup>331</sup> Can anyone imagine a CCAR President in the 1990's offering such praises for a United States President?

When the war ended the CCAR's peace initiatives did not. Grossman listed support for the League of Nations as a goal in 1919, and though the United States did not join this group that their own President helped initiate, the CCAR nevertheless continued to work for world peace. 1922 President Calisch listed armament limitations as one of his goals, and 1924/25 President Abram Simon worked for the goal of international world peace, promoting the CCAR's 1923 resolution calling for the establishment of a Permanent Court of International Justice and establishing a four point peace plan for the CCAR.

Our Conference can stand at least for the following four proposals:

- (1) The Adherence of the United States to the Permanent Court of International Peace.
- (2) The Call by the President of the United States of a Second Conference on the Limitation of Arms.

<sup>330</sup> Louis Grossman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1918, p. 159.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid*, p. 162.



- (3) A progressive education of the nations so that international agreement through an Association of nations may ultimately justify adequate preparedness only on a police status.
- (4) Consistent education of the Will to Peace so that the Will to War may no longer be invoked as a justifiable method for the settlement of international disputes.<sup>332</sup>

Peace in general was also explicitly mentioned as a goal in 1928 and 1930. The CCAR saw themselves as an integral part of international peace in the 1920's.

The 1930's were marked much more by isolationism in America, both economic and political. Historians Bailey and Kennedy summed up the reasons for this trend.

Isolationism, long festering in America, received a strong boost from these alarms abroad. Though disapproving of the dictators, Americans still believed that their encircling seas conferred a kind of mystic immunity. They were continuing to suffer the disillusionment born of their participation in World War I, which they now regarded as a colossal blunder. They likewise cherished bitter memories of the ungrateful and defaulting debtors.<sup>333</sup>

The rabbis, very much a part of their environment, likewise became more isolationist in terms of world events, with the exception of helping oppressed Jewry throughout the world. Like so many other Americans, they did their best to help keep America out of World War II. As late as 1940, just a year before Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor forced the issue, CCAR President Emil Leipziger spoke with pride about American restraint, notwithstanding Nazi atrocities already occurring.

God must have other means than horrendous war (more hideous than ever in the age of the machine) to win to freedom when that has been denied. We of the Central conference of American Rabbis contemplate with satisfaction and approval the expressed purpose of the President of the United States to prevent America from being drawn into the maelstrom of war.<sup>334</sup>

<sup>332</sup> Abram Simon, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1924, p. 143.

<sup>333</sup> Bailey and Kennedy, p. 779.

<sup>334</sup> Emil Leipziger, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1940, p. 197.



Once embroiled in the war, however, the CCAR rabbis gave the American government its full support, just as they had during World War I. Once again they both provided chaplains and issued statements of support. James Heller offered this support unflinchingly in his 1942 speech.

I recommend that a special committee be appointed immediately, to draw up a more extended statement to be directed to the President on behalf of the Conference, assuring him and the country of our understanding of the need for unlimited sacrifice by all, so that this war may be won and the way cleared for a better world.<sup>335</sup>

Similar statements were made in 1943 and 1944 as well.

All the while this was occurring, the CCAR by no means glorified this war in any way. They knew why the United States had to be involved, but one does not find even the tempered but nevertheless enthusiastic pride of the statements made during World War I. What is found instead, right in the middle of the conflict, is the serious and fervent hope that such a war would never occur again. 1941 President Leipziger expressed fear that too many saw the tragic World War as a "great spectacle of athletic prowess."<sup>336</sup> When the war ended, 1945 President Solomon Freehof expressed the relief, rather than the celebration, that characterized America after the war ended.

We were strangely calm. There was little of the wild rejoicing which marked the end of the last European war in November 1918. During the long dark years, we had anticipated that day when his strong confident voice, like a high clear trumpet, would announce the triumph of liberty. The triumph came but his voice was forever stilled.<sup>337</sup>

1946 President Abba Hillel Silver urged the CCAR to contemplate the atomic bomb as a theological problem, a problem more of ethics than

<sup>335</sup> James Heller, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1942, p. 215.

<sup>336</sup> Emil Leipziger, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1941, p. 205.

<sup>337</sup> Solomon Freehof, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1945, p. 182.

physics. In 1947 he listed two goals for promoting world peace, support for the United Nations and the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe. This quiet hope for peace finished out the 1940's. Surprisingly, there was little mention of reacting to the Holocaust as an explicit goal for the rabbis. There are several possible reasons for this omission. First of all, they did concentrate very heavily on helping the refugees, and this has been discussed in detail in the chapter on K'lal Yisrael. Secondly, like most of American society, they had not yet digested its implications. Intensive studies really did not begin until the 1960's and 1970's. A third possibility was that there was nothing they could do about it. Because they could have little impact on the situation other than to comfort their congregants and clarify their own theodicies, they did not express any specific "goal" related to it other than supporting Israel as a home for the many refugees.

The 1950's saw the CCAR Presidents reacting to the Cold War. Philip Bernstein, in both 1951 and 1952, affirmed the right of the United States Government to use force, if necessary.

Your President has already expressed his view in his 1951 message on the international conflict. He supports the policy of the United States Government to localize and to resist aggression; to strengthen freedom loving nations as our Allies, and to act within the framework of the United Nations. As before, he sees a long, grim struggle ahead.<sup>338</sup>

At the same time, as mentioned previously, he warned of carrying this attitude to extremes as McCarthy was doing. Joseph Fink, in 1954, expressed his fear that the Cold War was warming up.

Our world is no longer engaged in a "cold" war; at this time it has reached "luke-warm" heat in its warfare. We are now at limited war, not limited in our aims and purposes, but limited in the use of annihilating strategy by all the belligerents. Our fervent hope is to create conditions which would reduce the limited war to no war.<sup>339</sup>

<sup>338</sup> Philip Bernstein, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1952, p. 294.

<sup>339</sup> Joseph Fink, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1954, p. 3.

His goal was that rabbis use the religious message to eliminate the specter of war. On the other hand, the CCAR was still prepared to use arms, if necessary, to stem the growing tide of communism throughout the world. Barnett Brickner, in 1955, urged the rabbis to adopt the following recommendation to help protect the free world.

I therefore recommend that this Conference urge our Congress to support the Administration's Foreign Aid Program and to expand it as the best way to counter the danger of Communist subversion in the underdeveloped countries of the world.<sup>340</sup>

The goal was to try and walk both lines at the same time.

By the middle 1960's the tide had turned, and the CCAR Presidents no longer supported American military involvement in other corners of the world. World peace was to be the priority. As Leon Feuer put it in 1965:

Far and away, however, the most urgent issue of our time is that of war and peace. We must voice our emphatic protest at the role more frequently being assumed by our Government in intervening in other nations to frustrate social reform and to buttress reactionary political regimes and rightist military juntas.<sup>341</sup>

In that same speech, Feuer railed against the United States Government for taking military action in Vietnam. The CCAR stated its position against this conflict long before it was fashionable. As Michael Meyer put it:

Among all major American Jewish organizations, those of the Reform movement were the first and most outspoken in opposing United States military action in Southeast Asia.<sup>342</sup>

1967 President Jacob Weinstein urged the rabbis to be bold and speak against the Vietnam War if they wanted to from their pulpits.

We must instruct our Placement Office to give special consideration to those who might lose their pulpits because of their stand on Vietnam.<sup>343</sup>

<sup>340</sup> Barnett Brickner, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1955, p. 5.

<sup>341</sup> Leon Feuer, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1965, p. 3.

<sup>342</sup> Meyer, p. 366.

<sup>343</sup> Jacob Weinstein, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1967, p. 8.

Levi Olan continued a similar line during his Presidency and 1968 and 1969, applauding President Richard Nixon for "his courageous act of reducing the bombing of North Vietnam as a sign of our sincerity to negotiate a peace."<sup>344</sup>

When the Vietnam crisis ended, a few of the Presidents took up the issue of nuclear disarmament. Ely Pilchik called this issue one of "Tikkun Olam" in 1978. In that speech he quoted Victor Weisskopf, President of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, on the subject:

The first and foremost problem our time is to decrease, to put an end, to this continuous threat of annihilation. Then there would be a hope for the children of Adam and Eve; then there would be a hope for the children of Abraham and Sarah; then there would be a hope for the preservation of the Torah of Moses.<sup>345</sup>

By the early 1980's the United States had still not done much to eliminate the threat of nuclear annihilation. One could argue that the threat had even increased because of some of the remarks of Republican President Ronald Reagan. In any case, 1983 President Herman Schaalman was concerned:

Especially this is true when we become aware of the amazing inability of our country's leadership to grasp the fact that nuclear weapons and possible war are not a mere escalation beyond conventional weapons and war, but so decisive a leap beyond them into total destruction of God's creation that they become not only unacceptable rationally but are radical sin, radical evil.<sup>346</sup>

These were the last remarks on the issue of war in a specifically emphasized issue or goal in the CCAR speeches.

Similar to the social justice issue, it seems as though many of the important issues of war and peace of the late 1980's and early 1990's have passed the CCAR Presidents by. The Gulf War, the Bosnian Conflict and the fall of Communism are given only passing mention in the speeches.

<sup>344</sup> Levi Olan, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1969, p. 12.

<sup>345</sup> Ely Pilchik, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1978, p. 8.

<sup>346</sup> Herman Schaalman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1983, p. 2.

The closest one gets in recent years to a legitimate discussion of the events of the world was Walter Jacob in 1992.

The year which has preceded us has been momentous. It would be inappropriate to ignore these events while we turn to our particular concerns. The euphoria associated with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European regimes has been replaced by gloom.<sup>347</sup>

The key phrase in that statement was that it would be "inappropriate to ignore these events." Jacob did not ignore them. He mentioned them. But he devoted exactly one paragraph to them. The remaining seven pages are given to those "particular concerns." It is clear that CCAR priorities lie within Reform Judaism and with themselves, not the external world. Again, one can only guess at some of the reasons for this. They may have abdicated some of the responsibility for these events to other organizations within the Jewish community or even within Reform. Once again it must be pointed out that this division of responsibility has a price. That price is that rabbis may feel less personally involved and responsible for issues of war and peace. When Israel is involved this is not the case. Still, one wonders how extreme a world conflagration would have to be before the CCAR Presidents would focus on it specifically as a goal for its members, the rabbis.

### **Church and State Separation**

One social/political issue which has not died down in recent years and is, perhaps not coincidentally, also the first social/political issue brought up in the CCAR Presidential Speeches, is the issue of the separation of Church and State. Protecting this constitutional clause has been extremely important to the Jewish community over the years, for

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<sup>347</sup> Walter Jacob, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1992, p. 120.



Jews have generally seen any threat to the principle of separation as a threat to their civil rights. As Jacob Marcus explained:

The constitution which inaugurated the new American government in 1789 is still vitally important for all Americans, and certainly for Jews too, because there are elements in this land who would "baptize" it, amend it to declare officially, vigorously and assertively, that this is a Christian country. If that were to happen then the Jew and a host of non-Christian Gentiles would automatically become second class citizens.<sup>348</sup>

As late as 1954 there was a motion in Congress to amend the Constitution declaring that the United States is a "Christian Nation." As a result, CCAR Presidents have been among the leaders in this battle for nearly 100 years.

The first mention of the issue as a specific goal was by Joseph Krauskopf in 1904. In that very early speech he laid forth many of the issues which are still relevant today.

Insidious attempts are being made, in far too many quarters of our land, at fastening sectarianism upon our public schools. In very many of our States public school sessions are opened with Scriptural readings, selected for the most part from the New Testament, and read with and without comments, with and without sanctions of School Boards, certainly without constitutional right. Very often children of Jewish citizens are required to join in Christological hymn-singing in the public schools, are made to take part in exercises of entirely Christological nature, at the advent of Christmas and Easter holidays. As American citizens, and in the name of American citizens of Jewish and Non-Jewish persuasion, we must protest against the sectarianizing of our public schools.<sup>349</sup>

Krauskopf not only called for and got a resolution to that effect, but he set up the Committee on Sectarianism in Public Institutions, which later came to be called the Committee on Church and State. The issues he brought up, prayer in the classroom and children having to participate in Christian holiday celebrations, are still the main issues of church/state separation today. The majority of the rabbis who brought up the separation of Church and State as a goal did not say anything fundamentally different

<sup>348</sup> Jacob Rader Marcus, *Jews, Judaism and the American Constitution*, p. 2.

<sup>349</sup> Joseph Krauskopf, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1904, p. 32.



from Krauskopf. Nevertheless, various incidents at different times brought various twists by the rabbis to the subject.

1906 President Joseph Stolz simply reminded the rabbis of how important they were in the battle to keep Church and State separate.

Being the spokesman of a religious minority, in a land founded upon the principle of the separation of church and state, a special obligation rests upon the Rabbi of this country to be the vigilant watchman of the rights of conscience.<sup>350</sup>

David Philipson discussed the condescending statements issued by many Christian clergymen when Jews in various cities made requests to eliminate Christian hymns from the public school exercises. Philipson's flair for dramatic language came through when describing the debacle:

The dominant note in most of these unAmerican, unChristian and unmanly utterances was that this is a Christian people and a Christian country; an arrogant attitude of superiority was assumed, and we Jews were plainly told that we should be glad we are tolerated here, that we are aliens, that this is not our country, et hoc genus omne.<sup>351</sup>

Philipson's goal in all this was that the Jews produce tracts which would prove how vital the Jew has been to the United States over the years and "thus silence forever the envenomed lies that the Jew is an alien here and that this is not his country."<sup>352</sup>

Moses Gries' goal in 1915 was that the Jewish community be more organized and efficient in its approach to the problem.

Urgent is the demand for better organization against the associations which menace religious liberty in America. Immediate is the need for more thorough preparedness against the false arguments offered in the interest of legislation, favoring the introduction of Bible reading in the Public Schools.<sup>353</sup>

In 1922 Edward Calisch reported that while the battle over Bible reading in the public school had not yet been taken to the Supreme Court, a group

<sup>350</sup> Joseph Stolz, *CCAR Yearbook*, p. 238.

<sup>351</sup> David Philipson, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1908, p. 151.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>353</sup> Moses Gries, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1915, p. 147.

from Washington had threatened to do so. While he had no doubt that the court would rule in favor of the principle of separation, the incident "discloses the zeal of fanatic partisans" and that the Jewish community needed to keep up its "eternal vigilance."<sup>354</sup>

A minority position was taken up by 1924 President Abram Simon in regard to Church and State. He asserted that the time had come for the Committee on Church and State to draw up a "reinterpretation of the standpoint of our Conference." What he wished to reinterpret was the strictness of the separation. He felt that the people Israel, a people dedicated to religion and the Bible, was in an embarrassing, apologetic position enforcing the restriction of educational opportunities of religion and Bible in schools. He hoped to find

a common meeting-ground for an academic appreciation of Religion and its relation to education in a democracy, and to cultivate mutual understanding and co-operation among the great religious groups of America. I am merely referring to this endeavor as offering a suggestive and non-sectarian program in the higher schools of learning.<sup>355</sup>

His goal was for something ecumenical, educational and non-sectarian, but it was considered dangerous by many and clearly a minority point of view in the CCAR. Even he realized he was "treading bristles with difficulties and dangers," and such a goal was not mentioned in any of the other speeches.

The next time a Church and State goal was mentioned in the speeches was 1940, and the specific issue was "release time." Release time allows students to take time out from their regular public school day to receive religious instruction at their respective churches or synagogues. It thus make religious instruction a daily activity while removing the problem of

<sup>354</sup> Edward Calisch, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1922, p. 106.

<sup>355</sup> Abraham Simon, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1924, p. 141.

having it taught in the public schools. However, the CCAR and most opponents of teaching the Bible in public schools oppose this measure as well on the principle of the separation of Church and State. Emil Leipziger gave his point of view and outlined the hidden dangers of "release time."

Because it is generally some such plan which is advocated and not a clean cut request for religious instruction in the schools, the issue of the invasion of the democratic principle is not always clear. It is the considered view of your President that even the most seemingly innocuous project of time release cannot be practically applied without danger of becoming an opening wedge for a clear violation of the American principle.<sup>356</sup>

Release time is an issue which still gets discussed today from time to time, and Leipziger accurately described some of the problems associated with it. The CCAR and President Abraham Feldman celebrated in 1948 when the Supreme Court officially prohibited religious education in public schools by a margin of 8 to 1 in the *McCullum Case*.

Jacob Marcus, in 1950, took the issue up once again, not because there was anything in particular driving it, but because it was such an important priority for him. He hoped that it would continue to be an equally important priority for the Reform movement, and he phrased the problem in perhaps stronger language than anyone had previously.

The attempt to utilize the public school to further denominational religion is but one more phase of the attempt to use the power of the State to control conscience. Any threat to the complete independence of the American public school system is a mortal threat to American democracy and ultimately to the equality of all religious minorities. I therefore recommend that this Conference authorize the holding of an Institute on Church and State and from that forum express to the world our convictions in no uncertain terms.<sup>357</sup>

Clearly Marcus wanted to express his own convictions to the world in no uncertain terms, and over the years he certainly has.

<sup>356</sup> Emil Leipziger, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1940, p. 213.

<sup>357</sup> Jacob Rader Marcus, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1950, pp. 238-239.

In 1960 Bernard Bamberger called for a reformulation of the CCAR's positions on issues of Church and State. The new platform was not substantially different from any previous ones. Bamberger, similar to Marcus, simply wished to bring the issue to the forefront once again.

After that, showing a similarity to their response to issues of War and Peace and Social Justice, the CCAR took a back seat to the Religious Action Center in Church/State separation goals. One notable exception to this trend was in 1989 by Eugene Lipman, who had made a similar call for more involvement by the CCAR in social action issues. He wished to make guarding the separation of Church and State a goal for the rabbis of the CCAR, not just the various agencies of Reform Judaism.

It is difficult to understand why this issue has become so small a concern to our members. There is a great need for vigilance and courage today. We should return to having a monitoring presence in every state capital. We should be pressing the NJCRAC and the Synagogue Council much more vigorously than we do, even though the Orthodox institutions won't like it. We must not by relative silence become implicated in their abandonment of the principle of Separation. That principle is being eroded in the United States today, and the implications for our well-being as a Jewish community are ominous.<sup>358</sup>

Lipman was quite specific in his goals, going against the grain of most of the rabbis in the 1980's and early 1990's who were very general and broad in their goals, particularly the ones that were intended for general society.

### **Interfaith Relations**

Not wholly unrelated to issue of Church and State is the issue of the "Church"—how the CCAR has interacted with Christian and other religious groups over the years. On the CCAR's part, the relationship can be characterized as one of desire to work together. The majority of goals

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<sup>358</sup> Eugene Lipman, *CCAR Yearbook*, p. 15.

relating to interfaith in the speeches were goals of support for some type of interfaith organization and association. There were some exceptions to this, of course, particularly when it came to arguments about Bible reading in public schools and active Christian proselytizing. Overall, though, it was important for the CCAR Presidents to have a relationship with their Christian counterparts based on mutual respect and understanding.

The first mention of an interfaith relationship goal was indeed to support an interfaith association. This association was called the Golden Rule Brotherhood, and like so many other first mentions, it, too, was brought up by Joseph Silverman in 1901. Silverman explained the purposes and goals of the organization.

A Golden Rule Brotherhood has been organized consisting of both Jews and Christians whose avowed objects are 1st, the dissemination of the doctrine of universal peace and the abrogation of war; 2d, the inculcation of the Golden Rule as a guidance for conduct; 3d, the securing of equal rights to all citizens as guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States; and 4th, the eradication of racial prejudice and religious intolerance.<sup>359</sup>

The Golden Rule Brotherhood was clearly an exciting prospect for Silverman and the rest of the CCAR. It hoped to be national in scope and was, according to Silverman, "an indication that the world is ready for the broadest principles of religion and ethics."<sup>360</sup> It seemed as though the Messianic Age was just around the corner. The optimism was extreme, and though the world proved that it was not "ready," rabbis and ministers continued to try and make it so in the early 1900's through emphasis on these mutual cooperation groups. The Jews cooperated no less than the Christians, as Max Heller's 1911 goal of rabbis supporting the Tercentennial of the King James Bible from the pulpit indicates.<sup>361</sup>

<sup>359</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1901, p. 32.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>361</sup> Max Heller, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1911, p. 139.



In that same speech, however, Heller indicated a particular problem in Jewish/Christian relations. The problem is with one specific sect of Christianity, that of Christian Science. Some Christians would debate whether Christian Science is even Christian, but in any case, there were Jews who were following its tenets and whatever they entailed. The B'nai B'rith had adopted a regulation according to which a Jew who followed Christian Science became ineligible for membership.

That a secret Order would deem it necessary thus to declare heretical a movement which seems to have gained adherents in Jewish circles, is deserving of note; it would seem, at least, to call for some expression on our part.<sup>362</sup>

Although the CCAR expressed concern over the growing Christian Science movement in this speech and in discussions, not enough practical things had been done to block its inroads into Judaism and the Jewish people, as President William Rosenau indicated in 1917.

I, therefore, would recommend that as soon as possible a paper should be included in the program of the Conference, which is to tell us in some definite way how to counteract Christian Science propaganda.<sup>363</sup>

Rosenau then detailed what this counteraction program should include: an analysis of its "un-Christian" character, proof that it is not Judaism, the reason why a Jew joining it should be considered as breaking with the synagogue, the necessity of visits of rabbis to prospective Christian Science Jews to persuade them from joining and the use of practical methods to make all this possible. Also Leo Franklin listed combating the arguments of Christian Science as a goal in his 1920 speech. It is hard for us to believe it today, but during the 1910's Christian Science was considered a legitimate danger to Judaism by the CCAR.

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid, p. 138.

<sup>363</sup> William Rosenau, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1917, p. 199.



On the other hand, in terms of mainstream Christianity the relationship was such that 1914 President Moses Gries could state that Christianity had a duty to help oppressed Jewry in Russia.

The appeal is to True Christianity which dare not be silent in the presence of a "perpetual pogrom", planned to destroy the life and happiness of millions. Russia, blind to all sense of justice and deaf to every entreaty for mercy, must be forced to hear the voice of united public opinion.<sup>364</sup>

Indeed several Christian councils and individual clergymen had gotten together and written a petition to Czar Nicholas II appealing to him to withdraw the ritual murder charge against Mendel Beilis. Leo Franklin, in 1921, had a similar request for Christian aid in regard to the anti-semitic Congress in Austria, pogroms in Russia and anti-semitism acts in Germany.

I recommend that this Conference address itself to the great church organizations of this country, like the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, and to the authorized representatives of the Roman Catholic Church calling upon them as Christian men and women to speak out their protest against the calling of this World anti-Semitic Conference as subversive of every righteous principle for which religion stands.<sup>365</sup>

Whether or not this Christian leadership actually was effective in these incidents is less important than what it says about the Jewish/Christian relationship. Here a Jewish leader could enlist the help of Christian leaders, without fear, and many Christians would reciprocate the request and give their help.

The 1920's were marked by more calls for interfaith conferences. To Abram Simon interfaith relations and the clearing up of religious misunderstanding were extremely high priorities, given the increasing anti-semitic activity of Henry Ford and the Ku Klux Klan. In 1924 he recommended that the Executive Board

<sup>364</sup> Moses Gries, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1914, p. 171.

<sup>365</sup> Leo Franklin, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1921, p. 106.

study the feasibility and advisability of inviting to a conference or series of conferences religious leaders of the Church and Synagog for a friendly discussion of those teachings and ideas that are the source our occasion of misunderstanding and prejudice with a view to a public revelation thereof.<sup>366</sup>

First meet, then clear up misunderstandings, then publicize it to the world. In his 1925 speech he devoted an unprecedented four pages to the goal of bolstering interfaith relations! In that discussion he did the following five things on his part to facilitate interfaith relations: offered support to the Conference Committee on Goodwill between Jews and Christians, read the text of the Declaration of Principles that the CCAR and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ had made together, read a resolution by the Presbyterian Church Assembly of England which called for the combating of prejudice against Jews and like cooperation with Jewish leaders, advocated that the Jewish community hire a permanent worker whose job would be maintenance of the goodwill between Jews and Christians, and finally, recommended that the CCAR join with the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America to create an "Institute of Goodwill." The amount of specific suggestions he offered shows how truly concerned he was with this effort.

Interfaith relations were not all rosy in the 1920's, though, as 1928 President HG Enelow pointed out. Specifically, Christian missionary activity had reached levels that were making the Jewish community uncomfortable, to say the least.

The efforts of Christian missionaries to gain Jewish converts have been redoubled since the War, the diverse consequences of which have favored their activities.<sup>367</sup>

<sup>366</sup> Abram Simon, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1925, p. 134.

<sup>367</sup> HG Enelow, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1928, p. 170.

He gave explicit mention to both Protestant and Catholic groups as well as the Pope himself. His goal was to counteract this effort, and he gave a specific recommendation relating to it.

Therefore, I recommend, first, that the Conference instruct its new Executive Board to make a study of what is going on at present in the field of non-Jewish missionary endeavor, as far as it affects the Jewish people, and of means to counteract it.<sup>368</sup>

Apparently the problem was serious and scary enough that the CCAR wanted a formal strategy for counteracting it.

In the 1930's Rabbi David Lefkowitz observed the opposite side of the same coin. Many Jews, rather than turning to Christianity as an escape, were turning to Humanism. This movement was equally fraught with dangers.

The personality of God, which is the Ikhar of Judaism, is being either categorically or implicitly questioned, or rather denied.<sup>369</sup>

This movement similarly warranted serious study and means to counteract it, which Lefkowitz determined to be making the tenets of Judaism clearer to more people through essays and tracts.

In general, however, the 1930's were distinguished by the CCAR's support for the newly established National Conference of Jews and Christians (formed officially in 1928), a group which quickly became the leader in interfaith relations and which is still in existence today. The first time it was mentioned was 1932, and then President Morris Neufeld's goal was that the CCAR support it wholeheartedly.

The movement merits our support. I therefore recommend that the Central Conference of American Rabbis voice its approval of the aim and the efforts of the National Conference of Jews and Christians and pledge to the organization our own moral support as well as that of

<sup>368</sup> Ibid, p. 171.

<sup>369</sup> David Lefkowitz, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1930, p. 163.

our congregations.<sup>370</sup>

Ironically, he also felt compelled to speak out against Christian missionizing, which continued to increase. The two simultaneous goals of promoting interfaith cooperation and counteracting missionary activity provided a sharp contrast indeed, which he acknowledged.

In contrast with this heartening evidence of the spirit of goodwill, we cannot but deplore the persistent, though futile efforts of some church organizations to convert Jews...Such missionary methods are a disgrace to the true religious spirit.<sup>371</sup>

Like Enelow a few years earlier, staying informed was the key to counteraction, and he suggested producing tracts to disseminate this information. Supporting the National Conference of Christians and Jews was also explicitly mentioned as a goal in the years 1934 and 1940. The only other mention of Jewish/Christian relations during the decade was the familiar effort to enlist Christian clergy support to help oppressed Jews immigrate to the United States. This goal turned to more general inter-religious cooperation for peace during the days of World War II. There was not much disagreement here on the peace ideal, so it provided an ideal opportunity for Jews and Christians to cooperate without running into controversy.

In the late 1940's, 1948 specifically, Abraham Feldman listed the goal of taking interfaith cooperation to the local level.

I would sound a call to all our neighbors in the churches of Christendom in every sect and denomination, to unite all the religious forces in every community...I suggest that *councils of religious education* be set up in our respective communities, Councils composed of Jews and Christians, and each following his own pattern, united with others in a *united impact* on all the people of our communions, for God and faith and religious loyalties.<sup>372</sup>

<sup>370</sup> Morris Neufeld, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1932, p. 164.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> Abraham Feldman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1948, p. 195.

In the 1950's there was a reversal of the normal, when rabbis were offering their help and support to Christian clergy rather than vice versa. During the era of McCarthyism Christian clergymen were more heavily scrutinized for hints of Communism than Jewish ones were. 1954 President Fink's goal was to offer clear support for his Christian colleagues.

Therefore, I recommend that this Conference join forces with those religious groups in our country who are now engaged in the struggle against the compulsory imposition by government of an oath of loyalty to men and women who administer religious institutions.<sup>373</sup>

If Christian clergy were in danger, it could only be a matter of time before Jewish clergy were in at least equal danger. By protecting Christian clergymen, the rabbis were protecting themselves as well.

In the 1960's the CCAR continued its support of conferences, specifically the "Conference on Religion and Race held under Catholic, Jewish and Protestant sponsorship" in 1963. Specifically, 1963 CCAR President Albert Minda pointed to the race riots as a catalyst for the

imperative need for the united religious forces of America to continue to speak and act in behalf of human dignity and equality.<sup>374</sup>

Though not specifically pointed out as such, other civil rights support efforts, such as support for the "March on Washington" in 1964, were characterized by interfaith cooperation.

There were problems in the interfaith relationship, though, as Levi Olan pointed out in 1969, problems from which the relationship has never recovered. The CCAR was disappointed by the Christian's lack of support during the 1967 War in Israel, and Olan was moved to call the whole relationship a failure.

<sup>373</sup> Joseph Fink, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1954, p. 8.

<sup>374</sup> Albert Minda, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1963, p. 11.



One very shocking and distressing fact was uncovered by the crisis in Israel—our well advertised dialogue with the Christian world has been a dismal failure. It became very clear that the Church in its organized structure was at best neutral, and at worst antagonistic to the struggle of Israel to survive.

That we shall talk with the Christian world is, of course, beyond question, although we would do well to get rid of the much abused word "dialogue." But we should for ourselves demote our interfaith activities to a much lower place in our list of priorities. We should suggest to defense agencies that they radically reduce their budget allotted to this futile and demeaning activity.<sup>375</sup>

The language used by Olan was extremely harsh. Words like "dismal failure" and "futile" do not offer much in the way of hope. This hopelessness must have been especially difficult to bear coming from Olan, who was known for his optimism.

Speaking of dismal failures, in 1978, after the signing of the Camp David Accords, the possibility of interfaith relations with Islam was raised by President Ely Pilchik.

We joined in the endeavor to open up possible channels of cultural and interfaith communication with Islam, particularly in Egypt, under the auspices of the Synagogue Council of America. I urge our Conference to follow through on this opening move toward sitting down with Muslim intellectuals and liberal religious leaders dedicated to the Koran.<sup>376</sup>

A frosty peace treaty with Egypt hardly guaranteed peace with Arabs in general. Since peace with other Arab nations did not follow, the subject was dropped off the CCAR Presidents' agenda. If Israel's activities drove a wedge in Jewish/Christian relations, how much more so with Jewish/Muslim relations. It remains to be seen whether Jewish/Muslim relations will be brought up again if the Israeli/Palestinian peace treaty succeeds. There is doubt as to whether either one of them, the peace treaty or the interfaith relationship, has any chance of success at all.

<sup>375</sup> Levi Olan, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1969, p. 14.

<sup>376</sup> Ely Pilchik, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1978, p. 4.



Olan's words were the last on the interfaith relationship in the CCAR speeches. Indeed the Israel issue and the growing Christian clergy support for prayer in public school became wedges that the CCAR has been unable to get past. Certainly there are interfaith services in communities all across the country, and the National Conference of Christians and Jews is still a strong association which receives its share of support from the CCAR. However, the ecumenicism that occurs is usually very general and innocuous. Much less is done in the way of specifics, and gone is the optimism that characterized the early years of the Golden Rule Brotherhood.

### Hope Amidst Darkness

The final goal that deserves mention in the general society category is the vastly general and universal goal of hope. Despite its vague generality, it deserves mention here because of the amount of times CCAR Presidents mentioned it. In the early years the goal of "hope" was reflected as unceasing optimism, while in later years it was expressed as a "nevertheless" hope. Despite the darkness of our times, the rabbis said, it is our duty to keep the spark of hope alive.

In Wise's first speech, in 1890, the CCAR was ready to begin the Jewish "mission" with optimism and strength.

With this Conference we enter upon the new phase of American Judaism as the free messenger of God to be a free people, a kingdom of priests to anoint a holy nation.<sup>377</sup>

According to Wise the Jewish people would play an integral part in achieving the betterment of general society. The rabbis were the key to the goal.

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<sup>377</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1890, p. 21.

When Wise died Silverman only wanted to continue his work. The rabbis needed to be strong to continue to help achieve the perfection of their society.

Without our former intrepid leader, the task before us is greater than ever. Let us not shrink from it. Let us acquit ourselves as his worthy followers.<sup>378</sup>

Silverman's successor, Joseph Stolz also states that

we are building successfully on the unshakable foundations, laid by the immortal Founder, Isaac M. Wise, whose spirit is with us here and now, if it hovers anywhere on earth.

The optimism remained. All they had to do was follow their leader, even though he was no longer around to follow.

This kind of optimism remained with the CCAR rabbis until World War II. There were several difficult periods, particularly World War I and the Great Depression, but even in these dark years the rabbis displayed a sense of optimism. Witness the remarks of Louis Grossman in 1918.

This session is held under most serious conditions. The nation is under the tension of a historic struggle. The sacred cause of humanity is in the balance, our sons are facing death, our homes are prayerful and the great anxiety thrills our national life. Let our deliberations be in keeping with our feelings, our certainties, our unanimities, our ideals of American liberty.<sup>379</sup>

David Lefkowitz' remarks in 1931, with America deep in the teeth of the Great Depression, were not terribly different from Grossman's.

The suffering which is never absent from human life has in the past twelve months been exceptionally widespread and severe. In this peaceful environment (the CCAR Convention), may we be able to view calmly and see in true perspective the many problems that face Israel and Judaism. Toward the solution of these problems may we solemnly dedicate ourselves by calling to mind the courage and ardor with which Isaac Mayer Wise, the Founder, faced similar difficult years more than half century ago and emerged in spiritual victory.<sup>380</sup>

<sup>378</sup> Joseph Silverman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1900, p. 26.

<sup>379</sup> Louis Grossman, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1918, p. 187.

<sup>380</sup> David Lefkowitz, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1931, pp. 183-184.

Though the situations were tragic the tone of the remarks were laced with optimism. If they could only get past the political crisis better days would arrive soon. If they could only get back to the original visions of Wise and the prophets of Israel then the world would be a better place. These Presidents seemed to believe that eventually these optimistic universal goals could be achieved, no matter what the reality was. Goodness and peace were still eminently achievable.

The coming of World War II changed the CCAR Presidents' tone forever. The unprecedented violence of this War in general and the Holocaust specifically finally broke what pogroms, World War I and the Depression could not--the eternal optimism of the rabbis. In 1940 Emil Leipziger tried to argue that this optimism was necessary and effectual even during the dark days of pessimism ahead.

Over against such pessimism, we conjure Israel's eternal will to survive, and declare not only that Israel will not die--Israel dare not die--because humanity needs its message more than ever now; needs its enthronement of God--not man; needs its spiritual conviction as to democracy; needs its sanctification of the moral law; needs all of these as antidotes to the poison of totalitarian ideas which proclaim the worship of man, the denial of individual freedom, the glorification of might.<sup>381</sup>

His words represented a last hope to apply the old optimism to the new situation. Unfortunately, it was no longer applicable and failed. What he did point out, though, was that the ideas were needed then "more than ever." Subsequent Presidents agreed with this assertion, but they changed their goal from optimism to hope. Moreover, they made hope into an explicit goal, whereas optimism had been more of a tone rather than a goal. Optimism and the possibility that they themselves could actually help better

<sup>381</sup> Emil Leipziger, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1940, p. 196.

the dismal world was not tenable to the rabbis after World War II. All they could do after the Holocaust was hope.

But hope they did. The 1950's were filled with hope as a specific goal. As tragic as the world had become the rabbis had the goal of keeping hope alive. If they could not change the world at least they could hope that change for the better was still a possibility. It just wasn't around the corner anymore; it was more like a few miles away. Hope was mentioned as a specific goal in consecutive years from 1951 to 1955. Bernstein expressed the goal of hope as the very role of the rabbi himself.

That is our role, to keep the lights burning in the darkness of our times. We must be in the struggle and yet above it. We cannot separate ourselves from the immediate requirements of this hour; yet we can and must direct our gaze to eternity.<sup>382</sup>

1954 President Fink reminded the rabbis of their Jewish commitment to remain hopeful in the difficult times, especially in the difficult times he emphasized.

Particularly in these times we of Jewry stand ready to offer mankind the best that is in us. This generation caught in the whirl of a disintegrating world must have a sustaining faith, and we Jews are uniquely prepared to give mankind that sustaining faith--to improve faith based on justice.<sup>383</sup>

Barnett Brickner put it in terms of the specific issue of the atom bomb.

The artist seems to be saying that, despite the devastation and death which the atom may wreak upon us, not all will be lost. The spiritual impulse in surviving man will reconstruct a new world, in which there will be a place for God, who created it. By this hope and in this faith do we live.<sup>384</sup>

These are examples of the hope the rabbis saw as their job to keep alive. It was specifically because the times demanded it that the rabbis set it as a specific goal in the 1950's.

<sup>382</sup> Philip Bernstein, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1951, p. 223.

<sup>383</sup> Joseph Fink, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1954, p. 15.

<sup>384</sup> Barnett Brickner, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1955, p. 18.

Not that it disappeared by any means, but it was only mentioned as a specific goal after 1955 in 1961, 1968 and 1976. In his 1968 speech Levi Olan once again brought up the theme of hope as a specific goal because of a specifically bad situation.

The chorus of the prophets of doom is frightfully large and its chant of hopelessness pervades the world. Af al pi chen, nevertheless, we shall declare the words of the lord in the undying faith that His kingdom shall come to pass.<sup>385</sup>

Arthur Lelyveld expressed a similar note in 1976.

Confidence in America itself has been shaken by corruption and deceit, by brazen invasions of privacy, by immoral interference in the affairs of other lands to serve the interests of a corporate elite... We Jews have sustained a series of stunning defeats: successive rebuffs by the President of the United States, bald, amoral pragmatism in the dealings of his administration, and unfounded charges leveled against us in the council of nations to portray us as guilty of those very sins of which we have been the world's prime and most outraged victims.

As in the 1950's and 1960's the goal can be summed up as "hope nevertheless." Despite the difficult, uncertain times, rabbis must continue to preach hope. Not that hoping guarantees any outcome, but, nevertheless, they must continue to hope. Gone is the optimism of the early speeches. The times are more difficult, if one is to believe the rabbis. But the power to hope is still there.

As mentioned earlier, the speeches of the 1970's and 1980's became narrower. The CCAR Presidents turned inward, focusing more on goals for Reform Judaism and less on goals for broader society. One recent exception that deserves mention, though, is Samuel Karff, who went back to the pattern of ending his speech with words of "hope, nevertheless." Though it is not expressed as a specific goal, the theme is the same. Here are Karff's words in 1991:

<sup>385</sup> Levi Olan, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1968, p. 15.



In both Israel and Diaspora, we will encounter the ambiguities of living in an unredeemed world—and monumental perplexities that defy easy resolution. But when all has been said, b'ezrat hashem, a critical mass, a "saving remnant" will sign on to keep walking, to keep living, to keep bearing witness to God as sons and daughters of the covenant.<sup>386</sup>

The world is unredeemed; nevertheless the rabbis must work to keep the remnant going.

### Prescriptive or Descriptive?

The CCAR Presidents attempted to be prescriptive in their goals for general society. Their goals prescribed what they hoped the world would be like. However, unlike most prescriptive goals, theirs were reactions more than actions. The CCAR Presidents, for the most part, did not take the lead in social policy setting through their goals. Rather, they formulated their goals as reactions to the problems of society. As a result, the goals ended up being more descriptive in reality than they hoped. In terms of peace, they did not formulate goals until war was immanent. Not that they were unconcerned, but the problems of race, poverty and labor were not really discussed until these problems became acute in American society. Hope, too, only became an explicit goal when the times were especially dark.

The major exception to this generalization was in the area of the separation of Church and State. In this area the CCAR and the Presidents in particular took a leadership role from the very beginning. The CCAR not only reacted to problems in various communities around the country, they formulated resolutions for their movement, wrote letters to Congressmen and submitted briefs to the US Supreme Court. The

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<sup>386</sup> Samuel Karff, *CCAR Yearbook*, 1991, p. 10.



Committee for the Separation of Church and State was one of the very first permanent CCAR committees, formed in 1905, and it has continued to take a leadership role in this issue throughout the years.

With the exception of Church and State issues, however, the CCAR's general society goals have been reactions rather than leadership initiatives. The CCAR Presidents have attempted to be prescriptive in their goals, but they have often ended up being descriptive in these goals instead.

### **Rhetorical Questions and Strategies**

In the category of general society, the intended audience is further removed from the speeches than in any other category. The rhetorical question that comes up in this category is--is anybody really listening? The odds are extremely low that a leader of a nation about to go to war, a Congressman considering whether or not to vote for more social programming expenditures or a school board member who wants to see prayer in his district will ever come in contact with the words of a CCAR President. Moreover, if they do come in contact with the words, are they likely to care? In fact the goals are so far removed from the audience they intend to reach that they are almost purely rhetorical in and of themselves. The goals only state intention; they do not really serve as a significant part of the reality of their coming to be.

What kinds of appeals are effective given this inherent disadvantage? Ethos appeals, appeals to the ethics and character of the speaker, are not terribly important in this scenario. Logos appeals, appeals of logical argumentation, are not terribly necessary to use since most of the rabbis are already in general agreement that social justice, peace and separation of church and state are important. That basically leaves pathos appeals,

appeals to emotion, for the rabbis to use in their goals for general society. Since the goals basically do not have significant practical application anyway, this is the appeal which is most effective. All the Presidents can really do is stir up feelings, and the pathos appeal is best for this. The language used by the rabbis in these appeals is laden with strong and often exaggerated words in the hopes of stirring up this emotion. A look back at some of the quotations in this chapter makes this point clear. The quotations use phrases like "nefarious business," "nigh incredible transactions," "loudly we protest," "age-long struggle for right and justice," "great expenditures of intelligence, courage, and energy," "the whole world walks the cliff edge of economic crisis," and "monumental perplexities that defy easy resolution." These phrases are embellished, exaggerated and filled with pathos. If the CCAR Presidents stir up significant feeling and emotion, first in the rabbis in attendance and then in the Reform congregations, then perhaps eventually the ideals they set will become long-term realities for society. It is a long and arduous process, but in this very small way a CCAR President's remarks can make a difference in the eventual goals of the broader society.

However, it is less likely to happen in the category of general society than in any other category, since general society cares little about the CCAR's agenda. It is the CCAR's business to care about general society, but it is not in the nature of general society to care about the CCAR.

### **Success or Failure**

Given the inherent disadvantages for the CCAR in accomplishing their goals for general society, it is awfully hard to call them successful in their ventures in this area.

In terms of social justice, the CCAR has been successful in their willingness to confront the issues but not in their ability to achieve their goals. According to Roland Gittelsohn,

The Conference has not hesitated to risk the displeasure of the public by taking positions its members knew would not be popular.<sup>387</sup>

True they have taken positions often at odds with their own laity. Many lay leaders were even embarrassed by the near socialistic tendencies of the rabbis in the 1930's, and UAHF Chairman Ludwig Vogelstein stated that the CCAR Social Justice Platform showed "immaturity" and "a parrot-like adoption" of radical positions.<sup>388</sup> The CCAR has formulated literally hundreds of resolutions over the years on social justice positions of all kinds. Not only have things like poverty, racism, environment and labor been covered, but also energy, cults, farm workers, gun control, nursery schools, off shore land drilling, and even the neutering of cats and dogs! If there was an issue to be discussed, the CCAR formulated a position and resolution on it. However, the numbers of resolutions and even the courage it took to make these resolutions have not been synonymous with success by any means. Poverty, racism, and civil liberties problems still exist, and it can certainly be argued that they are more prominent and more difficult now than ever. The United States government has more social programs than they did before the CCAR began to press for them in the 1930's, but the success of the programs themselves is open to question. Neither programs by the government nor resolutions by the CCAR have solved the problems. In that sense these goals must be judged as failures. On the other hand, the CCAR has been successful in at least confronting these social justice issues.

<sup>387</sup> Roland Gittelsohn, "The Conference Stand on Social Justice," p. 93.

<sup>388</sup> Meyer, p. 311.

In terms of war and peace, one would likewise have to use the word failure. Of course one can hardly blame the rabbis for the institution of war. Their hope is peace. They have worked for peace. They have been involved in peace seminars, forums and institutes. However, the world continues to do as it wishes.

In terms of interfaith relations, already mentioned was Levi Olan's calling of the relationship a "dismal failure." He cited Christianity's failure to support Israel in times of crisis as a reason. The increasing fundamentalism of many churches and their push for prayer in the public arena has likewise strained the relationship. Joseph Silverman felt in 1901 that there were indications that "the world is ready for the broadest principles of religion and ethics." Almost a century later, apparently the world is still not quite ready. The CCAR has not succeeded in strengthening their interfaith relations.

The one exception where there is evidence that the rabbis succeeded in their general society goals is the separation of Church and State. The challenge to uphold the separation of Church and State, mentioned as early as 1904, has not gotten any easier over the years. With the growth of Orthodox day schools, and, therefore, Jewish support for release time, the CCAR has been challenged in their fulfillment of this goal even within the Jewish community. The growth and better organization of right wing Christian groups has provided a challenge outside the Jewish community. Nearly 90 years after the first mention, neither the issues nor the results have changed much. However, this should not be taken as a sign of failure. On the contrary, in a country dominated by a Christian majority, many of whom would still like to make it an officially Christian country,

maintaining the status quo can be judged as a great success. As Eugene Lipman put it:

The Conference has pioneered in the defense of the principle of the separation of religion and the state as a major bulwark of the American democratic ideal. The Reform rabbinate will undoubtedly continue to devote much time and effort to this problem, to voice its traditional position with conviction and consistency, and to act with courage in the arena of national affairs when positive action is required.<sup>389</sup>

Guarding the principle, guarding against infringement, guarding the status quo, may be all the CCAR can ever hope to accomplish. So far they have succeeded in doing just that.

### Conclusions

What can be said overall of the CCAR Presidential goals which relate to external society? Essentially, two generalizations can be made. First of all, when the CCAR Presidents made goals in this category, they were made primarily from the standpoint of prophetic Judaism. Whether the issue was social justice, war and peace, the separation of church and state, interfaith relations or hope, the rabbis saw themselves as links in the prophetic chain. They therefore felt justified in making these goals.

The second thing that can be said is that the number of goals in this category has diminished in recent years. The CCAR has turned inward and concentrated more on their own well-being and the well-being of the Reform movement. Primarily, this is because other institutions within Reform Judaism have taken over their role. This statement is not a value judgment. It is simply a matter of priorities. According to the annual Presidential addresses, goals for external society are no longer the most important priority for the CCAR.

<sup>389</sup> Eugene Lipman, "The Conference Considers Relations between Religion and the State," p. 127.



Whereas in the past the President helped set the policy and direction the CCAR would take on these K'lal Yisrael issues, he now leaves it up to the various committees. Moreover, within the Reform movement the Religious Action Center handles the political issues and the UAHC the practical ones. Lately, the CCAR in general and the President in particular have concerned themselves more with notions of Reform Judaism and what it means rather than the tachlis of putting that meaning into action. Their silence on these issues speaks volumes about what the CCAR President has become--little more than a figurehead. The speeches used to be filled with goals for the improvement of general society. Now they are filled mostly with goals for improving Reform Judaism and relations with other members of the House of Israel. This abdication, so to speak, on social issues has strong implications on the nature of the CCAR itself, and the issue will be taken up in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

**PART III**

**SUMMARY**  
**CONCLUSIONS**

# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is time now to return to the goals presented in the yearly speeches of the Presidents of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in a more general sense. Before that can be done, a summary of the concepts presented in each of the chapters may be useful.

## Chapter 2--Self-Definition

Chapter 2 discussed how the Conference Presidents used the speeches to define their vision of Judaism in general and Reform Judaism in particular. A by-decade analysis showed that the CCAR Presidents were especially concerned with self-definition in the early years of the Conference (1890's) and again in the two most recent decades. Self-definition took a back seat to other kinds of goals in the middle of the twentieth century, a time after the clearly defined Columbus Platform was produced and a time when the Reform movement was forced to direct its attention to the issues of World War II and the establishment of the State of Israel. Included in the discussion were both the definition itself and the issue of to what extent the CCAR had the authority to promote that definition. The definition itself included elements of Classical Reform in its earliest decades, and Neoreform and synthesis in the more recent years. The authority issue moved from a Synod to a comprehensive guide for Reform Judaism. Despite many mentions and many attempts, no such guide or body has ever come into existence. Considering the fact that there were almost as many self-definitions for Reform Judaism as there were CCAR Presidents, it is little wonder that all attempts at such a comprehensive guide have failed.

### **Chapter 3--Goals for the Rabbis Themselves**

The major goals in this category fall into three general areas: Conference structure, financial/job concern (which includes placement, pension, tenure, continuing education, job satisfaction and support for indigent rabbis), and publication/scholarship. All three general areas were mentioned in Wise's very first speech and continue to be discussed to this day. The number of goals in the category "rabbis themselves" was extremely high in the first two decades of the CCAR (55% of the overall goals in the 1890's) and fell to an all time low in the 1980's (18%). To some extent the low number in the recent decade can be taken as a sign of success. For the most part, the Rabbis have gotten what they wanted over the years.

### **Chapter 4--Goals for the Reform Movement**

The major goals in this category were goals relating to religious education, International Reform Judaism, Inreach/Outreach programs, relations with the UAHC and the aforementioned self-definition. Generally speaking, these same broad goal areas were listed since the first or second decade of the CCAR's existence and continue to be mentioned into the 1990's. The trend in the category followed the shape of an inverted bell curve. Goals in this category were highest during the CCAR's first decade (the 1890's) and the most recent decade (the 1980's), with a dip of lower percentages between 1930 and 1960. The trends in the category "Reform alone" followed the same line as the self-definition goals, since self-definition comprised such a large percentage of the category. For the most part, the CCAR Rabbis did not succeed in accomplishing the goals of this category, since education, inreach/outreach, International Liberal Judaism

and self-definition continue to be crisis areas for the Reform movement. Many CCAR Presidents actually admit to this lack of success, and the fact that the numbers continue to increase without the actual goals changing attests to the failure as well.

### **Chapter 5--K'lal Yisrael**

The major goals in this category were goals relating to Israel/Zionism, relations with other organizations within the Jewish community, relations with the Orthodox and Conservative movements, and oppressed Jewry/anti-semitism. Though the issue of Zionism has turned into the issue of relations with the State of Israel, goals in this category have not changed a great deal over the years. It is hard to point to definitive trends over time for the numbers of goals, but the percentage of goals which are primarily concerned with K'lal Yisrael issues has climbed to over 30% in the past two decades. Success in achieving the goals in this area was mixed. In general, the Presidents succeeded in stirring reactions in the groups they were trying to reach but failed in actually accomplishing their goals.

### **Chapter 6--General Society**

The major goals in this category were goals relating to social justice, war and peace, the separation of Church and State, Interfaith relations and hope. The specifics in each of these broad areas have changed over the years, but the areas themselves have not. The exception to this generalization is in the area of Church and State, where both the area and specifics have remained the same since 1904, when the issue was first brought up. The trend in the number of goals in this category was clear, following the shape of a regular bell curve. The percentage of general



society goals remained relatively high throughout the middle of the twentieth century (high 20's), but has recently fallen to levels below 10% in the past two decades. The CCAR Presidents have abdicated their responsibility in this area to committees within the CCAR and other organizations within the Reform movement. The CCAR Presidents were not successful in achieving their goals in this area. First of all, it was indeed extremely rare that a CCAR President's message actually reached its intended audience, and secondly, the lack of goals in this area in recent years indicates that the CCAR Presidents have, for all practical purposes, given up on making goals for general society.

### **Prescriptive or Descriptive**

In almost all categories, the CCAR Presidents attempted to be prescriptive. Their goals expressed the hopes of what they hoped their self-definition, their jobs, their movement, their people Israel and the society in which they lived would be like. However, only in relation to the rabbis themselves did they succeed in turning their prescriptive hopes into realities. As a result, despite their best attempts, their goals usually ended up being merely descriptive rather than prescriptive. There were exceptions to this rule within each of the categories, particularly so for the Reform movement. For the most part, however, only in the Rabbis category were the goals clearly both prescriptive and successful.

### **Rhetorical Questions and Strategies**

Rhetorical factors relating to the rabbis can best be seen in light of the specific audience the rabbis were trying to address. The broader the goal category, the further removed the audience the Presidents were trying to reach became. The Rabbis, the most specific category, were also the

immediate audience. They received the messages and the goals immediately. Members of the Reform movement were in the first level of the extended audience. They were fairly likely to get the messages, though they would get them through the filters of their own rabbis and the Jewish media, with their own inherent biases. Members of K'lal Yisrael were the next level of the extended audience. At best, Jews not associated with the Reform movement would receive the message through the filter and opinion of general Jewish media or their own media (such as Orthodox publications like *Tradition* or the *Jewish Observer*), which were clearly biased in a variety of ways. Finally, members of general society were extremely unlikely to receive any of the messages of the CCAR Presidents, since even filters with biases were unlikely to reach into broader society. If somehow they did, the messages would often be taken completely out of context.

Given the makeup of the different audiences, the rabbis naturally catered their rhetorical appeals to try and reach each of the different audiences. For the immediate audience, the rabbis themselves, logos, or logic-based appeals, were highly effective. The immediate audience is generally most capable of responding to logic based arguments. For the first extended audience, the members of the Reform movement, logos, pathos and ethos appeals were all used. In this case, the Presidents were apt to try a number of different rhetorical tactics to be adaptable to the variety of different ways their messages might eventually reach their diverse audience. In terms of K'lal Yisrael, the Presidents most often used ethos, the appeal to the ethics and character of the speaker himself. In order to reach K'lal Yisrael the President needed to prove that he was indeed qualified to set goals for the broader Jewish community. Finally, goals for

the general society were categorized by pathos, or emotional-based appeals. With this audience being the most removed from the actual speeches and goals, only appeals which struck deep at the emotions had any chance of reaching the intended audience of general society. The rhetorical generalization that can be drawn is that the further the intended audience was from the speaker, the less likely they were to receive the message, no matter what appeal was used. The appeals had to be catered to the specific audience, not only in terms of that audience's makeup, but also in terms of how far the audience was removed from the speech.

### **General Trends**

From this summary a few different generalizations can be drawn.

*1. The more specific the category, the higher percentage of goals that category received.* The very specific rabbis themselves category had the highest percentage of goals over the years (30%), while the broader general society category had the least (20%). Though the picture was fairly well balanced, the overall trend of the numbers of goals in each category moved from specific to general. This trend makes sense, considering that it is the fact that the CCAR is made up of rabbis that makes it unique. However, the CCAR Presidents have been so successful in achieving goals for the rabbis and the CCAR that the category has seen less activity in recent years. On the other hand, the category general society has also taken a nosedive in recent years, yet for precisely the opposite reason. The CCAR Presidents found they had little hope in achieving any of their general society goals, so they have nearly given up on them altogether. In recent years the CCAR Presidents have turned their attention to the more "gray" areas of the Reform movement and K'lal

Yisrael. Here the goals are difficult yet achievable, and it is in these two categories where the CCAR Presidents have devoted most of their attention in the two most recent decades.

**2. *The CCAR Presidents have abdicated a significant amount of their power and responsibility to other parties.*** In the early years of the Conference the CCAR Presidents set the agenda not only for the Conference, but also for Reform Judaism. In the early and middle years of the speeches one finds a much greater number and variety of goals enumerated. The goals in the middle twentieth century encompassed a great variety of rabbinic and broader societal concerns. The speeches of these decades were longer and brought up many more issues than the speeches of today. In addition, the majority of resolutions that were voted upon by the Convention body were previewed by the CCAR President in his address. In more recent years, many of the Presidents do not even mention major issues affecting the world in which they live. The CCAR still passes resolutions on them, but the President no longer makes the issues a part of his speech. He has given up his power within the CCAR to the various committees, and the CCAR in turn has given up much of its power within the Reform movement to the UAHC and the Religious Action Center. The CCAR President now concerns himself with more narrow goals. One gets the feeling that the Presidents do not feel that anybody else besides the rabbis will be listening anyway.

**3. The CCAR Presidential speeches paint a fairly accurate picture of the history of the Reform movement in America.** The issues and tone presented in the speeches fairly well echo Michael Meyer's *Response to Modernity*. However, studying these speeches one gets a better picture of minority views, since they reflect the individual President's

personality and not just the Reform movement. For instance, it validates the claim that there were many more Zionists in the early days of the Reform movement than is commonly supposed. The speeches are also much more biased toward rabbinic concerns, for after all, it is the rabbinic concerns that make the CCAR a unique body. Though not totally generalizable to the rest of the Reform movement, the speeches do give a reasonably accurate representation. They are one particular lens of viewing a great variety of material, a lens for viewing the changes in American Reform Judaism that is both interesting and reflective.

### Conclusion--ואין כל חדש תחת השמש

In conclusion, I have to say that this study was a humbling experience indeed. As many issues as today's rabbis and students think about, put on the table for discussion and debate until their mouths run dry, seeing over one hundred years of issues in the CCAR Presidential speeches proved that there is very little under the sun that is truly new. This fact gave me a great deal of respect for these rabbis, for they previewed issues which would remain in importance for dozens of years. An issue might go away for a few decades only to come crashing back unresolved thirty or forty years later. If a person thinks his or her idea is new, he or she may want to first take a look and see what a CCAR President had to say about it. I imagine that the President as preacher would respond to the individual with the words of "the preacher," the words of Kohelet 1:9-10.

לֹא דָבָר שֶׁיֵּאמָר רְאִיהֶנּוּ חֲדָשׁ הוּא כִּבְר' הָיָה לְעֵלְמִים אֲשֶׁר הָיָה מִלְפָּנֵינוּ:  
Is there a thing whereof it may be said, see, this is new, but it has already been in  
ages before us?

No, ואין כל חדש תחת השמש, there is nothing new under the sun.



# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A

## LIST OF CCAR PRESIDENTS

1. Isaac Mayer Wise	1889-1900	25. Abraham Feldman	1947-1949
2. Joseph Silverman	1900-1903	26. Jacob Rader Marcus	1949-1950
3. Joseph Krauskopf	1903-1905	27. Philip Bernstein	1950-1952
4. Joseph Stolz	1905-1907	28. Joseph Fink	1952-1954
5. David Philipson	1907-1909	29. Barnett Brickner	1954-1956
6. Maximillian Heller	1909-1911	30. Israel Bettan	1956-1957
7. Samuel Schulman	1911-1913	31. Jacob Rudin	1957-1959
8. Moses Gries	1913-1915	32. Bernard Bamberger	1959-1961
9. William Rosenau	1915-1917	33. Albert Minda	1961-1963
10. Louis Grossman	1917-1919	34. Leon Feuer	1963-1965
11. Leo Franklin	1919-1921	35. Jacob Weinstein	1965-1967
12. Edward Calisch	1921-1923	36. Levi Olan	1967-1969
13. Abram Simon	1923-1925	37. Roland Gittelsohn	1969-1971
14. Louis Wolsey	1925-1927	38. David Polish	1971-1973
15. Hyman G. Enelow	1927-1929	39. Robert Kahn	1973-1975
16. David Lefkowitz	1929-1931	40. Arthur Lelyveld	1975-1977
17. Morris Newfield	1931-1933	41. Ely Pilchik	1977-1979
18. Samuel Goldenson	1933-1935	42. Jerome Malino	1979-1981
19. Felix Levy	1935-1937	43. Herman Schaalman	1981-1983
20. Max Currick	1937-1939	44. W. Gunther Plaut	1983-1985
21. Emil Leipziger	1939-1941	45. Jack Stern	1985-1987
22. James Heller	1941-1943	46. Eugene Lipman	1987-1989
23. Solomon Freehof	1943-1945	47. Samuel Karff	1989-1991
24. Abba Hillel Silver	1945-1947	48. Walter Jacob	1991-1993

# APPENDIX C

## ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF GOALS

<u>GOAL</u>	<u>YEAR</u>
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Alexander Goode, Chaplain commemoration	1943
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Am Yisrael, let it be known that there is an "Am Yisrael"	1983
American Council for Judaism opposition	1943
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American Jewish Assembly support	1948
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American Jewry 300 years celebration support	1953
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American Judaism—assert independent strength	1956
American Judaism—proclaim strength	1902
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Anti-Zionism	1902
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Anti-Zionism	1934
Anti-Zionism	1935
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Arab/Israel peace support	1955
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Arbitration between rabbi and congregation	1906
Arbitration between rabbi and congregation	1948
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Automation study	1955
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B'nai B'rith cooperation to oppose discrimination	1931
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Beth Din establishment	1891
Beth Jacob movement in Eastern Europe, Jewish education support	1928
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Branch congregations establish	1916
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British White Paper protest	1943
British White Paper protest	1947
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CCAR administration change--Assistant President for CCAR	1966
CCAR administration change--Executive Secretary establish for CCAR	1948
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CCAR administration restructuring	1932
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CCAR democratization of committees	1975
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CCAR reorganization	1965
CCAR restructuring	1947
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CCAR restructuring	1959
CCAR restructuring	1971
CCAR restructuring--longer term for Exec. Heads, shorter for board	1905
CCAR restructuring--Get rid of 2 term rule for CCAR Presidents	1913
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Centennial of America celebration support	1926
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Chaplain call	1917
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Chaplain encouragement	1966
Chaplain equalization financially	1955
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Chaplain fairness when they return	1946
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Charlatan rabbis opposition	1938
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Christian Science opposition	1917
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Church and State separation	1940
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Civil Rights support	1961
Civil Rights March on Washington support	1964
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College Youth--make a priority	1965
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Conference on Religion & Race w. Catholics and Protestants support	1963
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Congregations help finance CCAR, HUC, etc.	1911
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Conservative movement cooperation	1951
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Covenant theology encourage	1983
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Derech Eretz--Guide for Synagogue	1962
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Dictatorship opposition	1953
Discipline for unfair congregations	1971
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Doctrines—Systematize Reform doctrines	1902
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Education—religious school support w. Reform emphasis	1929
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International Liberal Judaism strengthen	1926
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Publish Book for Private Devotion	1902
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Publish Book of Meditations and Prayers	1923
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Publish Catechism or Manual for Confirmation	1902
Publish CCAR Journal	1953
Publish CCAR Journal	1954
Publish cheaper JPS Bible	1921
Publish cheaper liturgy to get to more people	1920
Publish cheaper prayerbooks through Endowment Publication Fund	1921
Publish Code of Practice and Ritual Guide	1958
Publish Conference literary annual	1908
Publish Convert's Manual	1955
Publish Encyclopaedia	1897
Publish Encyclopaedia—First volume completed	1901
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Publish Hymnal	1924
Publish Hymnal (a new one)	1931
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Publish Jewish Quarterly Review	1902
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Publish JPS new translation (assist in process)	1963
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Publish Rabbinical Journal	1950
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Publish UPB (revise)	1917
Publish UPB (revise)	1924
Publish UPB (revise)	1930
Publish UPB (revise)	1938
Publish UPB (revise)	1942
Publish UPB (revise)	1945
Publish UPB (revise)	1971
Publish UPB, Volume II (High Holiday Prayerbook)	1893
Publish UPB, Volume II (revise)	1939
Publish Union Songster	1961
Publish Volume of Sermons	1917
Publish Volumes of Sermons	1922
Publish Weekly Paper to spread Judaic knowledge	1934
Publish Year book	1890
Publish Yearbook	1891
Publish Year book Collection	1899
Publish Yearbook Collection	1901
Publish Yearbook quicker	1914
Publish Young Israel Journal	1909
Publishing house and book concern establishment	1945
Publishing support for Intellectual Jewish Work Ozar HaSepharim	1928
Pulpit freedom support	1953
Quota system study	1972
RA and Rabbinical Council support--have conference together.	1942
RA members who wish to join CCAR decide	1976
RA members who wish to join CCAR decide	1977
Rabbi model--prophet or priest?	1974
Rabbi as pastor emphasis	1917
Rabbi as progressive spokesmen	1939
Rabbi as teachers	1919
Rabbi behavior--kadosh	1990
Rabbi compensation, security, etc.	1980
Rabbi Continuing Education	1953
Rabbi Continuing Education	1975
Rabbi Continuing Education	1980
Rabbi Continuing Education	1984
Rabbi Continuing Education at conferences	1916
Rabbi Continuing Education--institutionalize	1974
Rabbi Continuing Education--regionalization encouraged	1976
Rabbi Continuing Education Summer school	1902
Rabbi Continuing Education Summer school	1906
Rabbi Continuing Education Summer school	1917
Rabbi not a salesman	1937

Rabbi recruiting for HUC	1949
Rabbi recruiting—our responsibility	1987
Rabbi satisfaction	1989
Rabbi Title guard	1923
Rabbi training modernize—include socializing function of the rabbi	1919
Rabbi unique, different than counselors	1983
Rabbi to use language of kedusha and kehila not business & contracts	1983
Rabbi's freedom and leadership	1902
Rabbi's goal is to serve God	1928
Rabbi's prestige	1973
Rabbi's rabbis (set up for counseling)	1962
Rabbis' rabbis (set up for counseling)	1971
Rabbi's salary the obligation of congregation	1936
Rabbi's status	1980
Rabbi/Assistant Rabbi relations	1948
Rabbi/Congregation relations	1971
Rabbi/Congregation relations	1978
Rabbi/Congregation relations	1987
Rabbi/congregation relationship	1968
Rabbinic conduct	1971
Rabbinic specialization	1916
Rabbinical bodies cooperation	1957
Rabbinical equalization fund (chaplain problems)	1931
Rabbis leaving	1901
Rabbis leaving	1921
Racial Crisis	1963
Racism combat	1968
Rebuild Jewish learning centers here in America	1946
Reconstruction	1918
Reconstruction of the synagogue	1919
Recruiting of young men for the rabbinate	1921
Reevaluation of Reform	1969
Reform as primary	1929
Reform disunity	1975
Reform failures	1942
Reform ideology progressive spread	1941
Reform in Israel	1926
Reform Judaism—Principles of Reform Judaism formulation	1936
Reform legitimacy defense	1910
Reform legitimacy defense	1911
Reform presence in World Zionist Organization	1977
Reform strength—assert	1917
Reform strength—muster strength to be ourselves as a movement	1941
Reform strengthening	1977
Reform victory—Triumph of Reform principles	1912
Reforming the tradition no longer necessary	1969
Reforms justified for human dignity	1990
Reformulation, positive of Reform	1937
Refugee absorption in local communities	1938
Refugee Jews' status post war	1941
Refugee rabbi support	1939
Refugee rabbi support and welcome	1938
Refugees to Palestine at once	1946
Refugees to Palestine, lobby US government	1947
Regional activity encouragement	1975
Regional Conferences discourage	1901
Regional Conferences support	1955
Relief for Rabbis Retirement	1936
Relief fund for indigent rabbis	1933
Religion as primary	1927
Religion as primary	1928
Religion as primary	1929
Religion as primary	1934
Religion as primary	1936



Religion as primary	1941
Religion as primary	1935
Religion as primary	1946
Religion as primary	1952
Religion defense	1942
Religious Action Center glorification	1966
Religious Action Center—Establish for more social justice	1961
Religious aspect emphasis	1906
Religious aspect emphasis	1911
Religious aspect emphasis	1912
Religious aspect emphasis	1915
Religious aspect emphasis	1917
Religious aspect emphasis	1918
Religious Assembly through the Synagogue Council emphasized	1949
Religious forum (interfaith) support	1931
Religious goal for the synagogue	1921
Religious rights for American Jews in Saudi Arabia	1956
Represent Judaism to Nations—modern mission of Israel	1991
Research fund—archaeology searches in Palestine	1907
Retreats for CCAR	1958
Retreats for CCAR	1959
Revelation of Bible as the word of God	1913
Revival service	1922
Right wing dictatorship US support protest	1965
Russian Jews support	1902
Russian Jews support	1903
Russian Jews support	1906
Russian Jews support	1911
Russian Jews support—Bellis Trial	1914
Russian Jews support—enlist Christian support	1914
Russian Jews support—Pressure American government	1910
Russian Jewish rights	1951
Russian self-determination support	1918
Sabbath is Saturday	1936
Sabbath preservation (Jewish Saturday)	1913
San Francisco Earthquake victims support	1907
Sargent Picture protest	1922
Sargent picture protest	1920
Scholarship/Academic papers encouragement	1906
Scholarship/Academics support	1900
Scholarship/Academics support	1936
Scholarship fundraising for HUC	1965
Scholarship—encourage publication	1903
Scholarship encouragement	1938
Scholarship expansion and encouragement	1940
Scholarship financial support	1938
Scholarship subvention fund support	1933
Scholarship support—Littauer fund support	1930
Scholarship support—Littauer fund thanks	1931
Scholarship/Academics recognition—to encourage publication	1891
Science and Judaism reconciliation	1928
Secular Jewish organizations opposition	1934
Secularism in society—combat	1968
Secularism in society—increase kadosh among Jews	1949
Secularism in society—reawaken religious spirit	1969
Self-Criticism	1907
Self-Definition	1907
Self-Definition	1913
Self-Definition	1914
Self-Definition	1917
Self-Definition	1922
Self-Definition	1924
Self-Definition	1926
Self-Definition	1926

Self-Definition	1931
Self-Definition	1935
Self-Definition	1947
Self-Definition	1963
Self-Definition	1964
Self-Definition	1970
Self-Definition	1975
Self-Definition	1977
Self-Definition	1978
Self-Definition	1981
Self-hating Israel comments criticized	1976
Services--make them more appealing	1950
Seventy-fifth anniversary celebration	1964
Shabbat observance at conventions	1953
Smaller congregations--discourage mergers	1950
Social action in general emphasis	1966
Social Action Joint Commission establishment	1948
Social Justice emphasis	1912
Social Justice emphasis	1920
Social Justice emphasis	1925
Social Justice emphasis	1927
Social Justice emphasis	1928
Social Justice emphasis	1935
Social Justice emphasis	1965
Social Justice emphasis	1980
Social Justice and Peace Commissions combined	1942
Social Justice Commission--joint with Conservative and Orthodox	1933
Social Justice Committee establishment	1913
Social Justice in industry	1934
Social Justice platform	1960
Social Religious Union	1904
Social service in general	1914
Socialism tendencies	1931
Soviet Jewry President's Conference support	1964
Soviet Jewry support	1966
Soviet Jewry support (against Communist anti-semitism)	1953
Special Education and Programs	1907
Spinoza anniversary	1932
Statement of principles acceptance	1925
Statement of the fundamental principle of Judaism	1931
Strikes and Labor/Management relations involvement	1963
Study of American Jewish Congregational Life and HUC	1968
Subversive movement investigation support	1939
Success not be judged by secular measures--small is fine	1980
Summary of the year's work	1908
Summer Resort Services	1908
Sunday Services decision	1904
Sunday Services decision	1905
Superannuated Ministers Fund	1908
Superannuated Ministers and Relief funds	1916
Superannuated Ministers fund	1913
Superannuated relief fund support	1932
Survey for Reform	1956
Survey of Rabbis	1962
Survey of Reform Judaism	1963
Survival values, cross denominational lines	1972
Sympathy to Eleanor on death of FDR	1945
Synagog Council of America cooperation	1926
Synagog Council publicity	1938
Synagog Council support--Religion and synagogue as primary	1936
Synagog representation in General Jewish Council	1940
Synagogue as central--Reconstructionist like	1948
Synagogue as house of learning	1965
Synagogue board members--encourage longer terms	1993

Synagogue Center Stern Plan	1933
Synagogue Council of America support in congregations	1977
Synagogue Council reevaluation	1945
Synagogue Council support	1946
Synagogue Council support	1965
Synagogue Council support--unity amongst 3 branches	1966
Synagogue primacy	1900
Synagogue primacy	1906
Synagogue primacy	1918
Synagogue primacy	1924
Synagogue primacy	1937
Synagogue primacy	1941
Synagogue primacy	1942
Synagogue primacy --keep them open every day.	1916
Synagogue primacy--work with Orthodox and Conservative	1938
Synagogue survival--alternative people	1972
Synagogue/Civil religion relationship clarify	1987
Synod establish	1903
Synod establish	1904
Synod establish	1905
Temple Center (Reconstructionist-like)	1924
Tenure establish	1948
Tenure establish	1949
Tenure establish	1950
Tenure establish	1951
Tenure establish	1952
Theological confusion	1972
Theology and Halacha--systematize	1903
Theology clarification	1928
Theology clarification	1943
Theology clarification	1978
Theology of American Judaism formulation	1923
Theology of Reform clarification and formulation	1955
Theology of UPB study	1927
Theology--Systematize and harmonize	1893
Tikkun Olam	1984
Torah as divinely inspired emphasis	1982
Torah study for rabbis emphasis	1968
Torah teaching emphasis	1957
Tract publication	1923
Tract publication	1925
Tract publication for Reform Judaism	1948
Tradition emphasis	1985
Treatises on Reform Judaism	1957
UAHC and CCAR merger	1904
UAHC and HUC and CCAR--relationship clarification	1958
UAHC and HUC cooperation to prevent duplication	1937
UAHC/CCAR Joint Commissions	1948
UAHC/CCAR Joint Commissions	1965
UAHC/CCAR Joint Commissions	1967
UAHC and HUC joint cooperation (United Fund Drive)	1944
UAHC cooperation	1915
UAHC cooperation	1941
UAHC cooperation	1943
UAHC cooperation	1948
UAHC cooperation--representation on their board	1925
UAHC cooperation on peace resolutions	1938
UAHC cooperation--expand the committee	1912
UAHC like a rival rabbinical structure	1964
UAHC support	1942
UAHC support (Eisendrath specifically)	1963
UAHC support	1975
UAHC financial support	1931
UAHC and HUC cooperation	1949

UAHC and HUC cooperation	1959
UAHC and HUC cooperation	1962
UAHC and HUC cooperation	1977
Umbrella national organization establishment	1914
Umbrella national organization establishment	1915
Unaffiliated Inreach	1900
Unaffiliated Inreach	1918
Unaffiliated Inreach	1932
Unaffiliated Inreach	1938
Unaffiliated Inreach	1942
Unaffiliated Inreach	1966
Unaffiliated Inreach	1986
Unaffiliated Inreach--"Back to the synagogue" campaign	1920
Unaffiliated Inreach*--"Back to the synagogue" campaign	1923
Unaffiliated Inreach--commission a survey	1914
Unaffiliated Inreach--People's Reform Synagogues	1904
Unaffiliated Inreach--People's Reform Synagogues	1905
Unaffiliated Inreach--small town Jews	1939
Unionize rabbis	1890
United Germany support (believe it or not!)	1955
United Jewish Appeal Support	1963
United Nations support	1947
United Nations support	1953
United Nations support	1955
United States Army--praise them for bravery and restraint	1918
Unity--American Jewish people	1906
Unity--blame Orthodoxy and American Council for Judaism for disunity	1956
Unity--CCAR itself	1891
Unity--CCAR itself	1892
Unity--CCAR itself	1894
Unity--CCAR (agree or face sanctions)	1896
Unity--CCAR itself	1944
Unity--CCAR itself	1945
Unity--Conservative and Orthodox	1939
Unity--Israel issue in the face of Arab propaganda	1969
Unity--K'lal Yisrael	1973
Unity--K'lal Yisrael	1937
Unity--K'lal Yisrael	1940
Unity--K'lal Yisrael	1941
Unity--K'lal Yisrael	1972
Unity--K'lal Yisrael	1974
Unity--K'lal Yisrael	1981
Unity--K'lal Yisrael--Israel's actions affect us	1983
Unity--K'lal Yisrael	1987
Unity--national organizations	1903
Unity--national organizations	1916
Unity--national organizations	1933
Unity--national organizations.	1936
Unity--national organizations (encourage NCRAC to do this job)	1953
Unity--permanent national Jewish organization for this is needed	1946
Unity--rabbis in America	1969
Unity--Reform principle clarification	1974
Unity--Synagogue Council	1941
University services offer	1916
University Work	1918
Vienna Rabbiner Seminar support	1930
Vietnam protest	1967
Vietnam protest	1968
War--clarify Jewish view through tracts	1918
What is a Jew Definition	1905
White Slave Traffic opposition	1909
White Slave Traffic opposition	1911
Women in the rabbinate--improve placement	1980
Women's ordination support	1955

Women's ordination support	1956
World Congress of Jewish Organizations support	1933
World Congress—make a decision whether or not to give support	1932
World Fellowship of Faiths support	1930
World Jewish Congress support	1971
World Union for Progressive Judaism support	1931
World Union for Progressive Judaism support	1949
World Union for Progressive Judaism support	1955
World Union for Progressive Judaism support	1960
World Union for Progressive Judaism support	1962
World Union for Progressive Judaism support	1980
World Union for Progressive Judaism support	1989
World War I Support	1918
World War II relief for being over , but no celebration	1945
World War II support	1944
World War II support—A statement by the CCAR	1942
World-tribunal support	1915
Yearbook copyright	1904
Yiddish Scientific Institute of Wilna support	1929
Young people's religion, Junior Congregations establish	1930
Zionism compromise	1925
Zionism compromise	1926
Zionism compromise	1929
Zionism compromise—Reform Judaism are not incompatible	1943
Zionism in Reform since Max Heller in 1908	1970
Zionism—be civil to each other	1918

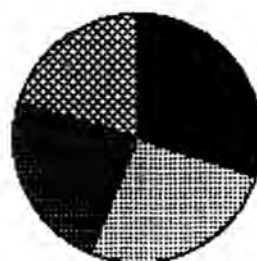


# APPENDIX C

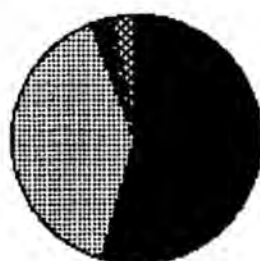
## PIE GRAPH--BY DECADE GOALS



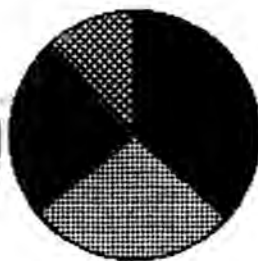
Overall



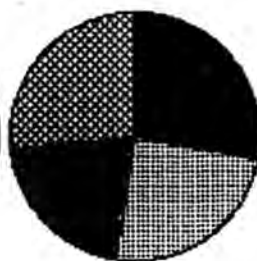
1890's



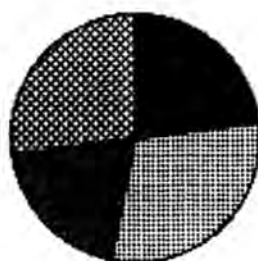
1900's



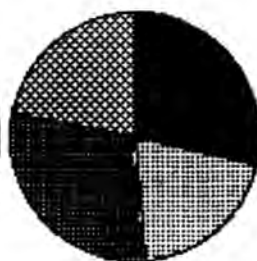
1910's



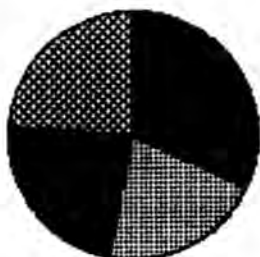
1920's



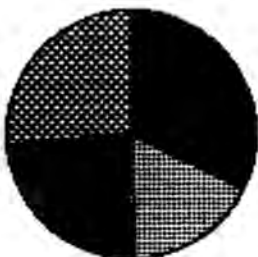
1930's



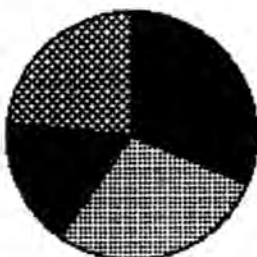
1940's



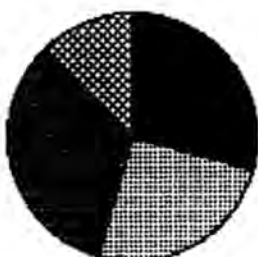
1950's



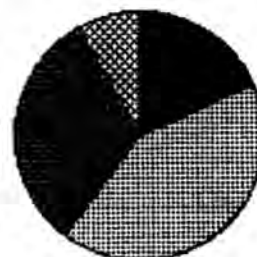
1960's



1970's



1980's



<u>Decade</u>	<u>Rabbis</u>	<u>Reform Alone</u>	<u>K'lal Yisrael</u>	<u>General Society</u>
1890-1900	55%	40%	03%	03%
1901-1910	37%	28%	24%	12%
1911-1920	28%	25%	21%	27%
1921-1930	23%	30%	20%	27%
1931-1940	29%	20%	30%	22%
1941-1950	32%	21%	23%	24%
1951-1960	32%	17%	24%	26%
1961-1970	31%	28%	17%	23%
1971-1980	29%	25%	33%	12%
1981-present	18%	42%	32%	8%
Overall	30%	26%	24%	20%

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