



THE SABBATH CONCEPT IN REFORM JUDAISM

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts  
in Hebrew Letters and Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion  
Cincinnati, 1972

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To Oma, who made the seventh day special

With loving gratitude to Suzy, my Sabbath bride, and to my dear parents. Special thanks and appreciation to my teacher, Rabbi Jakob J. Petuchowski, for his guidance and assistance.

## DIGEST

Any dissertation about an institution as ancient and significant as the Sabbath must be limited. Even dealing with the Sabbath in a movement as young as Reform Judaism cannot include all the thoughts and writings of the rabbis and laymen who have contributed to this vital issue. Nevertheless, there are those who stand out as major representatives of Reform Judaism over the past century and their voices affect the future of the Reform movement as well as its past.

This thesis investigates the Sabbath concept in Reform Judaism as it has evolved since the first rabbinical conferences in Germany during the middle of the nineteenth century until the present day. It is an area of concern that often resulted in bitter controversy. It is a subject that had the potential of dividing the Reform Jewish movement. Moreover, it is an issue that has resulted in creativity and freshness in Jewish thought as well as liturgy.

Chapter I, an introduction, deals with the emerging relationship between the ancient Sabbath and the newly emancipated Jew and how it was envisioned by the Breslau Conference of 1846. This chapter includes the thoughts of Samuel Holdheim and then shifts to the shores of America where Holdheim's proposal of a Sabbath transfer to Sunday met with a more favorable reaction.

The second chapter covers the Sabbath concept of the chief organizer of American Reform Judaism, Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, who clung to the primacy of the Mosaic seventh-day Sabbath.

Chapter III discusses the thoughts of Wise's successor as President of Hebrew Union College, Dr. Kaufmann Kohler, whose thoughts on the Sabbath changed drastically after living a short period of time in America.

The following section takes the reader into the debates of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in its early years, between 1890 and approximately 1920.

Chapter V deals with a later stage in the C.C.A.R.'s concern over the Sabbath. Proposals for Sabbath observance guides were offered and responsa revolving around the Sabbath were written in order to maintain the institution whose condition was deteriorating.

The final chapter includes contemporary thoughts on the Sabbath, the ideas of men who inherited the Sabbath problem and who seek to solve it in a meaningful way for the coming generation.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE SABBATH "PROBLEM": AN INTRODUCTION

Before the nineteenth century one could not speak of a Sabbath "problem" because the seventh day of the week, the day of rest, was an integral part of the life of the Jewish People. For centuries they maintained this religious institution in the rigorous fashion established by the Torah and the later legislation developed by the rabbis. Saturday was a strict rest-day for the Jew, and the ghetto existence to which he was accustomed restricted his relationship with the surrounding culture and kept him out of a general economic system that may have pressured him to weaken the rigidity of the Sabbath.

When, however, emancipation came for the Jewish people, they were able to make inroads into the life of their non-Jewish neighbors and the strength and domination of Sabbath legislation was potentially in danger. "When (the Jews) began to participate in the life of the larger world, the collisions between that life with its changed industrial economic and social conditions and the hundred and one prohibitions wherewith the Talmud had hedged about the observance of the Sabbath were constant."<sup>1</sup>

This was the beginning of the Sabbath "problem" and along with many others that developed from the new status of the Jews in Europe, gave rise to the Reform movement in Judaism that endeavored to grapple with the conflicts and develop a viable Judaism which could function in the

freer atmosphere of the late 18th and 19th centuries.

Reform Judaism did not follow one line in its attitude toward the Sabbath. It often was hesitant in touching the institution at all and, at other times in its relatively brief history, its approach was radical. So, too, was it to be innovative in accepting the traditional nature of the Sabbath but with creative interpretations of its observance and character.

In the earliest days of the Reform movement, especially in Germany, the two major areas of concern were the meaning of the Sabbath under the political and economic circumstances, and the question of its transfer to the civil day of rest, Sunday. While these continued to be the issues between the Reform Movement and the Sabbath for many decades, they were of prime importance at the first rabbinical conferences during the middle of the nineteenth century.

It was in Breslau, Germany, in 1846, that the burning issue of the Sabbath was discussed and argued. It had been noted at previous rabbinical conferences that the conflicts arising out of modern life directly affected the spirit and the observance of the Sabbath and that the rabbis<sup>2</sup> were obliged to attempt to solve these problems. At the outset it became obvious that there would be no easy solutions to the Sabbath problem since the rabbis who convened were as divided on this issue as they were on others, if not more so. Some were conservative like Rabbi Abraham Adler who believed that "there is a cleft between life and the traditional Sabbath observance. We must reconcile this difference, not continue it."<sup>3</sup> Others, such as Rabbi Samuel Holdheim, were more radical in their approach. Holdheim, who was to figure prominently in the Breslau discussions, held that "we cannot adopt the rabbinical conception of the



Sabbath. We must ask our conscience what is the intent of Sabbath observance. Perhaps we can preserve Sabbath observance without Sabbath rest."<sup>4</sup> A Sabbath Commission was elected to present opposing opinions and while they were to report at the Frankfurt Conference in 1845, one year after Brunswick, conditions demanded that they wait until they convened in Breslau in 1846.

The majority report of the Commission stated that "the Biblical idea of the Sabbath is the celebration of the day, it is a ~~rest~~<sup>12</sup> a cessation from the work which marks the other days of the week, different, however, from the rest which is equivalent to complete idleness. The celebration is a consecration of the day...and this consecration implies an abstention from the daily professional and business pursuits."<sup>5</sup> It was the Talmud which later developed strict legislation and the majority report held that the Biblical concept should be the one adopted since "Talmudism is only a stadium in the historical development of Judaism and that, therefore, the Talmudical interpretation can lay claim to consideration only when harmonizing with the demands of life."<sup>6</sup> The Sabbath was to be a day of consecration and any concept of rest had to stipulate that activity which could lead to a more thorough consecration of the day should not be prohibited but should rather be encouraged. Because of the stress on consecration, emphasis was also placed (and quite heavily) on the worship aspect of the Sabbath and the service was to be designed to reflect the mood of consecration.

Philipson points out that the discussions centered too much on academic matters and not enough on practical ways of maintaining the Sabbath. "What was desired and required was a way out...could anything be done to relieve the strain of the situation and restore the

Sabbath to the Jew?"<sup>7</sup> The core of the discussion, academic as they were, revolved around whether the Sabbath's essential feature was rest or consecration. "The practical outcome of this difference of opinion naturally was that those who considered the rest idea fundamental laid greatest stress on the observance of the day as a time of cessation from all work, while such as claimed the consecration idea to be fundamental contended that the Sabbath observance culminated, not in idle abstention from work, but in sanctifying thought and sentiment by worship and prayer."<sup>8</sup>

The ideas of Samuel Holdheim need special mention for while there was no definite program for preserving the Sabbath offered at the Conference, Holdheim's approach not only stands out in terms of its radical nature but also because it was to lead to a revolutionary thought in Sabbath observance, especially in America--the transfer of the Sabbath to Sunday. Holdheim "would not offer a resolution recommending the transfer to Sunday because he was convinced that this would be rejected with indignation by the great majority of the people, and hence it could not be expected that it would be concurred in by the religious guides."<sup>9</sup>

What was his Sabbath idea that led him to this conclusion? Rest was indeed the special feature of the Sabbath as found in the Bible. But rest or total abstention from work was only one side of the coin. It is negative. "Cessation from work is in itself no religious moment, and if shavat were to be understood in this way, demanding the cessation of all work so that everyone would have ample time for worship, then we would disregard and hide the really positive aspect of the observance."<sup>10</sup> Rest, came from the biblical statement that after the creation of the world, God rested, but this "is for us a symbolic ex-

pression of His absolute eternity and exaltedness."<sup>11</sup> It was later seen as precisely a "symbol" but because of the need to develop a positive aspect of the Sabbath, there developed the customs of reading from the law and divine service.<sup>12</sup> According to Holdheim, who based his view on the exigencies of the day, this negative element of Sabbath observance must yield. "It would be a mocking of all experience if one would claim that today's Israelite who desecrates the Sabbath, thereby, denies the truth of religion, though it be found deeply in his heart; or if one would claim that the person who celebrates the Sabbath thereby recognizes this truth and thereby had made it his own."<sup>13</sup> Holdheim held that symbolic religion had no place in modern life and that the sanctification of the Sabbath, not rest, was to be the essential feature of 19th century Sabbath observance. "Where sanctification is the important thing, rest is only a condition and everything is forbidden that interferes with sanctification. In so far as rest is a condition for the sanctification, it is commanded. But where the conditioning element is inoperative, rest ceases to be commanded."<sup>14</sup>

The transfer of the Sabbath to Sunday was a logical conclusion for Holdheim. He believed that its celebration on Saturday was tied to this symbolism which said God rested on the seventh day but "if we wish to avoid anthropomorphism, we can understand the story that God rested on the seventh day in no other way than that God manifested thus the absolute difference between himself and the world which he created. Since we claim that this and all cognate beliefs are no longer realized by man through rest, we must observe the Sabbath, thereafter, not through mere rest, but through active consecration and the sanctification of life."<sup>15</sup> This was not possible on Saturday due to "the demands of civic life."<sup>16</sup> Holdheim sought to preserve the Sabbath, the

Sabbath idea, in any case, as well as Judaism, and felt that only a transfer would provide the cure. "We wish to save the Sabbath for Judaism, and to save Judaism through the Sabbath even if we have to give up its symbolic framework."<sup>17</sup>

The Breslau Conference did not adopt Holdheim's radical suggestion but adopted a resolution which maintained the historic Sabbath and stressed the need for "an ever livelier consciousness of the holiness of the Sabbath by an edifying divine service and by the furtherance of Sabbath consecration in the homes."<sup>18</sup> Many of the Talmudic restrictions were dropped and it was emphasized that occupational necessities were understood to exist and that "no religious duty is violated if precautions to save (property, possessions and livelihood) are taken on the Sabbath; nay, even if the actual work of saving is done on the Sabbath."<sup>19</sup>

The "problem" of the Sabbath still existed, even at the end of these heated but significant discussions in Breslau. The Sabbath problem was also present in America and was to lead to similar debates on the Sabbath and modern life. While we will be discussing the progression of the Sabbath concept in America, it behooves us in this introduction to make a few points with regard to the Sunday-Sabbath in America. This was to be very significant in the early years of the Sabbath controversy and many leaders in America Reform Judaism as will be seen, developed their own Sabbath concepts in reaction to the Sunday-Sabbath idea.

The Sunday-Sabbath was first instituted in America in 1854 by a Baltimore society called "The Hebrew Reformed Association" and later by Chicago Sinai Congregation and Keneseth Israel of Philadelphia, in addition to at least twelve other congregations.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps it was in-

stituted as a practical measure to insure a larger crowd than on Saturday morning. Nevertheless there were congregations who saw in the civil day of rest a means to enhance the Sabbath idea and not just have an additional worship service. Therefore, while there were congregations which instituted an additional service for Sunday mornings, our interests lie in those who saw Sunday as the necessary Sabbath for the Jew.

Along with Holdheim, Rabbi Samuel Hirsch also favored the transfer of the Sabbath to Sunday. His reasoning was that since "the prime purpose of the Sabbath is to evidence man's capacity for freedom, it matters little on what day the Sabbath is kept, so long as its spirit is conscientiously observed; and since modern economic conditions make its observance on the seventh day, after six days of labor, impossible, seeing that the Jew would have to observe also Sunday and thus work only five days, its transference to the first day of the week is not only permissible but peremptory."<sup>21</sup>

His son, Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch followed in his thought but endeavored to imbue Sunday with the true spirit of the Sabbath since the Saturday Sabbath has "become a historical reminiscence, [and] is no longer a living institution."<sup>22</sup> Hirsch was a firm believer in the Sabbath idea and indeed wished that the historical Sabbath could again have the same affect it once did. "The Sabbath preserved the Jew, and made him free-- free in the dungeon, fireproof in the furnace of hatred....Remember, without Sabbath we brutalize, without Sabbath our mission is forfeited, without Sabbath the seething, roaring ocean of assimilation will sweep us to an unworthy tomb, to the well-deserved doom of contemptible oblivion."<sup>23</sup> Hirsch, however, believed this could no longer be on the seventh day, and just as the men of the German conferences "craved for

a Sabbath, not a lecture day, not a day for intellectual criticism or intellectual amusement--not a day for the caricaturing of Judaism--(they)<sup>24</sup> yearned for Judaism on Sunday," so did Hirsch. Isaac M. Wise felt that Rabbi Hirsch abandoned his Saturday services because he objected to preaching to women only and "in spite of the abrogation of the Saturday service his congregation in no ways regarded Sunday as the Sabbath."<sup>25</sup> This, however, was not the case. Sunday was to be the Sabbath for the Jew. The conditions in America warranted a serious consideration of the Sabbath and in times of the ever-increasing dominance of Saturday as another working day it could no longer carry the ideas of Sabbath. Sunday, the day when all of America ceased working had to be adopted as the Sabbath for American Jews as well.

This was the Sabbath "problem" as it developed in Germany and the United States in the nineteenth century. With the reality of emancipation and Jewish integration into the economic life of their societies, this took precedence over the strictness of the traditional Sabbath. It was now in the hands of the Reform rabbis to deal concretely with the Sabbath "problem," a task which turned out to be virtually impossible since the opinions varied greatly. Nevertheless, the great and the small in the Reform Movement contributed their thoughts. The controversies which resulted and the fruits of their dedication to personal Sabbath concepts yielded an interesting and continuing epoch in Reform Jewish thought. The endeavor to develop a viable Sabbath concept, or concepts, continues until this very day and as long as the Sabbath says something the Reform movement will be grappling with the ancient institution for many decades to come.

## CHAPTER II

### ISAAC M. WISE: PRESERVER OF THE MOSAIC SABBATH

A sweeping reform of Judaism was to occur on the shores of America as it had in Europe. If the liberal rabbis of Germany did not emigrate to the United States then certainly many of their students did, and the ideology which was to dominate American Jewry had its foundations in these men and other reformers who saw in America fertile ground for the development of liberal interpretations of Judaism.

Although the Reform Movement was not formally organized until the latter part of the nineteenth century, its chief organizer, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, played a significant role in Reform Judaism for many years before. With respect to the Sabbath, Wise maintained a conservative position, never once advocating anything but adherence to the Mosaic Sabbath. He championed the cause of the seventh-day Sabbath, urging all to observe it as a day of rest and he battled untiringly against any transfer of the Jewish Sabbath to the first day, Sunday, the civil day of rest.

Upon his arrival in Albany, New York, where he was to accept his first American pulpit, he noted that "two-thirds of all the Israelites of Albany and of America before 1848 were uneducated and uncultured. Their Judaism consisted in a number of inherited customs and observances. The less these were understood, the holier were they considered. Every one made things as easy and as convenient as possible in practice.

People did not observe the Sabbath."<sup>1</sup> This lack of concern for things Jewish upset Wise greatly and the impoverished state of the Sabbath was most aggravating since the keeping of the Sabbath was prescribed in the Decalogue and he insisted that "one could not be a Jew unless he kept the Ten Commandments."<sup>2</sup> As Wise saw it, by neglecting the fourth commandment dealing with the Sabbath, then "on the same principle...one neighbor might strike out 'Honor thy Father and thy Mother,' while another could eradicate 'Thou shalt not steal,' etc. and so be done with the whole of the ten commandments."<sup>3</sup>

He desired little else than to impress this upon his congregants and a good many of them did indeed close their shops on Saturday "so that the Sabbath was observed as strictly in the congregation in Albany as in Wilna and Brody."<sup>4</sup> He went so far to have the Board of Trustees of his congregation rule that none of its members "should in any way desecrate the Sabbath" and Wise would make it a point to visit an erring Board member in order to explain to him "how difficult it was to reintroduce the observance of the Sabbath in this country" and therefore, refrain from breaking the Sabbath, or resign from his position as a trustee should he continue in its desecration.<sup>5</sup>

Wise moved to Cincinnati and set upon the task of publishing a weekly newspaper, The Israelite [later, The American Israelite], which he used as a vehicle to editorialize as well as report news of general interest. He immediately began to advance the position he had taken in Albany with regard to the closing of all Jewish concerns on the Sabbath. He assumed that there would be no economic hardships on the Jews and no competition were they to do this. If the Jews closed all their businesses on the Sabbath, "there would be no wholesale business on Sabbath



in the city of Cincinnati." <sup>6</sup>

Wise felt there was no necessity to work on the Sabbath from the strictly economic point of view as well as from his religious belief that the Sabbath day is one of rest. He was disturbed to see Jews working on Saturday and felt "it is sad to see the many stores, banks, and work-shops of Israelites open on the Sabbath day, where fathers and sons toil with an intensity as if their very existence depended on working on that very day." <sup>7</sup>

But along with the economic, Wise felt a deep community attitude toward the Sabbath and urged his people, stating "Israelites, if you do not wish that the race of Israel shall decline in purity of principles, in health, and life-sustaining vigor, then resolve firmly to cease your business on the Sabbath, and go with your family to the House of <sup>8</sup>Worship...." This attitude, this link between the future of American Jewry and the observance of the traditional Sabbath day, was not at all tenuous for Wise and he editorialized, "as long as the Sabbath is not observed by all who can possibly do it, Judaism is not established on this continent, and the Israelites are guilty of a moral inconsistency, falling back on Judaism itself. Judaism can never claim respect nor hope for final victory until Sabbath is generally observed." <sup>9</sup> The Sabbath kept the Jews apart in their religious attitude from the general community. Since it was religion only which separated the Jew from his neighbor it was important that he observe all the institutions of his religion in order to strengthen Judaism in America.

It was the Decalogue that demanded this of the Jew and, therefore, the Sabbath had to be observed as a day of rest. Wise viewed the concept of rest as an ideal state for man and the Sabbath as a fitting

vehicle to achieve that state, appealing to the nature of man to seek some time away from his daily pursuits. The Sabbath was a necessity for the physical welfare of the individual as well as the spiritual and Wise felt

if there is any deserving pity, it is those who have no Sabbath, therefore, no rest. To have no Sabbath and no rest; what a cruelty and what a terrible punishment; to be obliged to toil from day to day....It is strange...why men of sound reason...should commit such a great mistake as to break the Sabbath for the sake of gain, when we have plenty of evidence, that those who keep their businesses closed on the Sabbath, succeeded as well, and often better as those who break the Sabbath and have no rest. 10

Whether Wise was serious or not in his last comment is questionable, because for evidence of this fact Wise had pointed to the success of Moses Mendelssohn and Amsel Rothschild, attributing it to their early years being spent in homes where the Sabbath was observed as a day of rest.  
11

Wise was convinced that the Jew was interested in accepting his traditional day of rest but was unduly influenced by the spirit of the times which moulded his religious beliefs to the disillusionment of Wise. He chided the Jews saying, "make it fashionable for the Israelite to keep his Sabbath...and in a few years the young blood will be fashionably inclined in that direction. A little consistency will do them good. Materialism and fashion play too important a part in the great drama of life; a little more idealism, to restore the ethical equilibrium, would do us a considerable amount of good."  
12 Proper observance of the Sabbath as a day of rest might, in fact, result in a change of heart away from this contemporary decadence for Wise was sure that "if it was necessary to God to rest the seventh day and thus review His work, how much more is it necessary to the children of man, to rest the seventh day and review

their work, they certainly would find room for improvement."<sup>13</sup>

This was, in fact, a central feature of Wise's understanding of the Sabbath. Rest, worship, and family involvement on the Sabbath improved man's lot, raising it higher than a mere animal's existence with the converse being as true "for those who disregard the Sabbath gradually retrograde in true nobility, and step by step they become a little more unreasonable, a little more selfish and slowly but surely develop into savages..."<sup>14</sup>

In positing his conviction of the necessity to observe the Biblical Sabbath, Wise pointed out further that "they who neglect to observe the Sabbath as God has commanded it, naturally endanger their spiritual development and run the risk of becoming small souled...And this will be the fate of the children of Israel if they neglect to join the congregation and keep the Sabbath as a day of rest, as a day of mental elevation and advancement..."<sup>15</sup> It was the Sabbath day which reversed this tendency in man's nature. It resulted in strength and purity of heart:

That pearl of a day points to the house of worship, there to bend the knees before God, and acknowledge our weaknesses and implore His divine aid to calm the passions, to enlighten the mind, to strengthen the energies, and to fill our hearts with purity and hope.

16

Isaac M. Wise strongly believed in the Sabbath of the Decalogue and throughout his career preached and wrote of the uplifting nature of the Sabbath and how it was to be the cornerstone of a strong American Jewish community. It was truly a day different from the other six for "the Jews understood the words of the prophet, 'and thou shalt call the Sabbath a delight,' to the effect of distinguishing it be better cloth, better food, domestic peace and happiness, better home comforts (and) the house changed into a temple by 'more light,' the tables covered white."<sup>17</sup>

Wise used his pulpit and his newspaper to fight the battle against transferring the Sabbath of the Decalogue, a move which had gained impetus in the United States and one which he opposed violently. Under no circumstances would he yield to a Sunday Sabbath for the Jews in that "the Sabbath day can never be changed, for the fact that God rested on the seventh day and sanctified it as a day of rest to man can never be undone, and the divine law itself contains no provision which entitles to a change of day."<sup>18</sup> Simply because it appeared as a commandment in the Decalogue was reason enough for Wise to look upon any attempts at a transfer as outside the limits of Judaism, against the very concepts which differentiated Judaism.

It appears ridiculous, if Israelites speak of making a Sunday-Sabbath. You may just as well make the attempt to do away with this earth which God has made to be as you can do away with the Sabbath which providence has ordained and established to be. <sup>19</sup>

Wise further questioned the integrity of the average Jew who looked toward Sunday as a suitable substitute for the Saturday Sabbath, feeling that it would serve only in the interests of his secular goals and could never be, in the Jewish heart, a religious experience.

Every Israelite knows that Sunday is no day of rest for him. He spends it in secular amusements if he has no other business. The Sunday has no holy character for the Israelite. Hence, those Israelites who do not observe the Sabbath, actually have no day of rest... <sup>20</sup>

Similarly, Wise stated that the Jew should maintain self pride in his Sabbath and not look to anything else as a substitute for any economic reasons.

No advantage and no material gain should influence an Israelite to violate his Sabbath: as the satisfaction of his conscience and the word of his God must be infinitely dearer to him than all earthly advantage and wealth. <sup>21</sup>

Wise fought against the establishment of a Sunday-Sabbath not only because of his conviction in the Sabbath of the Decalogue but also because of the artificiality of the Sunday, both in its holiness and as a means of "Americanizing" the Jews. He abhorred the attempt at equating Judaism's Sabbath with the Christian's Sabbath. He thought it to be a striving after wind to assume others, even outside Judaism, would flock to Jewish worship services were they held on Sunday, saying "mark it, those who say we do not worship with you, because you do so on Saturday, would not worship on Sunday, which is their society day..."<sup>22</sup> Wise was saying that there can be no transfer of this holy day to Sunday since, according to Wise, there is nothing at all holy about the first day but it is merely a civil day of rest, created artificially hundreds of years before as a Christian "Sabbath" but having neither a Biblical mandate nor divine sanction and thereby being purely civil in nature. He was adamant in his refusal to grant holiness to Sunday even for Christians and he wrote,

The Sabbath of the Decalogue was proclaimed and ordained under the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, the Sunday Sabbath which arrogant clergymen call the Lord's Day, was ordained and proclaimed by the Emperor Constantine, the man stained with the murder of his wife, his son, and his colleague...The Sunday Sabbath, an imperial-papal institution, maintained by the inconsistency of Protestants, is not thought of much in the Catholic countries although the day was given to Catholics only, in order to separate them from the Jews. Nevertheless, Christian friends always ask us again, why we did not adopt their Sunday...never! The Protestant world has to come to us, we can not go over to the opposition.

23

Wise wanted to show the absurdity of sanctifying Sunday in any way, by any religion, and he hammered home the point, addressing both Jew and non-Jew.

The idea that the Sunday-Sabbath would be substituted

for the Sabbath of the Decalogue is as absurd as is the attempt of missionaries to supersede ancient monotheism by the trinitarianism of Constantine and his priests. The Jew will never believe in a Jesus-god or in a Sunday-Sabbath. 24

Wise crystalized his thoughts further stating, "you can desecrate the Sabbath, but you cannot consecrate the Sunday." 25

Wise was far more concerned about the Sunday-Sabbath movement in Judaism in terms of its abrogation of the Biblical Sabbath and how it would work against the best interests of Judaism. Rather late in his career, when there was a number of congregations which had begun holding Sunday services, Wise appealed to the new group of Rabbis whom he had ordained and, in so many words, accused them of not living up to the principles of Judaism as he had taught them at Hebrew Union College. Similarly, he minimized the affects of the movement in the hope that the mainstream of Reform Congregations will not follow the example of the others.

Any Rabbi...who proposes to change the Sabbath to Sunday, does it on his own responsibility; he has not learned it in the college, it is not written in his diploma, he was not given this privilege, he speaks and teaches independent of the college and its teachings for which the college disclaims all responsibility...We have to make the same declaration in behalf of the [Central Conference of American Rabbis], as that body never discussed the Sabbath question, never touched upon it. 26

For Wise such a transfer would amount of heresy and for a rabbi or congregation to advocate a Sunday Sabbath or abolish the Sabbath of the Decalogue would place him outside the covenant for "one who uproots, rejects and denies publicly this divine commandment is a 'mumar', and nobody can save him." 27

It must be noted, however, that Wise was secure in the belief that the Sunday Sabbath movement would be short-lived and that those who would

champion the cause to maintain the traditional day of rest would be the majority of rabbis graduated from Hebrew Union College. Wise strongly linked the future of the Sabbath with the new seminary and the formation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The desecration of the Sabbath was to cease with their development for "they will exert then great influence to have the Sabbath observed on the day appointed by the Most High and Saturday will be indeed the day of rest for the Israel-<sup>28</sup>ites."

Wise not only had to present his views against the concept of a Sabbath-transfer but also had to react to the very phenomenon itself as there were a number of rabbis who had at least instituted Sunday services, either in addition to those of the Sabbath or as a substitute for Saturday worship. These were relatively few, but they were influential congregations and it was to these that Dr. Wise directed his antagonism. Very early in the life of The Israelite, before the full force of the transfer movement was felt in America, New York's Harper's Weekly magazine reported on the movement and Wise saw fit to dismiss the religious conviction of those Jews who would change the Sabbath by writing "about 30 or 40 men of those 30,000 (Jews in New York City in 1859) lately set their mind upon giving up the Biblical Sabbath, and adopting the Christian Sunday, not because they do not believe the ten commandments or they believe that Jesus of Nazareth rose the first day of the week from his grave...not because they have adopted a new principle, or after elaborate research, arrived at the conviction that it is right to do so; only because their business is such that they must transfer the Sabbath to Sunday to suit themselves."<sup>29</sup> Wise objected as vehemently to the position taken by most congregations who held worship services or lectures

on Sunday without actually transferring the Sabbath day to Sunday. He believed this undermined the holiness of the Sabbath, regardless what name they gave to the first day. Partly to weaken the Sunday Sabbath, and partly to inject new life into the Sabbath of the Decalogue, Wise established the institution of a late Friday evening service "and thus revitalized Synagog attendance on the Sabbath and prevented a complete shift to a Sunday service."<sup>30</sup> As Wise himself said of these services,

no Jewish congregation will succeed in permanently establishing a Sunday service...Nobody can serve two masters and the Jews will not replace the Sabbath of the Decalogue by the Pope's Sunday...all the good that can be attained by the Sunday service can be fully reached by a Friday evening service, strictly within the pale of Judaism and to the satisfaction of all parties. 31

Wise's strong attachment to the traditional Sabbath was based exclusively on his belief in the continuation and the primacy of the Ten Commandments, coupled with his insistence that Sunday's "holiness" is artificial and based in large measure on anti-Jewish sentiments. His position can best be summarized by a statement of his found in his newspaper, the major avenue of the presentation of his religious views:

[The newspaper]...never advocated Sunday service for Jewish congregations or societies...Those Sunday services have invariably proved a failure, because they are without any religious or historical sanction. The Sunday is peculiarly a Christian holiday, which cannot be converted into a Jewish historical Sabbath... To us...who believe in the divinity of the decalogue, only one day out of seven is holy, and that is the Sabbath of the Decalogue...If we do not keep a day holy for this reason, we keep none, if we cannot find time to keep Israel's Sabbath, we cease to claim being one of the covenant between God and Israel.

...for Jews who believe in God and His law do find means to distinguish the Sabbath of the Decalogue by some proper means, somehow if they cannot keep it in the orthodox manner; anyhow they will not countenance any Sunday demonstration to confirm others in their errors.



Men who desire to abolish the Sabbath...seek refuge behind the Sunday service and the utilitarian principle, because they lack the courage to say what they actually do intend. This suspicion poisons the words spoken or prayed and renders them worthless. Therefore all Sunday services in Jewish congregations prove a failure.

### CHAPTER III

#### KAUFMANN KOHLER: A CHANGE OF HEART

In 1903 Kaufmann Kohler ascended to the presidency of Hebrew Union College, three years after the death of Dr. Wise. He had been living in America since 1869 and in the thirty-four year period shifted his attitudes regarding the Sabbath from the need to abandon the traditional Saturday to strongly advocating the retention of the Sabbath of the Decalogue. In 1891 he quoted from Ecclesiastes (3:3,5), "There is a time to build up and a time to pull down. There is a time to gather stones and another to cast them aside," in admitting that he had changed his mind. He stated,

Now, it seems to me that the time has come for a careful re-consideration of the Sabbath question...I consider it not merely my privilege but my duty to state publicly that I have found sufficient reasons to change my views of the same. 1

Kohler's early position, during the years he served Chicago Sinai Congregation (1871-1879), was one of reverence for the traditional day of rest, but disappointment that the status in which it was once held by the Jewish people could no longer continue due to the commercial aspect of Saturday in modern culture.

The Sabbath was an inexhaustible blessing to the Jewish house, a bearer of joy; a messenger of hope and comfort it was amid all the atrocities and persecutions of the dark mediaeval age...[but] alas for the Jewish day of Sabbath! Its brightness and splendor are gone; its blossoms withered. It is no day of holy rest any more, no day of recreation and elevation and sanctification, but a day of noise, of labor and business. 2

Rabbi Kohler saw in the Sabbath a positive contribution to society in general, one which he felt would continue due to the nature of man; "the fourth article of the Sinai Constitution has become a common law to hundreds of millions of men."<sup>3</sup> Due, however, to our society's acceptance of Sunday as the civil day of rest the Sabbath has been maintained in the spirit of the Mosaic legislation but not in the letter of the law. This, for Kohler, at least in his early ministry in America, was a goal the American Jewish community could be proud of attaining. Whereas the Jews could not realize the seventh day Sabbath as a holy day, the acceptance of the idea was so much a part of the Jewish and Gentile world alike that a transfer to one universal day of rest would be the Jewish ideal.

For the Jewish mission is to unite mankind, to do away with all the social and religious barriers, and make the name of God one and mankind one--one God, one united mankind, and one day of communion with the Heavenly Father, a common Sabbath--this is our Messianic Hope. 4

Were Sunday the working day of the Christian world and Saturday its Sabbath as it once was, then mankind could have maintained the seventh day as the holy day of rest and sanctification. Since, however, the majority of men keep the first day as one of cessation from work, then, in the spirit of Judaism's mission, this, too, should be the time for rest. Kohler felt that Saturday could not be divine in that "it is a day devoted to the worship of Mammon; it cannot be at the same time a day of the Lord."<sup>5</sup> He did not weep at the death of the Sabbath since for him the Sabbath did not die.

Now, is the Jewish Sabbath, with all its dear remembrances of old, gone and lost forever?...No. The Jewish day, the letter of the law, is lost, but the Jewish idea of the Sabbath, the true and genuine Jewish spirit of the Sabbath law, will not be lost. 6

Kohler attempted to justify his position in stating that the two reasons for the Sabbath found in Scripture establish not only the actual Sabbath day but also a Sabbath idea. God rested from the act of creation which establishes the seventh day as the Sabbath. On the other hand, we also note that the Sabbath is celebrated as a reminder of Israel's redemption from Egypt, "leaving the selection of the seventh day unexplained. Most surely the Sabbath has a higher bearing upon our mind and soul; it is a law written with divine fingers into the tablets of our heart. It is the testimony of man's being a free moral being, an image of the free and good Creator."<sup>7</sup> It is this second Biblical basis for the institution of the Sabbath that enabled Kohler to think in terms of the universal day of rest regardless of any specific time. It was the idea of the Sabbath which Kohler sought to preserve even as the necessity arose to

transfer all the blessings, and all the rich seed of moral and spiritual elevation, all our dear remembrances from the old historical Sabbath day to the public Sabbath, which we are in fact already celebrating, with our young, with our employes, with our fellow-citizens. 8

Soon, however, Kohler was to change his attitude regarding a Sabbath transfer to Sunday.

Kohler viewed the Sabbath, both the idea and the day, as being the most integral element in Judaism for "without the Sabbath, Judaism is a religion without God, a life without hallowing spirit, a voyage on the stormy sea without a haven of rest; a ship without an anchor."<sup>9</sup> While he acknowledged that many cultures shared a day devoted to the worship of their gods and that this was often the seventh day,

the Sabbath, as a day of rest devoted by the whole nation to the higher interests of life, celebrated by man to the honor of his Creator, was not known

to the Babylonians, nor to any other people. 11

It was the Jewish Sabbath, humane in nature as opposed to a chiefly astronomical event, that was to affect modern civilizations and cultures, by lending them the idea of a

day of communion of the soul and heart with the  
Divine Source of Love, a day of recreation for the  
body and of elevation and enlightenment of the mind. 12

It was the Sabbath that gave strength to the Jewish people and Kohler saw this day as being at the very heart of the community of Israel.

The destruction of State and temple could never imperil the vitality the vigor and hope of the Jew, as does the general neglect of the Sabbath to-day. 13

Kohler believed there to be a definite connection between the Sabbath and the general spirituality of the Jew. With the observance of the Sabbath day the Jew was above the world, not only in communion with God, but separated from the pettiness, the toils and the worries of his weekly existence. However, when the Jewish people saw the wheels of secular progress turning undaunted at the time of their physical and spiritual rest, and when the lure of this material world took away their Sabbath peace, this, for Kohler, "robbed the Jew of his wondrous idealism, loosened his family tie, his precious heritage of the past, and laid bare all the weaknesses and foibles of his race." 14 Desecration of the Sabbath took away from this spirituality and led the Jew to materialism which, for Kohler, was of the highest forms of idolatry. He asked, "when will our people cease to sacrifice their lives and those of their children to the idol Mammon, and again live for the sake of God?" 15

Kohler emphasized that the Sabbath is our link with God

...who was enthroned above the world as its free and holy Creator and Ruler, and the Sabbath became a testimony to His creative power and His seal of perfection. And as a symbol of God's royal sceptre and

seal we keep the Sabbath holy.

16

Kohler insisted on savoring the institution of the Sabbath for both of its Pentateuchal bases--as the day on which God rested and as the idea growing from the redemption from Egyptian bondage. As we stated, his prior position of a universal day of rest, whether it was Saturday or Sunday, grew out of his Messianic wish and he was quite willing to sacrifice the traditional Mosaic Sabbath if mankind would truly keep holy the first day of the week. Even though he was to shift his opinion for the retention of Saturday, he continued to view the Sabbath as an ideal of freedom.

The Jewish Sabbath, made the week's closing day independently of the moon, proclaimed the absolute freedom of God, and the freedom vouchsafed by God to man, His image. It was instituted to cheer and liberate man, as a day of joy and comfort to all alike, to both slave and free man, for body and soul. It was the first abolitionist. It declared the bondman free; it laid down the first fundamental principle of democracy.

17

Kohler saw a loss of this freedom in the desecration of the Sabbath and appealed to the age-old fear Judaism maintains in terms of losing this freedom saying, "The Jew to-day turns into the lowest of slaves the moment he gives over his Sabbath to the rule of Mammon." The lure of economic success will not raise up the Jew but will eventually result in the loss of his independence, a state he strove to achieve over a long and turbulent history. Now, Kohler says, the Jews have reverted to their status as it was in Egypt.

But, alas! our people have fallen into servitude... their ears are deaf to the Sabbath bell of liberty. The groan under the grinding millstone of business on their neck, and yet they lack the strength to assert their freedom, because they have lost their faith in God, the all-providing Father and Redeemer.

19

This idea of redemption, implicit in the Sabbath, was the core issue for Rabbi Kohler. Even when he gave up his notion of transferring the Sabbath day to Sunday he still maintained that the holy nature of the Sabbath

does not derive...from the fact that God commenced building this great universe on Sunday, finishing it on Friday, to rest on Saturday. There is no such limit of time, as days, and weeks, and months, and years, with Him around whose throne the shoreless ocean of eternity roars, making innumerable suns and starry worlds move about in endless cycles. 20

Rather, Kohler became disenchanted with the non-Jewish world around him, grasping its mistreatment of the Jews; and the hopes he had of a soon-to-be-achieved era of Messianism were dashed by the anti-Semitism he was witnessing. Kohler's optimism that such a day would eventually come never left him. He was convinced that the world would share a universal Sabbath day, worshipping the one God, regardless on what specific day of the week that would be. But this was still in the realm of the far-off future. The world's maltreatment of the Jews showed Kohler that "as yet the Christian Sabbath stands for a trinity of gods or for the Unitarian Christian God, and the Jewish Sabbath alone stands for humanity's great and only One God and His covenant with man, His child."<sup>21</sup> Kohler, however, saw no promise of an immediate acceptance of the ideal of a universal Sabbath, one geared to monotheism and the finest qualities of humanity. Similarly, his hopes for an enlightened and religiously concerned Jewry, gaining inspiration from worship on Sunday when all could freely unite in prayer without the burdens of business weighing upon their shoulders, was short lived. There was no noticeable increase in worshippers and, what for Kohler was more disappointing, "the principles of Jewish faith have nowhere taken a deeper hold on Sunday audiences. On

the contrary, laxity appears to be the result. Scepticism and agnosticism are on the increase."<sup>22</sup> This was in direct opposition to the goals that Kohler had envisioned when he supported the Sunday Sabbath movement. He believed the time was ripe for utilizing Sunday mornings as a time for the enrichment of the mind and the strengthening of faith among his people. As he said at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Chicago Sinai Congregation's Sunday services in 1899, when he had already altered his position,

it was by no means simply the innovation of the Sunday service that charmed us and spurred us on. What gave especial power and zest to our understanding was...Das neue Wissen und der alte Glaube, the yearning for a living truth, the eagerness to have modern thought blended with our ancient faith, the bold grasp of new ideas fresh from the laboratory of science for our own uplifting. 23

Kohler did not find this happening, however, and to add to his great disappointment he soon came to realize that the Jewish people and their unique Sabbath institution were alone in this world; his great hopes for a speedy arrival of the Messianic age were to be in vain. Kohler hailed the French Revolution which sparked the Reform movement:

The declaration of the three principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity seemed to bring the millennium of universal peace and happiness within reach of mankind, and to fulfill the glorious vision of the Jewish prophets. What wonder if the enlightened Jew hailed this era with rapture, and rose from his long winter's sleep to his full dignity as the heavenly appointed pioneer of the broad religion of humanity! Readily would he pull down...the pillars of the temple of authority-worship, if he could but unite all men and races upon the common ground of a pure faith in God and man in all its grand simplicity. And this great hope and aim found its correlative object in the establishment of a universal Sabbath...What matters it whether the day is termed Sunday or Saturday in the calendar, if it be but the sign of the covenant between God and man, a token of the Messianic peace that has dawned upon the world. This was the gist of the Reform movement



among the liberal-minded Jew. Upon the altar of broad humanitarian religion they would willingly sacrifice their own tribal traditions. 24

Despite all this faith Kohler had in the new awakening of mankind that could truly be commemorated by one Sabbath day for all in its Biblical spirit of freedom and redemption, his eyes were opened to the stark reality that the dreams he dreamed were only illusions. He declared, "what a sham and a fraud has this era of tolerance and enlightenment become!"<sup>25</sup> He was disgruntled by the renewed prejudices in Germany being disseminated by people in all walks of life; he was taken aback by the Russian pogroms in all their terror,

and in view of such atrocities, perpetuated by a Christian ruler upon the kindred race of their Saviour, the churches keep silent. Neither the Pope, whose lips overflow with pity on the lot of both the laboring man and of the bondsman in Africa, nor the leaders of the Protestant churches, have a word of condemnation for the persecution of these Jews. 26

Kohler's Sabbath view had to be altered for such acts as the world was witnessing did not allow for a universal Sabbath. To continue to utter such hope would be a mocking of everything he believed Judaism to stand for, and to continue in his plan for a Sabbath transfer would amount to a selling of his people. The facts stood for themselves. Now Kohler had to re-evaluate his concept of the Sabbath.

Rabbi Kohler's revised view of the Sabbath incorporated the idea of the Sabbath as a theme of redemption, the Sabbath day as one of devotion to the Jewish God by the Jewish people, hallowed by tradition and by generations of forbears, and, now supreme in his mind, the Sabbath would be a vehicle "to maintain our Jewish identity, and to preserve our Jewish institutions without faltering, without yielding." Kohler went on to say, "we must, with united forces, rally around our sacred Sabbath"<sup>27</sup>

If a universal Sabbath were to come to fruition, it did matter now on which day it was to be since the Jews were always the people who upheld its message and the non-Jewish world was the one whose barbarism threatened the era of peace. Sunday was no longer a viable alternative and the Jews had to preserve the holiness and splendor of their traditional Sabbath. The Gentiles had to see that the Jews clung to their own beliefs for in that way, and that way only, "we cannot but gain in the world's respect, in our own self-esteem, materially and spiritually, by a restoration of the pristine Jewish Sabbath."<sup>28</sup>

Kohler saw that regardless of how much an enlightened individual favored reforms in Judaism, the emotional attachment of the Sabbath was something to be reckoned with:

Its divine nature, its holy character, its strong hold on the minds and hearts, cannot by a sudden movement be transferred. All the elevating and inspiring influences in the Jewish Sabbath exerts over us, all the sweet and dear reminiscences it awakens in our hearts, are the work of a long historical growth, the fruit of a soil fertilized with tears and unspeakable sorrows, and cannot be carried over from this day to another. Hence a Jewish Sunday-Sabbath is for any sober-minded, conscientious advocate of reform out of question today. 29

In addition to his awakening to the fact that the condition of the Jews in the world of his day did not warrant a concession to a universal Sunday Sabbath, the strong pull of the traditional day exerted an influence on Kohler to change his view. Man needed a day of rest and the Jewish Sabbath "alone offers rest to the body, joy to the heart, and enlightenment to the mind."<sup>30</sup> The pressures facing modern man make him realize that he cannot go on without one day of the week for a restoration of "the jaded strength of muscles and nerves, to quiet the agitated brain, and to cool off the fires of anxiety and care consuming the

heart of the businessman during the week."<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Kohler saw the Sabbath as being a time for "domestic reunion." Man needs a moment to be drawn into the bosom of his family as "life's earnest duties during the week draw each member of the family towards its own peculiar sphere, away from the domestic circle and center." Father is overly concerned with his business, mother is forever tending to the home and her children and they, too, have their own lives which take them from their parents during the week.

Where, then, is the link to unite them? Hail thee,  
O Sabbath day! coming as a messenger of peace to  
rally all around the holy fireside. Blessed the  
home where thou, peerless queen, still swayest thy  
golden sceptre from Friday night to Saturday even-  
ing. There sympathy and love unite the hearts; care  
and anguish, sadness and despondency flee as dark  
sceptres before the Sabbath lamp. 32

With respect to the mind of the Jew, Kohler saw the Sabbath as

what no philosophical or priestly school ever did...  
for mankind. It scattered the seeds of truth a-  
broad...The Sabbath lessons...built the civilization  
we boast of. The Jewish Sabbath is the father of  
our common education...Take all in all, the Sabbath  
is the corner-stone of Judaism, the foundation of all  
our physical, moral, and intellectual strength. 33

This was a significant issue for Kohler since he envisioned his Sunday Sabbath as taking over this task for the traditional Sabbath. Many more would flock to learn, many more would gather to be inspired and when he soon came to realize that this was not to be, he sought to infuse with new life the element of education which had always been a part of the seventh day Sabbath in Jewish history.

Kaufmann Kohler, like Isaac M. Wise, his predecessor at Hebrew Union College, believed that Friday evening services might add to the sanctity of the Sabbath in his day as it had in the past for "the Friday evening was the Jewish fount of youth. From its crystal waters, the

worried, the woe-stricken and wearied Jew drank and felt refreshed and re-invigorated."<sup>34</sup> For Kohler, the Friday evening services were to be what Sunday morning failed to be. Calling the Sunday innovation a great religious failure, Kohler anticipated "altogether different results from the introduction of more solemn and impressive Friday Evening Services,"<sup>35</sup> which appeal to the layal heart of every Jew." It was only when he realized that these Sabbath eve services were working against his concept of an entire Sabbath day of rest and sanctification that he admitted they "are altogether an innovation--an innovation of a dubious character, in so far as they make those who attend them feel that they have done their duty toward the Sabbath."<sup>36</sup> Whereas Kohler was the great visionary for a universal Sabbath day--and that failed--, he hoped to resurrect the vision in terms of Friday evening. In the eyes of the visionary himself, that also did not succeed.

Kohler was faced, however, with congregations and rabbis who did maintain his old position, namely the efficacy of transferring the Sabbath to Sunday. He had to deal with these people as a prominent leader of Reform Judaism in America and as a former exponent of the Sunday Sabbath movement. He dealt with them as directly as possible, admitting the former position he held as well as the need to alter his opinion. What was of prime concern to Kohler was the continuation of Judaism and the Jewish people and he believed all reforms were expendable if they were not in the best interests of furthering Jewish devotion and faith. Kohler confronted individual critics who believed that he, their formidable leader, had abandoned them,<sup>37</sup> and he also spoke at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the institution of Sunday Services at Chicago Sinai Congregation, services which he introduced in 1874. In no

uncertain terms did he address the Central Conference of American Rabbis a number of times calling upon them to support all action in favor of strengthening the traditional Sabbath.<sup>38</sup>

Mr. Eugene Cohn, quite dismayed at Dr. Kohler's reversal, believed that a leader could not change his mind and that such a decision as the one to transfer the Sabbath should have been well thought out in advance before Kohler caused so many to adhere to this new reform.<sup>39</sup> Cohn states that Kohler was incorrect in stating that Sunday services led to more agnosticism and scepticism. He continued to say that Sunday could never take over from the ancient Sabbath and he lauded the fact that the Sabbath "was a creature of an age of faith, and the age of faith has fled." For Cohn, "reason, and reason only, is the Truth of God." Kohler is abandoning "the ship of Sabbath Reform," and were it not for others who would take over the wheel, a reversal in course would plunge the ship into destruction on the rocks of the past toward which Kohler's ship would be headed.<sup>40</sup>

Kohler vehemently disagreed, fearing that such an attitude would lead to disaster for "worship is a function of the soul, not of the mind... Men void of all religious feeling, of all attachment to their ancestral faith are as much out of place in a temple as men deaf to the melodies of music are in a concert hall."<sup>41</sup> While Kohler envisioned reason and the scientific age to usher in new attitudes of man to man, reforms in all areas of life and a lower rate of crime, he saw the opposite occurring. There is nothing in Sunday services which is changing the inner being of man. Because of the secular nature of Sunday worship and due to the emotion-less state of those who have turned away from the Sabbath, "simple-minded men and women who had been staunch believers in God and

in Judaism have turned skeptics and scoffers, souls from whom the secret  
<sup>42</sup>  
 aroma of faith has gone." Kohler stated that

the large majority of Jews have no desire to break  
 with their glorious past and out of their midst  
 Judaism will...rise to a new and vigorous life, if  
 the pulpit is alert to the demands of the hour and  
 infuses soul, spirituality, religious earnestness  
 into the modern Jew. 43

Kohler makes a complete turn from his earliest position which glorified all reform as bringing light to a dark age. Due to what he feels is the true feeling of American Jewry he proclaims that his critics "start from the false presumption that Reform is an end to itself, and that the boldest radical is the best and truest reformer." For Kohler, this was no longer the case for "Reform does by no means exclude a retreat if such is demanded for the sake of preserving the object of religion."<sup>44</sup> The attempt at preserving Judaism by transferring the Sabbath to Sunday will not work, according to Kohler, and since the preservation is the core issue and not the innovation, he could not but revert back to Judaism's traditional Sabbath.

Kohler also attacked Cohn's argument that American Jewry's enlightened reforms should not be changed because of the persecution of the Jews in far-off lands. While Cohn could see no reason for dropping the Sunday Sabbath, Kohler asks whether it is "really in harmony with our Jewish, nay, with our humane sentiment in these days of Jew-baiting ...to pay greater homage to the Christian Sabbath than to the ancient Sabbath?"<sup>45</sup> Kohler refused to weaken the defenses of Jewry and saw in the Reform movement a dastardly disservice to world-wide Jewry were it to sanctify a day whose legend was wreaking havoc upon other Jews. Were the time ripe for promoting a universal Sabbath, Kohler would have been the first to advocate it, but since the foundation for such a day

was crumbling before his eyes he could not sanction it any longer.

In his address before the Chicago Sinai Congregation at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Sunday Services, Kohler reiterated that while he supported, even initiated, this plan of a Sabbath transfer in the congregation, he nevertheless has "become more solicitous than ever of the progress and welfare of the whole body of Judaism rather than of a mere portion, and, consequently, also more insistent on the Sabbath institution as an indispensable safeguard and bulwark of Judaism."<sup>46</sup> Kohler praised Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch and the congregation for forging ahead with their principles, while admitting at the same time that he sees "more peril than benefit in this heroic measure...fearing lest the patient may die under the operation."<sup>47</sup> Kohler emphasized the need that often exists for a doctor to employ surgery even though the risk is great and would not call such a person a murderer but "the question only is whether it is within the jurisdiction of a single congregation to decide on a matter of such vital importance as is an exclusive Sunday service, a Sunday Sabbath for the whole Jewish body."<sup>48</sup>

While the principles of Sinai Congregation never faltered, always striving for the truth at all costs, it is this factor itself which disturbs Kohler.

While we endeavor to emancipate ourselves from the tralldom of the law, we should not allow the spirit of loyalty to evaporate also. Freedom threatens to become frivolous license unless it is kept in check by faithfulness. Individualism leads to anarchy. Reason cannot always be supreme arbiter. True ethics is submission to a will higher than ours, to a mind and authority above ourselves. Intellectualism alone will not do...Religion is emotion, faith with reason as corrective.<sup>49</sup>

So, for Kohler, while Sinai Congregation may have been saved from the doom which he foresees in terms of the "triumph" of reason, it is

his hope and his plan to save the historic Sabbath. Judaism owed it to itself to make a determined effort, to give itself prestige in a hate-filled world, to awaken the Jew to the noble message of the Sabbath and to restore it as a true day of rest for a tired world. Only if the peoples of the globe would prove themselves to be worthy of its influence, could there ever be a universal Sabbath day and this indeed would have to be the traditional, historic, seventh-day Sabbath.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE EARLY CONFERENCE AND THE SABBATH

While the problems relating to the Sabbath in American Reform Judaism were present for almost half a century resulting in much difference of opinion among the clergy and the congregations, it was not until 1902 that the unified body of Reform Rabbis, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (hereafter to be referred to as the Conference), attempted to deal with the Sabbath, twelve years after its first convention in 1890. During these formative years the question as to the meaning and observance of the Sabbath for Reform Judaism was raised by individuals who addressed the Conference. The wide spectrum of opinions necessitated the formation of a commission to deal with the Sabbath and present the feelings of the commission members to the Conference as a whole.

It was Kaufmann Kohler who initiated the discussion of the Sabbath within the Conference. In criticizing the entire Reform movement at its 1892 convention, stating that

Reform, with no other principle but that of progress and enlightenment, has created a tendency to treat the past with irreverence and to trifle with the time-honored institutions and venerable sources of Judaism,

Kohler went on to say that the Sunday innovation did nothing to truly enlighten the Jews who flocked to services. These Jews would not become "pillars of historical Judaism", nor are they craving "positive Judaism". As far as Kohler was concerned "the Sunday service is...a patricide" which "will never satisfy any but the intellectual aristocrat who lacks

pious reverence for the past. It destroys or undermines the Sabbath,<sup>1</sup> but it fails to build up a Judaism loyal to its ancient institutions."

There was no recorded discussion over Dr. Kohler's address but a few days later a motion was brought forth by Dr. Joseph Silverman of New York's Temple Emanu-El in response to another matter:

I have a resolution to offer on an important subject. We have abolished Milath Gerim and some of our co-religionists will think that we are ready to surrender the entire Judaism to the Christian cant. I, therefore, offer this resolution: Resolved, that the Executive Committee be instructed to have at least two papers prepared (for the next convention) giving plans for the better observance of the Sabbath. 2

While the motion was referred to the Executive Committee with power to act, no such paper was presented but Dr. Silverman was to be influential twelve years later when he chaired a committee on the Sabbath question.

It was not until 1895 that the Sabbath was again mentioned. At that convention Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch delivered an address, "The Philosophy of the Reform Movement in American Judaism," in which he raised the question pressing upon the minds of many of the Reform rabbis at the time, namely whether the Sabbath was "contingent upon one day?" Hirsch stated to the Conference that America's economic organization, wherein Saturday is a legal work day, destroyed the sanctity of the traditional Sabbath. Only Sunday, therefore, the civil day of rest, could function in this capacity and it was in the best interests of Judaism to transfer its observance of the Sabbath to Sunday.<sup>3</sup>

The Sabbath problem was again brought to the floor of the Conference at its convention in 1896. Rabbi Israel Aaron, of Buffalo, New York, called upon the rabbis to take immediate action on the status of the Sabbath, being quite disillusioned by the ambivalence of the day in his time. Aaron believed that "the manly course is to decide upon a sturdy,

heroic, self-sacrificing policy, making toward a re-sanctification of Saturday, or obeying circumstances we seem unable to control, seek to invest Sunday with the spirit of the Jewish Sabbath." Aaron continued to state that the future of the Sabbath would not affect Judaism as a whole for "Judaism will not live or die with the life or death of the ancestral Sabbath...Judaism is eternal."<sup>4</sup>

Kohler returned to the question of the Sabbath in the Conference sermon delivered in 1898. Preaching on "A United Israel", Kohler, "to be candid," stated that "the Reform movement has disappointed us all... not [realizing] many of our fondest hopes." He felt that Judaism no longer had the hold it once did on the people, attributing this in part to Sunday services. These services, at which there are "artificial attractions to dazzle the eye, sensational pulpit topics to trickle the ear," are adding to culture and knowledge which are themselves leading people away from the synagogue. In a final sigh, Kohler eulogized, "Alas, since the bridal crown fell from the Sabbath queen, Jewish home life has lost its lustre; the purity and virtue of the Jew has faded like a flower torn from its stem."<sup>5</sup>

In 1901, just one year prior to the formation of the Conference's Sabbath Commission, Rabbi C.A. Rubenstein of Baltimore responded to a paper read by Rabbi Solomon H. Sonneschein of Des Moines, Iowa, in which the latter called for a freeing of "the Seventh-Day-Sabbath, from the shackles of the misapplied Talmudic rigor and discipline."<sup>6</sup> Realistically, Rabbi Rubenstein corrected Rabbi Sonneschein's view of the Sabbath in a plea to the Conference members:

The Sabbath is now untrammelled by Talmudism as it is untrammelled by anything else. The trouble is not that we have a Sabbath hedged in by tradition, but that we have no Sabbath at all. If this Conference would take

a decided stand on this question, much would be gained. The day in the week on which Reform Jews shall worship is the vital issue in Reform Judaism, and we cannot shift the responsibility of defining our position much longer without endangering the stability of the splendid structure which our predecessors of the last century have committed to our care. 7

The Conference picked up the banner and in the four years to follow (1902-1906) the Sabbath issue was to play an essential role on the agenda of the Conference. Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger of San Francisco, future chairman of a newly created Sabbath Commission, presented a paper in which he called upon the Conference to consider the Sabbath as it exists in 1902, to delve into the reasons for its status, to see what action could be taken to alleviate its problems and, most drastically, "to formally engage in an important and solemn discussion of the question whether the facts and data at our disposal will at all justify a proposition to recommend formal action in the uprooting of one of our most important historical institutions." 8 Voorsanger, himself, was not in favor of a Sabbath transfer, but as chairman of this significant commission acknowledged that as a body of rabbis whatever action was to be taken would, of course, be done in complete sincerity and consideration of all the issues "and there is nothing in (the Conference's) constitution that could warrant the suspicion that it would not desire to remain in all and everything that affects our faith and religious practice upon distinct historical ground...or that a departure therefrom is not a violation of the essential and fundamental principles upon which, by common consent, our faith is founded." 9

Regardless of what conclusions were to be reached, Voorsanger demanded that an honest evaluation of the Sabbath's status be presented and that all opinions with respect to the question at hand be voiced.

He, himself, did not come to his task in complete objectivity, however, for he believed a drastic break from the traditional Sabbath was dangerous and, at the outset, voiced his concern and hope whether it not be "at least possible that by a careful analysis of causes, we may contribute some suggestion whereby the historical Sabbath may remain a part of our spiritual inheritance to all our children."<sup>10</sup> He was acknowledging the defeatist attitude of many in the nation and the world that proclaimed the death-knell of the Sabbath and a need for the consequent transfer of the day to Sunday, without serious consideration of a variety of possibilities to maintain the historic day. No, for Voorsanger the status of the Sabbath was a sham because those who advocated retention of Saturday did nothing to revitalize it and those who had abandoned it did not properly consider the consequences.

It was Voorsanger's contention that while there were two bases in Scripture for the observance of the Sabbath, the physical and the spiritual, "one of these two principles is fast becoming obsolete; and because of its close identity and union with the other, the latter is of needs affected, and its power and influence limited. In brief, Sabbath rest, so far as its public character is concerned, is nullified by the exigencies of the times, and the public, as well as the domestic celebration of the day, is affected in consequence."<sup>11</sup> Lamentable was the fact that "the sanctifying influence of the day is becoming lost," not that "this almost universal secularization of the Sabbath for the pursuit of labor [is] the greatest evil."<sup>12</sup>

Voorsanger elaborated this point as the basis of his paper. He made the claim that "indifference" could not be viewed as the cause of the sorry state of the Sabbath, but because of other factors relating to

modern society's view of the spiritual and physical elements of Sabbath observance the people's indifference was an affect.<sup>13</sup> Voorsanger directed his further comments to an explanation of this proposition and believed that therein could be found a possible solution. In a warm defense of the Jewish people, Voorsanger claimed,

we have no right to assume that a people, otherwise always imbued with a correct perception of right, always loyal to its institutions, noted for the strength of its domestic virtues, a people capable of sacrifice on behalf of every element that can at all strengthen or perpetuate its traditional legacies of truth and spirit...cannot be assumed to be merely flagrantly and criminally indifferent to, or negligent of, one of the most important factors in its religious economy.<sup>14</sup>

It was the rabbis' responsibility to define the problem and to work on a more viable solution for the benefit of his people and their faith.

Voorsanger saw the causes of indifference to the Sabbath to be Spiritual, Economic and Social.

The Sabbath may have been related to the calendar structure of sister cultures in the Near East but possessed a uniqueness as well. While it served to "conserve energy," it affected man's self-image which the other cultures' rest day did not. Voorsanger stated the Sabbath "brings [man] a sense of personal dignity..., develops his sense of freedom..., [and] inspires him with humane sentiments towards his fellow men."<sup>15</sup> But Voorsanger contended that the Sabbath must be understood in its historical development and specifically in its legal aspect:

The old Jewish commonwealth...placed the institution under the protection of authority, and that authority was made imposing by the proclamation of its divine mandate...

Since God rested, man must also rest and a whole series of legislative enactments solidified the concept of rest into a very rigid one wherein

16

"almost nothing in the way of exercising energy is tolerated." As Voorsanger saw it, this authority was so strong and demanding that it culminated in the death penalty for those who transgressed the social institution of the observance of strict rest on the seventh day. The rabbis had the authority to enforce their interpretation of the Sabbath laws since the entire community adhered to both the social institution of the Sabbath and to the principles which gave these individuals the mandate to legislate Sabbath regulations in this manner. What Voorsanger points to in this analysis is that "spiritual authority has been steadily on the decline." The rabbis of the Conference and the principles of Reform Judaism have refused to "recognize any authority, from which a-foretime proceeded the moral and physical directions regarding [the Sabbath]."<sup>17</sup> It was not that Voorsanger was denying the validity of the freedom inherent in Reform Judaism, rather he simply presented this position as fact and believed that the contemporary Sabbath suffered because of it;

When the authority of the [Sabbath] is shaken by the absence of social, political and ethical safeguards, when the origin of the [Sabbath]...contradicts the statement of the traditions, when people prove by their attitude that in some way they know these things; how, unless we turn the dials of time backward, can we restore this old institution to its original status and endow it with an authority that shall not be opposed or questioned? 18

This decline in spiritual authority was Voorsanger's first premise as to why Sabbath non-observance was at a critical point.

Voorsanger next pointed to economic considerations. Because no one was exempt from the rigid laws of Sabbath rest, "not even the stranger within the gate, nor the alien," there was no competition in any sphere, especially the economic. There was no conflict with other subcultures

and the law of the land made Saturday more complete a day of rest than the American Sunday. The Rabbi points out that were the majority of Jews to keep the Sabbath they would, therefore, be operating on a five-day work week and not a six-day week for if they did insist on cessation from work on Saturday, Sunday would remain the popular day of rest and "not a single religious consideration that we might present could induce the American people to change its consensus in that matter."<sup>19</sup> And Voorsanger points out that this should not change! He was convinced that the "unfortunate" situation was still the best insofar as a two-day work-free weekend would pauperize the Jews. This, he believed, would be more detrimental than the poor state of the Sabbath since "material prosperity is no inconsiderable factor in social happiness, and even the well-being of our communal institution depends very largely upon the degree of prosperity our people enjoy."<sup>20</sup> Voorsanger therefore acknowledged the status quo, refused to allow for a change and admitted to the economic situation being "at the bottom of all our trouble," but nevertheless still clung to the hope that the Saturday Sabbath could in some way be maintained.<sup>21</sup>

In terms of the social causes, Voorsanger discussed how "Sabbath rest needed a social atmosphere." He stated that even the halakha "derives its vitality from Teganoth, Gezeroth, and Minhagim," and that while these "fixed the status of practice" it could not remain so always since "they are the mechanism only to bring the principles of faith and practice in harmony with the life of the community."<sup>22</sup> The life of the community in America is determined by a viable assimilation of all facets of life whereby the Jew could practice his religion without impinging on the welfare of the general community and therefore the old



order of the regulations of the Sabbath had to give way since "we cannot place any restrictions on the growth of (the Jew's) sentiment as regards his social freedom."<sup>23</sup> Regardless of what ordinances have been laid down by the sages, rejection has to ensue if social conditions warrant it, and in America there had to be a definite rejection since "the very spirit of Sabbath rest has changed because the popular idea of rest has changed; because the social life...has changed...because...it is an impossibility to perpetuate old time interpretations among a people that are forever learning from their neighbors, hence forever adapting themselves to the life of which theirs is a part."<sup>24</sup>

Voorsanger grappled with a serious problem since no one ever defined new concepts for the Jews while the old concepts and legislation was quickly losing force in their American environment. This inevitable process was as critical as the spiritual and economic and, for Voorsanger, warranted a serious discussion geared to definite action.

Implicitly, Voorsanger could not see a change occurring in these conditions. He also heralded them to the extent that at least the economic and social causes reflected the acceptance of the Jew of and by the "American way of life." His conservatism, on the other hand, would not permit him to take these factors to, perhaps, their obvious and final conclusion, that the Jew had to abandon his Sabbath in favor of the civil Sabbath. The Sabbath was far too precious in an institution for it "is one of those powerful elements that have given our religious system that distinct individuality that has made it the source of other systems," and Voorsanger felt that a transfer, even considering the conditions he presented, would lead to a "sectarian movement that may eventuate in the third and fourth generation in our being cut off from the confraternity of Israel."<sup>25</sup> Regardless of how the Sabbath presently stood

it should not be abandoned because of its historical position for the Jewish people.

Religion...means more than a mere acknowledgment of ethical principles, more than a compliance with traditional discipline, more than a classification and profession of theological statements. Religion... means also a maintenance of the continuous identity of Israel as God's missionary for the transmission of those truths held efficacious in teaching and saving the world.

26

The Sabbath is a means of identity and has been throughout history.

Voorsanger said, "We deal here with no mere custom, nor with rabbinical decrees and decisions. We deal with an institution, one of the oldest, held to be divinely ordained. However we may interpret...its divine origin, that institution is indissolubly interwoven with other elements that make up our religious system."

27

Voorsanger presented seven points for future consideration. The Conference should officially state its Sabbath position, should differentiate between a Sunday service and a Sunday Sabbath, and it should "define, if possible, the spiritual authority that guides and directs the religious practice of our people." Furthermore, the Conference should either reconcile the ideas of rest with the current economic situation or suggest new interpretations; it should inquire into the historical and theological principles involved with a Sunday Sabbath and see if such a move would be schismatic. The Conference should emphasize a solemn celebration of the Sabbath and "look for means whereby the domestic character of the Sabbath can be enhanced."

28

The discussion that followed Rabbi Voorsanger's presentation included the comments of fourteen rabbis, not one of whom directed his statements to the issues presented. They included personal opinions and congregational policies vis-à-vis Sunday services or Sabbath retention.

As Voorsanger pointed out in his closing remarks,

I am not at all interested in the question whether any particular congregation holds Friday evening or Saturday evening services. ...The question of Sunday Sabbath, or Saturday Sabbath, was not and is not now under discussion...but I do want to know what you are able to do to revitalize the Sabbath and make it an integral portion in the religious life of our people.

29

This was the question, the request, which prompted the formation of a Sabbath Commission designed to investigate the seven points made by Rabbi Voorsanger at the conclusion of his paper. Over the next year, the members of the commission were assigned one of these issues each and were asked to present their position at the 1903 convention in Detroit.<sup>30</sup>

In his correspondence to the commission members, Voorsanger referred to his own 1902 paper and asked whether there was even a Sabbath "problem". He admitted to problems concerning the non-observance of the Sabbath, the lack of a domestic quality and the outnumbering of women over men at services, "but is there, or can there be, any problem regarding the day itself?" He questioned whether the Conference had any right or any historic basis for even considering a transfer to Sunday.<sup>31</sup>

As far as he was concerned, the Conference was in no position to change the Sabbath day. He assumed this to be taken for granted because of the havoc he felt would result in such a drastic step. On the other hand, it was in the jurisdiction of the Conference to guide its people in a proper observance of the Sabbath and he wished his Commission to abandon any discussion on the transfer issue and concentrate solely on such guidance. He sought to imbue the Conference with the "spiritual authority" he previously mentioned was lacking and raised the point that the Conference and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations had to become co-ordinated.

The days of the Shulchan Arukh discipline are past; but you must admit that there is many a stage between a concerted, unwieldy and unyielding authority and religious anarchy. I am more afraid of the latter than of the former. I conceive the possibility of an authority that must be acceptable to our people. 32

The role of the Conference was to adopt some principles and measures regarding the historic Sabbath and present them to their congregations as a guide to proper Sabbath observance.

Rabbi Sonneschein dealt with Voorsanger's first suggestion whether the Conference should officially present a position regarding the Sabbath. He stated that the Conference had the right "to render a decision in all matters pertaining to a reconstruction of even the most fundamental religious ceremonial." Because of a conflict between the rabbinic ordinances and contemporary life, Sonneschein felt that modern interpretations were in order, stating, "Every Beth Din in every generation has the right to judge according to [the exigencies of] their place and their time."<sup>33</sup> But Sonneschein seemed to have misinterpreted Voorsanger's main point. Voorsanger wanted the Conference to take a stand on Sabbath observance, the maintenance of the historic Sabbath, however Sonneschein maintained his opinion by rationalizing the non-observance of the Sabbath. He stated the principle of allowing for Sabbath transgression through "hefsed gadol" (great loss), where transactions may be made on the Sabbath if there would be a great loss involved should they be postponed. He states that the exigencies of modern life warrant such a decision by the Conference and "as long as the Conference will stand by the 'Seventh Day,' and not cast its lines to fish exclusively in the Sunday pond, we have not only the authority, but the duty to lighten the burden of the 'Ghetto'-Sabbath, and to free the American Jew from the thralldom of a superannuated casuistry."<sup>34</sup>

Voorsanger, himself, dealt with the problem of what spiritual authority the Conference had over their congregants. This issue perturbed him a great deal inasmuch as he believed that the various customs and practices of American Reform congregations, specifically with respect to the Sabbath, would lead to anarchy and would present a grave threat to the future of Judaism. He was not advocating complete authority by the Conference over its constituents but wondered "whether Sabbath observance would not derive more strength from the people's better acquaintance with the sources whence religious practice receives its sanction and the authorities appointed to expound and direct it."<sup>35</sup>

Voorsanger saw the rabbi as a preserver of "the religious as well as the physical unity of the Jewish people at a time when all the elements of its sovereignty had become dissipated and the gravest danger existed of its ultimate absorption among the dominant nations of the period."<sup>36</sup> The rabbi guided the people and strengthened their personal and religious commitments and his authority was least threatened under such conditions that witnessed the Jewish people in its weakest hour. Because of the changing historical circumstances, especially in America, many of the rabbinic functions have ceased to exist but in terms of "education, ritual practice, discipline, religion and ethics,...[they] remain the burden of rabbinical care."<sup>37</sup> Now, however, Voorsanger notes that even in these areas there is a conflict "because Jewish life must progress with the widening of the environments in which he [the Jew] lives."<sup>38</sup> Such is the problem with Sabbath observance and it is because of this that Voorsanger raised the issue of authority. Because of the democratic structure of both Reform Judaism in general and of any one congregation in particular, the people may express options running the

gamut of Sabbath observance. But because this issue is so crucial and one in which little or no precedent may be found, the problem of authority arises. It was here that Voorsanger suggested a coordination of the Conference and the U.A.H.C., not specifically for the Sabbath, but for any matters to guide American Jewish life.<sup>39</sup>

Rabbi H. G. Enelow of Louisville accepted membership on the Sabbath Commission but refused to restrict himself to only one of the considerations presented in Voorsanger's 1902 paper. He asked to present the entire question as he saw it "but as a result of Enelow's opinion included in the commission report, the various parts of this report represent the opinions of the various authors rather than the consensus of the commission as a whole."<sup>40</sup>

At the outset Rabbi Enelow stated that one could not maintain the Saturday Sabbath and still have "a complete participation in the economic and intellectual life of the American Nation" and because of this desire to be a part of this new culture, from the standpoint of the Sabbath regulations "there is to-day but a handful of Jews in this country, if any, that are not Sabbath breakers."<sup>41</sup> In view of this, Enelow called on his colleagues, "in order to avoid hollow ceremonialism and the imputations of indifference or hypocrisy, [to] define [their] position in this matter, seeking to ascertain the real purpose of the Sabbath and the possibility of its preservation in the modern environment as an integral part of progressive Judaism."<sup>42</sup>

Enelow called on his colleagues to look to the reasoning of modern rabbis, such as Holdheim and Geiger, instead of the ancient sages "in obscure and far-off lands."<sup>43</sup>

He, himself, saw in the Sabbath the evolution of a concept begin-

ning in an agricultural society and gradually changing emphases because of historical considerations. The Sabbath was related to other feasts of an agricultural people where on certain days there would be worship and rejoicing. It was on no higher plane than any other celebration of the time.

As long as the Sabbath belonged to that class of spontaneous periodic religious feasts, its place in the economy of an agricultural state was natural, and required no explanation. 44

Enelow goes on to say that the Deuteronomic explanation of the Sabbath's origin, being a day of rest as a memorial of redemption from Egypt, fits perfectly with the Deuteronomic reform of Josiah. Worship was centralized in Jerusalem and the other local religious experiences were secularized. The Sabbath became the day for physical rest, supported by its link to the Exodus. Because of its folk nature, being celebrated outside of the central Jerusalem sanctuary, it became very meaningful for the people, especially when the Temple was destroyed and the exile was in effect. Now these local festivals were extremely important, being the only religious institutions remaining. Enelow continues to state that "it need not surprise us if we find the philosophy of the old institution altered according to the demands of the new environment. Judaism again and again has read into its old institutions <sup>45</sup> messages for new times." Because of the religion of their captors the Jews added another element to the celebration of the Sabbath, the theme of the creation <sup>46</sup> "to combat the Chaldean cosmogony." Thus, there was a two-fold reason for the Sabbath—a connection between God and His covenant as shown through the Exodus, and a tribute to God the Creator who rested on the seventh day.

The theme of rest developed over the years as a component part of

the Sabbath. At first it was a natural element of some weekly feast since a need to rest in an agricultural society was quite clear. In the Deuteronomic reform it became attached to humanitarian principles. In Babylonia it emphasized the creation aspect of the Sabbath day. And so this theme was linked with Sabbath observance. It was not satisfactory, however, as Enelow points out, since "cessation from labor in itself, religiously considered, is at best but a negative merit. If the Sabbath is to have any positive religious value...the discontinuance of labor must be attended by some actual religious exercise."<sup>47</sup> It was always a religious festival and Judaism had to return to some element of worship in order for the Sabbath to be preserved, for rest alone could not validate its perpetuation.

Enelow posed the question whether the Sabbath is a symbol or an institution. He sees no problem in asserting the symbolism of the Sabbath as did the Deuteronomists or the Babylonian Jews but,

ere we can call a thing the symbol of our inward soul, we must have the thing. And the present age, I believe will not be content with subscribing to the Sabbath as a merely anonymous symbol, having no actual connection with the religious consciousness of the subscriber--a sort of impersonal idea afloat in the atmosphere, detached from the world of realities. 48

Similarly, since for Enelow it is an institution, we must regain possession of the Sabbath, for a religion without one of its viable institutions will soon abandon that institution if it finds it to be unnecessary for the continuation of that religion, or the religion will instill a new meaning to it in order to preserve it as part of that religion.

Enelow states further that the Saturday Sabbath can no longer be, simply because there is no way in modern society to change the nature of the seventh day as a working day. When the Jew was isolated he could maintain Sabbath rest; now it has become impossible. Nevertheless, the



institution of the Sabbath is still vital "for the furtherance and the fortifying of our religious consciousness." <sup>49</sup> The Sabbath day cannot be maintained but the Sabbath idea must be maintained and so a radical departure is called for. As Enelow viewed the situation, "Judaism is greater than all the ceremonies and observances and institutions it has ever sheltered, including the Sabbath." <sup>50</sup> Because the underlying principle was the worship of Yahweh, and not the specific institution or festival that preserved Judaism, the modern rabbis, owing to the spirit of their time, have the right, if not the duty, to do whatever is in their power to save the institution, even if that means transferring the Sabbath to another day.

The discussion following the report of the 1903 Sabbath Commission centered about two issues: was this indeed a report and, if not, what substitute could be presented, especially on the matter of the Conference's attitude regarding the Sabbath. Because only three men reported their opinions to the Conference and because there was a major difference of opinion regarding a Sabbath transfer, an issue which the chairman of the Commission said was not even raised, it was decided that this indeed was no report but represented the views of individuals. Furthermore, the issue of the Sabbath was not discussed as had been outlined in Voorsanger's paper wherein the Commission was to decide on definite action to be taken to enhance Sabbath observance.

As to taking a stand on the Sabbath, the Conference found itself to be somewhat impotent. Many favored a Sabbath transfer, but the issue was an attitude to the Sabbath. Similarly, since the Sabbath meant many things to many people there was a conflict over what exactly could be stated. Rabbi Joseph Silverman of New York's Temple Emanu-El and Pres-

ident of the Conference plainly stated that the latter conflict could be avoided since "we are not called upon here to discuss the theological side of the Sabbath, but the practical side of it."<sup>51</sup> It was this practical aspect that was being overlooked while it was in fact the chief issue brought up by Rabbi Voorsanger in his initial report. Therefore, Rabbi Silverman proposed the following motion which was accepted by the Conference members:

That this Conference declares itself in favor of maintaining the historical Sabbath as the fundamental institution of Judaism and of exerting every effort to improve its observance; and instructs the Executive Committee to appoint a committee to study the methods of carrying this declaration into effect, and to report to the Conference whenever, in the opinion of the Executive Committee, the special committee has made an adequate report as to methods. 52

What was especially significant in this motion is that Rabbi Silverman virtually caused the Conference to abandon the possibility of transferring the Sabbath. What he did not touch upon was Sunday services, in addition to the Sabbath services, and whether the Sunday services would have a schismatic effect. This could be brought up at another time (which it was) or not at all. The purpose of Silverman's motion, however, was to strengthen the Sabbath and Judaism.

I know, and you know, that many Jews do not observe the Sabbath because they cannot. But that is no reason why we should support them in their indifference or in their disinclination to make sacrifices. We shall strengthen those who desire to maintain the Sabbath, and we shall buttress those who are undecided on this subject. 53

In the next two years little was done with respect to the Sabbath, so little in fact that in his 1905 Presidential address to the Conference, Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf of Philadelphia stated that he hoped Commissions of the future "will faithfully discharge their task, so that we may have no repetition of the disappointment to which the Sabbath Commission treated

us a year ago."<sup>54</sup> In that year, 1904, the only member of the Commission present at the Conference was Rabbi Enelow who read a paper written by Voorsanger, who was unable to attend the convention. The paper was not published because, as the Conference decided, it was not a report and no one else on the Commission was really prepared to present either a defense or a substitution. Similarly, the Executive Committee never acted upon their responsibility to elect a special committee as was moved by Rabbi Silverman. It was decided to have the Executive Committee "appoint a commission on the Sabbath question in accordance with the resolution adopted last year [1903]."<sup>55</sup>

Five Rabbis composed the new committee and in 1905 presented ten recommendations:

1. That the observance of the Sabbath in the home be revived where it has been abandoned, and encouraged where it seems to be declining. [This would include] Friday evening services...the "light", the "Kiddush", the blessing of the children by the parents and the gathering of the family and kindred.
2. That Sabbath Observance Leagues be organized...
3. That such literature on Sabbath observance, as shall be deemed helpful in this propaganda, be made available by proper index or reprint.
4. That appeals be made to business and professional men to observe the Sabbath and to respect the scruples of Jewish employes who desire to keep the seventh day holy.
5. That congregations be requested to induce their leading members and especially their officers and trustees to observe the Sabbath [and that teachers and religious school committee members set a good example in Sabbath observance.]
6. That the Jewish Women's Council, the U.A.H.C., the Southern Rabbinical Conference...be invited to cooperate in this movement, making for better Sabbath observance.
7. That parents be urged, when making arrangements for private instruction [for their children], to have regard for the Sabbath and that Jewish schools of a secular nature be requested to hold no session on Sabbath or holidays.
8. That strenuous efforts be made for a better observance of the Sabbath at summer resorts...

9. That in order to protect individuals, or business houses that observe the Sabbath, steps be taken, when necessary, to secure for them immunity from the enforcement of Sunday legislation.

10. That a standing committee on Sabbath observance be appointed...to carry out the recommendations adopted by the Conference... 56

The recommendation regarding home observance was carried. The Sabbath Observance League recommendation was referred back to committee. The major objection was voiced by Rabbi David Philipson who insisted that these Leagues could not revive the Sabbath and that "we need something entirely different. There are economic, social and other conditions to be changed..." and the Leagues are "only a superficial thing." 57

Rabbi Khelow voiced objection to the recommendation dealing with Sabbath literature stating, "You cannot publish a single thing on this question, unless you know definitely what you want the men and women of this country to observe." 58 The recommendation was left to the Executive Committee.

The Conference passed the fourth recommendation dealing with an appeal to businessmen to enable their Jewish employees to observe the Sabbath. While Rabbi Clifton H. Levy stated that such a proposition "is not businesslike" because of the problems involved in letting some employees off on Saturday and others not, Rabbi Schulman stated, "I am not prepared to declare that to every man, woman and child that they should sacrifice themselves for the Sabbath observance. But my colleague asks you to appeal to the professional classes..." and because "this Conference has accepted the resolution that it wants to maintain the historical Sabbath," Schulman felt it necessary to pass this resolution. 59

Recommendations five, six and seven were carried but the seventh, dealing with Sabbath observance in private schools, was separated from

the first part of the recommendation and was carried. <sup>60</sup> The eighth recommendation, regarding summer resorts, was withdrawn. The Conference referred to the Committee on Sectarianism the recommendation concerning immunity from Sunday legislation, but Chairman Silverman objected on the grounds that it had to do specifically with Sabbath observance. Rabbi Philipson stated that the Committee on Sectarianism "will have its agents everywhere and will...take steps that shall prevent any action on sectarianism in the various states." <sup>61</sup> The final recommendation was carried as well.

The 1905 Conference, while it did not raise the issue of a Sabbath transfer, did involve itself in the problem of Sunday services. Both in committee reports and in the President's Message the points were raised that an in-depth study had to be made concerning the affects of such Sunday Services. While there already existed a Weekday Service in the Union Prayer Book, the point was suggested that a separate Sunday service be written. It was brought up by Rabbi Moses that "a special ritual for a Sunday service is a dangerous beginning," because it would mean "that our Shabbos is not sufficient, that our weekday service is not sufficient, that the Sunday is something special..." He suggested that the Union Prayer Book be changed if there was indeed a deficiency in it so that it is deemed unacceptable for Sunday services and, if not, that this weekday service be the one used for Sunday and not another, specially written, one. <sup>62</sup>

The President of the Conference, Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf, recommended that the entire question of Sunday services be examined in great detail. While he was in favor of Sunday Services he was willing to condemn them if such a report concluded that they were harmful to Saturday services.

Therefore, he called upon the Conference to examine the allegations made, from the point that they are beneficial to Judaism and even inspire greater Saturday Sabbath observance, to their doing violence to the Sabbath. This committee was to present their impartial findings at the 1906 convention.<sup>63</sup>

Rabbi H. G. Enelow chaired this Sunday Service Committee.<sup>64</sup> Although he reached certain conclusions regarding the "influence" of Sunday Services, he began the report stating how difficult it was to engage in such a determination because of a number of significant reasons. Enelow believed it was difficult to "calculate influences," especially "those of religious movement," because "the word influence...stands for something so subtle, elusive, secret as baffles the effort of the cataloguer and the figures of the statisticians."<sup>65</sup>

The Sunday Service movement was so young that one cannot truly gauge its influence. Since Chicago Sinai Congregation was the "pioneer of Sunday service Congregations," and these were instituted in 1874, making them thirty years old, or one generation, "it certainly takes more than one generation for any religious institution to render its influence a vital force."<sup>66</sup>

Enelow also pointed out that these services were instituted during a difficult period and one would have to measure the potential influence as well as the actual influence to ascertain its total effect. Because of the Sabbath controversy surrounding them, such a determination would be difficult if not impossible since, from the outset, many were bitter toward these services and remained so on the principle that they were destroying the traditional Sabbath.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, there are too few congregations holding such services to measure its influence. "A religious movement...needs more wide-spread

recognition and allegiance before it can make itself really felt."

Enelow submitted a number of questions to rabbis who have, in some way, been connected with Sunday Services. He did not inquire of those who only had opinions of this ritual for "experience is in a matter of this sort the sole convincing argument."<sup>69</sup> The questions he asked were:

1. Do you think they do any good?
2. (a) Do they help the Jew?  
(b) Do they help the non-Jew?
3. Do they help or hurt?  
(a) The Sabbath idea or practice?  
(b) The observance of the Saturday Sabbath?
4. Has your attendance at the Sunday Services been increasing or decreasing?
5. Would you urge the introduction of Sunday Services in congregations where they do not now exist?

The committee reached conclusions based on the responses of the participating rabbis:<sup>70</sup>

1. [They felt that] the Sunday service is found to be helpful to the maintenance and the cultivation of the religious spirit among the people, particularly the men and the young people.

Aside from the rabbis who answered merely "yes" or "most assuredly", a number were more specific. Rabbi Isador Philo felt that "they afford the means of religious instruction and spiritual upliftment to...Jews who would otherwise become estranged from Judaism."<sup>71</sup> Rabbi Samuel Hirshberg, who did not hold Sunday Services but served on the Committee, believed that a Sunday Service might be as beneficial as any other supplementary service, provided that it did not place Saturday services "in a subordinate, a secondary position."<sup>72</sup>

2. In view of the non-attendance of the people...on Saturday, the Sunday Service affords a weekly opportunity for worship, apart altogether from the question of Sabbath observance.
3. The Sunday Service brings the congregation, especially the male portion thereof, under the more direct and more constant influence of the pulpit, which often leads to a more energetic communal and

congregational activity.

4. The Sunday Service, in almost every instant, is attended by a considerable number of non-Jews, who in that way are given enlightenment on Jews and Judaism, and are afforded an opportunity for possessing themselves of our conception of religion.

5. ...The introduction of Sunday Services, as supplementary services, is a question that should be determined in each instance by local conditions.

Most of the answers that led to the Committee's conclusions were terse and reflected the idea that any additional service at which a large number of Jews worship will certainly help the cause of Judaism. They will enable the rabbi to reach more people who may otherwise attend only on the High Holydays. They will enable families to attend together and they will enable the rabbi to address himself on more secular subjects. It is with respect to their effect on the Sabbath that we must draw our attention.

In this area, there was a distinction drawn between the Sabbath idea and the actual Saturday Sabbath observance. Feelings concerning the effects of Sunday worship on the Sabbath idea are that they do indeed help foster a day of rest, albeit on a Sunday. As Rabbi Goldenson pointed out, "If by a Sabbath idea is meant Saturday worship and Saturday sanctity, I fear that Sunday Services do not help the Sabbath idea, but if Sabbath is to mean a day of contemplation and rest from engrossing material cares, I am confident that the Sunday Service tends to promote the Sabbath idea."<sup>73</sup> Rabbi Moses Gries believed that such services would never transplant the idea of the Sabbath "in the old fashion," but that Sunday would be the only time Jews could have a Sabbath in its spirit since the Saturday Sabbath was for Gries a dead institution.<sup>74</sup>

With respect to observance of the Saturday Sabbath, Sunday Services seemed to have no effect. Those who attended Saturday services before, did so as well when Sunday Services were introduced even though they may



also have attended services on Sunday.<sup>75</sup>

The Conference was conservatively tied to the maintenance of the historic Sabbath although many members believed that the conditions of the time made it impossible for the majority of the Jews to observe it. They did not deal with concepts of the Sabbath since there was a universal feeling that one could not honestly ascribe a new meaning to a day which would not be observed regardless of what meaning was imposed upon it; the old concept of the Sabbath as a day commemorating Creation or Israel's redemption from Egypt certainly did not have an effect.

What was most disturbing, even to the members of the Conference, was that nothing could be done to save the Sabbath day. Even the introduction of Friday evening services or a concerted effort to re-introduce candle-lighting and the "Kiddush" into the home were looked upon as superficial, considering the economic conditions that destroyed the traditional Sabbath as a day of rest. For the Conference to continue in its discussion of the Sabbath would have been tantamount to "kicking a dead horse", and the best they could have done and which they did indeed, was to again state their ties to the traditional Sabbath day and the hope that some day, when conditions change, it again would gain in stature.

As regarding Sunday, the Conference would not "officially" transfer Sabbath to the civil day of rest. For them to have done this would have been a drastic step whose consequences few seemed particularly eager to face. Those whose congregations did adopt a Sunday Sabbath fought for such a universal change on the part of Reform Judaism. Sunday services, on the other hand, were seen to be beneficial for instruction in Judaism, especially for those who otherwise would not attend the synagogue at all. Certainly, to preserve worship and the synagogue in some form besides

their role on the Holydays, there was nothing wrong for a congregation to adopt weekday services, even if they should be on Sunday. The subject of the Sabbath was brought to rest due to impotency on the part of the Conference to deal with it in the light of the surrounding culture that was weighing heavily on the shoulders of Judaism.

## CHAPTER V

### RESPONSA AND GUIDES

The position of Reform Judaism had been stated--there would be no official transfer of the Sabbath and the historic day was to be maintained with dedicated effort at again making the Sabbath a viable institution for contemporary Jewry. In the fifty year period before 1965, the year in which the Conference again raised the Sabbath issue, the emphasis was shifted from the problem of communal worship, which seemed to be the concern of the early period of the Conference. The question now became, how could the Sabbath regain meaning for the individual? What definition of Sabbath observance could strengthen the family unit?

The economic situation still brought pressure to bear on the synagogue and Sabbath services inasmuch as Saturday was a working-day. Reform Judaism slowly accepted this factor and reached out for other alternatives. It was still concerned with the problem of declining attendance at worship services but the independence of the Sabbath from the synagogue was implicitly acknowledged and now the task was to revitalize the Sabbath under these circumstances. Without such a concerted effort the Sabbath would be doomed as fewer and fewer Jews sought their synagogues on the Sabbath day.

The primary vehicles that were employed in order to maintain the sanctity of the Sabbath within the framework of Reform Judaism were Responsa and "guides" for the Reform Jewish family. The Responsa written during this period reflected a conservative trend to make the Sabbath day

one of rest and restraint from unnecessary physical labor. The "guides", on the other hand, were relatively innovative in terms of their de-emphasis of the strictly "worship" aspect of Sabbath observance. They attempted to direct the Sabbath to the home, reversing the trend found in most Reform congregations which adopted the lighting of the Sabbath candles and the "Kiddush" for Friday evening synagogue ritual.

In 1927, Dr. Jacob Z. Lauterbach answered a question concerning whether it is "permissible to let a non-Jewish contractor, building a synagog [sic], work on the building on the Sabbath."<sup>1</sup> Lauterbach referred to the halachot which stated that a Jew is not permitted to allow another Jew to do work for him on the Sabbath. On the other hand, a Jew is permitted to hire a non-Jew and should that person find the need to work on the Sabbath there is no reason to prevent him since a Jew "is not commanded to try in any way to make the non-Jew observe the Jewish Sabbath."<sup>2</sup> Lauterbach points to one problem that may arise, namely, other Jews might see work being done on the Sabbath and thus lead them to desecrate it. Here the author believes it is a serious consideration since the law refers to the building of a private home. But in terms of a synagogue, a public structure, the law is not as strict in that the problem of the reaction of other Jews, "seeing the work done on Sabbath (and suspecting) a violation of the Sabbath law...does not enter into the question."<sup>3</sup> This is because the Jewish community is aware of the situation.

What is interesting is Lauterbach's own response. Regardless of the precedents he quotes, he believes that a synagogue should not be built on the Sabbath, even by non-Jews, and that a congregation, if need be, should pay additional money to the contractor to refrain from work on this day. If there is no absolute need for the speedy building of the synagogue it

should not be labored upon on the Sabbath and, if there is a need, following the responsum of Solomon Jehudah Rappoport in 1882, Lauterbach feels "at least let no one, representing the congregation, be seen there on the Sabbath supervising the work or watching the laborers."<sup>4</sup> The Conference endorsed this view and empowered its Executive Board "to frame a letter to be sent to congregations calling attention to this phase of the Sabbath question in the erection of a synagogue and that it is the opinion of the Conference that work be suspended on Sabbath and holydays if it can be done without hardship to the workingmen."<sup>5</sup>

A later successor to Lauterbach as chairman of the Conference's Responsa Committee is Rabbi Solomon Freehof. Under his chairmanship the Reform Responsa grew and some of the questions he answered related to Sabbath observance.

Freehof tackled the question of Bar Mitzvah celebrations being held on Sunday. His answer to the question reflects more a position on the Sabbath than the matter of the Bar Mitzvah, although the latter is what is explicitly under consideration. The Bar Mitzvah is seen to be primarily a religious event and Freehof seeks to undermine those who want the rite on Sunday only in order to make it more convenient for attending guests. Freehof believes that because of its religious nature "the Bar Mitzvah must take place on the Sabbath in connection with the Torah reading...Let the ritual remain on the Sabbath where it belongs, and let the party be on Sunday, when the people seem to prefer it."<sup>6</sup> Freehof does give some leeway, but maintains the sanctity of the Saturday Sabbath. He states that only if there is a valid reason for having a Torah reading on Sunday such as Chol Ha-Moed or a New Moon falling on Sunday, should one have a Bar Mitzvah, "but to conduct a Torah reading where no

Torah reading belongs, to recite the blessings of the Torah when none are due (Berocho L'vatolo), merely in order to make the religious service convenient to the social celebration, is to consent to an inversion of values and should not be done."<sup>7</sup>

Another matter Freehof discussed regarding the Sabbath was whether a congregation could hold a business meeting late on Friday evening. Freehof presents the standard opinions with regard to money matters on the Sabbath. He states that contributions are accepted for mitzvot done in connection with the Sabbath but that private matters of a fiscal nature may not even be planned on Sabbath. Public affairs, on the other hand, matters relating to charity and other mitzvot for the community, may be discussed. Freehof then answers the question in terms of the sentiment of the congregation. Because they are not making an effort to meet on a week-day which, in fact, would be difficult for this particular congregation, a congregational meeting on the Sabbath would be permissible. Freehof limits the meeting, however, stating,

it would be better if the meeting were not predominantly financial in mood...Certainly any attempt to keep a written record or to handle money at that meeting [which is definitely prohibited by Jewish law] would shock the religious sentiments of the community and should not be permitted.

8

Questions regarding the Sabbath went as far as to ask about the permissibility of having a Gift Shop open on Friday night under the assumption that it sells religious items and the majority of those who would buy such things might only be in the synagogue on Friday evening. Freehof points out in his response that having a Gift Shop open might be under the same category as holding congregational meetings on Friday night, that is, for the sake of public concerns, it is permissible. In the case of the Gift Shop, Freehof believes that

the providing of prayerbooks; menorahs, candlesticks, and books of Jewish study certainly promotes the observance of our religion. Even the purchase of non-religious objects contributes to the income of Sisterhood and not only makes possible its own work, but helps provide contributions...to the building funds and to general maintenance.

9

Freehof, however, does not leave it at this for there is also the matter of handling money. He believes the Gift Shop may remain open providing that there is a distinction drawn between the manner in which transactions are handled on the Sabbath and other days of the week. "There should be no exchange of money," writes Freehof, "but people may come in to select what they want." Freehof comes to this conclusion stating,

this distinction between the Gift Corner's procedure on the Sabbath and on weekdays would rather tend to strengthen the consciousness of the Sabbath in the lives of our people. It would serve to remind them of the Sabbath traditions and perhaps influence them to do less purchasing in general on the Sabbath, whenever such self-restraint is practical.

10

In terms of permitting a dance to be held on the Sabbath for religious school children, Freehof points to a problem in the traditional discussions on this matter. Whereas it is prohibited to clap hands, dance or slap thighs, the rabbis were hesitant to enforce this law because so many of the people were, in fact, doing these things to enhance the beauty of the Sabbath and it's meaning for them. He points out that the rabbis were afraid to allow for musical instruments since it might necessitate repair, that is, physical labor, should they break. This law also was disregarded. Freehof, in conclusion, relies totally on historic responsa which stress the fact that great numbers of people who act contrary to law will often abolish the law by their actions, and allows for dances to be held on the Sabbath.

11

Freehof takes a guarded position with respect to allowing weddings

to take place late on Saturday evening before the sun sets. Because of a confusion about Daylight Savings Time, the wedding had been arranged for an hour before the sun was to set. Quoting the circumstances surrounding Rabbenu Tam and Moses Isserles, who both were faced with a Sabbath wedding and permitted it, Freehof concludes that since arrangements had been made and it would involve serious problems, the marriage could take place. He adds, however, that it would be best to delay as long as possible and preferably to wait until dark to avoid creating a bad impression before an Orthodox Rabbi, should one be co-officiating.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of the Sabbath, Freehof maintains a conservative attitude, hoping to preserve the dignity and restful nature of the seventh day as according to tradition. It is for the benefit of congregants that he takes these positions in order to instill a feeling for the Sabbath in them. The clergy and the synagogue must set the example for Sabbath observance before the congregants are enjoined to observe the seventh-day.

The matter of Sabbath Guides is one of the most significant because of the very nature of Reform Judaism, especially in the United States. The Reform Movement shied away from listing the correct forms of observance in any area of Jewish ritual, not wishing to present an "orthodox" image, and, because of this, no guide to the observance of specific holidays and festivals was prepared. On the other hand, "the movement shrank only from creating an official code, but did not discourage scholars from creating their individual guides."<sup>13</sup>

After the Conference debated the Sabbath issue, making several proposals centering around the worship aspect of the Sabbath, a long time passed. The Reform rabbis realized that the Sabbath issue may have been settled in terms of the synagogue, but was not gaining in primacy as far



as its other aspects were concerned.

<sup>14</sup>  
In 1937, Rabbi Israel Harburg delivered a paper before the Conference on "[The] Observance of (the) Sabbath" at which time he called upon the Conference "to face courageously the many inevitable obstacles that stand in the way of the Sabbath and in the face of it all see what can still be done to bring the Sabbath spirit within the framework of our present day life."<sup>15</sup> Now this too was the aim of Harburg's predecessors in the Conference who tackled the Sabbath problem, but Harburg pointed out that the early Conference was too preoccupied with Temple attendance and the Sabbath "as if the two were interchangeable or co-extensive."<sup>16</sup> The other themes of the Sabbath were neglected; worship was the overriding concern and it was Harburg's contention that the status of the Sabbath in his generation warranted that "these manifold aspects of the Sabbath should be stressed in our day more than ever."<sup>17</sup> The Jews were uninterested in the synagogue whether services were held on Friday night, Sunday morning or Tuesday afternoon. This, however, did not mean that the rabbis had to lambast their congregants for their "materialism" or "indifference" because their not attending Sabbath services did not necessarily lead to the conclusion that they were worse Jews or that those who were in communal worship were better. On the contrary, "many of those who are most conspicuous by their absence at services are busily engaged in the maintenance of our religious and educational institutions."<sup>18</sup> It is not that Harburg condones non-attendance, for he believes that

without the constant stimulus of Sabbath and Holiday public worship the devotion of these people to their Jewish and humanitarian activities will sooner or later diminish, or even vanish altogether. <sup>19</sup>

What Harburg does believe, however, is that Sabbath observance must be

defined more broadly than merely worship and that "nothing short of a restatement of Liberal Judaism with a re-emphasis of Halacha can save our Jewish spiritual life from disintegration."

20

For Rabbi Harburg it is the principle of mitzvah that modern Jewry must regain in terms of the imperative nature of the mitzvot:

It was a great fallacy on the part of our early liberal leaders when they spoke of all mizvot [sic]...as being customs, traditions, rituals and ceremonies, none of which imply the imperative connotation of the word mizvot...Of all the mizvot there was only one thing which we did stress and that was attendance at Temple services. And now that the appeal of this particular mitzvah [sic] is on the wane, many of us have become alarmed in thinking that the whole of Judaism is on the brink.

21

Not so, says Harburg, provided that Jews come to regard certain aspects of their tradition as commandments that they must obey. Without this, no ceremonies or rituals or rites will gain acceptance since "people will not be inclined to make great sacrifices, or even put up with any inconveniences, for matters which they do not regard to be absolutely imperative."

22

Harburg points out that the Sabbath is the key on which some form of code for Jewish practice can be built in his day. There was no desire for another Shulchan Arukh, but if any need did arise for a code it would be a fruitless enterprise

unless we first concentrate all our efforts on the revitalization of the Sabbath in American Jewish life... We rabbis in Israel (must) devote our major effort now in making our people Sabbath-minded, whether they be synagog [sic] members or not, whether they be worship minded or not.

23

He called upon the Rabbis to be non-parochial in their efforts so as not to repeat the stalemate that resulted from the earlier Conference discussions of the Sabbath question.

Harburg not only chastised the rabbis for failing to note other as-

pects of the Sabbath but also for a dishonest concept of worship attendance:

[Emphasis on worship] has led us to become more or less indifferent as to what our congregation did on the Sabbath so long as they attended our Friday night or Saturday morning services. When many of our people...were seen on the Sabbath at night-clubs, at horse races or at card-games in their homes, we were not deeply grieved over it so long as the attendance at our services was more or less satisfactory. To be candid even many of our rabbis began to regard the Sabbath, outside of the hours of worship, to be nothing more than a day of leisure. 24

Harburg did enumerate what he believed should constitute meaningful Sabbath observance. First he believed the Sabbath to be a "Day for Spiritual Activity". The Jew must, of course, maintain a Sabbath spirit in his home but he must also expand the sacredness of the day to the general community, "not merely by refraining from certain actions but more so by sponsoring various spiritual activities which will produce a Sabbath atmosphere." 25 Community centers should be "wide open" on the Sabbath with all the "Jewish activity that can produce a Sabbath or holiday spirit in the heart of young or old." 26 So, too, the synagogue should be open for longer than the period of time worship services last.

Harburg also called for a major revamping of the notion of worship in order to overcome apathy in this area. He was indeed concerned about worship "which is and should be a major aspect of all Sabbath observance," but understood the rigid structure of contemporary services to undermine that which worship should achieve. Some people attend services to be consoled, others to be enlightened, and still others are not as concerned with the devotional aspect as they are with the teaching aspect. Furthermore, while there are many who do want to join in community celebration of the Sabbath, they are not always eager to be in the synagogue at pre-

cisely the same hour each week. Jews are drawn by very many considerations and the service as it stands meets only the needs of some of the people. Harburg therefore suggests an early and short Kabbalat Shabbat service and a lengthier late Friday evening service, an early Sabbath morning service for businessmen who do want to attend but could not do so in mid-morning, afternoon services, occasional substitutions for the sermon (which "will incidentally help to improve the content of our sermons"), small study-groups, interest groups and even Sisterhood meetings to be held at the Temple or in their homes to "thus add a Sabbath spirit not only to the Temple or to communal institutions, but also to their homes."<sup>27</sup>

Rabbi Harburg also believed that part of the Sabbath problem, that is the problem of disinterest and lack of concern about the Sabbath day, was based in part on the fact that "Temple Judaism has been too much of a one-man's job. It not only overtaxed the rabbis to an inexcusable degree but it also tended to limit the scope of Temple activities."<sup>28</sup> Because Temple activities had to be expanded so, too, personnel, and Harburg saw this possible within the framework of Temple auxiliaries and also in the scope of a viable Sabbath program. He believed that while the congregants were far less educated in Jewish matters than their forbears, Sabbath afternoons could be used to build up the knowledge of those who seek learning. What more appropriate time could be found to gather together those who are interested! Informal, small and active study groups could learn Torah more successfully than by means of the sermon for

those...who conducted adult classes in Bible or in Jewish literature know that these were far more conducive to the creation of kindred spirits among our (people) than all of our exhortation from the

pulpit on religious indifference, or crass materialism or on Jewish ignorance. For in the last analysis the spirituality of a congregation is not to be gauged by the lofty sermons of the rabbi which it can afford to engage, but rather by the spiritual and cultural standards of their own activities which they themselves can carry out.

29

These, in turn, will lead to independent congregants who can lead their own groups, conduct services and relay information and thereby create a more positive mood for themselves and others in terms of Judaism. And all this is possible in the domain of the holiness and the joy of the Sabbath.

What Harburg called the Conference members to do was to re-orient their Sabbath concept only for the preservation and sanctity of that institution which they had resolved to maintain. It may be true that economic considerations were still pressing upon the Jews but not so much that at least part of the Sabbath could be spent in some acts of holiness. Both commandments had to be kept in mind by the rabbis as well as their congregants--"to observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and "to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

If for the present we cannot have a full observance of the Sabbath we may at least strive to have a zecher l'shabos [sic] - a remembrance of the Sabbath, as much as present-day conditions will permit...so that when the time comes, and come it will, when the Sabbath will be as much a day of rest in our country as Sunday is, we will not have to 'construct' or 're-construct' Jewish life as if it were ex nihilo. 30

In this vein he asked Reform Judaism to

apply all the technique of modern education such as forums, seminars, and printed literature to make our people understand as to what we liberal Jews mean by Sabbath observance; as to what we expect of them to do or not to do on the Sabbath day; and above all, we must present to our people in the simplest language the ethical philosophy of Judaism which makes the Sabbath imperative in Jewish life.

31

Perhaps World War II and the problems arising out of the Nazi Holocaust thwarted continued discussion and elaboration on Rabbi Harburg's presentation, nevertheless it was twenty years later, in 1957 that modern Reform Judaism published its first guide.<sup>32</sup>

This guide was based on the principle that it was both incorrect and foolish to assume that Reform Judaism meant that one did not have to observe anything, or that one did not have to be bound by the Law to be a good Jew. On the contrary, "in the past generation, most Reform Jews have come to recognize that a religious movement cannot live on ideology alone, that ideals must be supplemented by practice...The 'deed' leads to the 'creed', the way of 'doing' brings one to the way of 'believing.'" <sup>33</sup>

In addition, the open-ended attitude of early Reform Judaism to customs and ceremonies which it did not dismiss entirely, gave no assistance to the individual Jew who desired to make a decision for himself as to what he would observe. There was no "plan of action," so to speak, and regardless of the motivation which any one Jew may have had, this very real lack of guidance extinguished whatever spark may have existed to observe certain rituals outside of the synagogue. Therefore,

it has since become evident that unbridled individualism in religion can be as destructive to spirituality as laissez-faire individualism has been to democracy. In consequence of this fallacious principle, Reform Judaism has been equated with minimal Judaism in the eyes of many; and to some, being a Reform Jew came to be synonymous with doing nothing about Judaism--all of which tended to sap the strength of Reform as a way of life. <sup>34</sup>

It was therefore felt that some guide be offered, not in terms of an authoritarian Shulchan Arukh, but one which "would help bring a greater degree of observance, self-disciplining commitment and spirituality into our religious life, because it is essentially a response to many who have long been seeking guidance."<sup>35</sup>

The criteria for Reform Jewish observance, or at least the criteria which the authors affirm, reflect the continuing covenant between the Jews and their God as manifest in the history of the Jewish People. Regardless of "denomination" the ties of history to the life of each Jew is unalterable and, as such, demands a response of some kind. It is through observance that the Jew is linked to the Exodus as he is to the Holocaust and

even many of the moments in the life of the individual are intimately related to Israel's historic career. To be sure they are infused with the most intense kind of personal meaning, but they are at the same time bound up with the experiences of the people.

36

The authors admit to an ever-changing emphasis on certain symbols and the historical fact that others have ceased to have any relevance and have consequently been dismissed. Nevertheless, throughout all of Jewish history--yesterday, today, and tomorrow--"there is bound to emerge a compelling symbolism and form of observance which will...capture the essential meaning...(of) the intervention of God in the world, the wrestling of Israel to preserve its being and its soul, and the confrontation of Israel with the world."<sup>37</sup>

Reform Jewish observance must spring from the events of the past and must speak of the modern Jew's connection to the life of his people:

The self-imposed discipline of the observance, to which the Jew submits as a sacred mitzva [sic], thus becomes a symbol of the commitment of his faith and of his people to the unending struggle to enthrone God in the world within the invisible bounds of human history. It is also a sign of the Jew's commitment to the covenant which each generation renews and which each Jew re-enacts in the regimen of Jewish living. By this regimen he not only renews the covenant, but chooses to renew it. He also transcends time and stands with Abraham and our ancestors at Sinai, to play his part in helping perfect the world under the Kingdom of God.

38

The password in this guide is mitzvah. Now while mitzvah is also the central element in "orthodox" observance, Doppelt and Polish sought to imbue it with a different meaning. Mitzvah is not necessarily mandatory because it was the command of God but rather it

is a spiritual entity in itself which immortalizes primarily an historic relationship to God which the Jewish people experienced in the course of its history...It flows from an historically spiritual moment when our people confronted God; and every time we enact the Mitzva, we are re-enacting that spiritual moment of our history in our own times and are renewing it in our own lives as Jews. 39

If an orthodox Jew keeps the Sabbath by complete rest it is because he acknowledges the word of God which has commanded the Sabbath to be so observed, but the authors see the imperative nature of a mitzvah "not because they are Divine fiats but because something happened between God and Israel." 40 Furthermore, they believe the criteria for a mitzvah is not that "we insist that the...Shabbat [for example]...is literally a Divine injunction in the miraculous sense of the term...(but) only inquire whether the Mitzvot we are to keep constitute spiritual moments in Jewish history when the Jewish people came upon God." 41

Mitzvah is primary, and the concept of Halacha is secondary for the authors. Halacha is "the projection of each individual Mitzva into our collective life as a people and into our personal lives as individuals by means of definitive procedures for practicing it." 42 Halachot are important because without them "mitzvot remain suspended in the atmosphere, hovering like souls disembodied, and there remains only an emaciated and emasculated Judaism which cannot long abide." 43 But the halacha is man-made, growing out of the specific conditions of an age by certain individuals who responded to that time in history. As such, when the times changed, the means to bring life into the mitzvot changed by



necessity and it was again rabbis, only mortal men, who "were wont to apply the principle of majority decision" to change the Halachot.<sup>44</sup>

Doppelt and Polish used this concept to point the way to the fact that no specific action can be made mandatory "except by general acceptance and popular observance." Therefore, even the exact mode of carrying out a mitzvah is not as essential as the imperative nature of the mitzvah itself.

The Minhag-concept is also taken into consideration and probably as another device to soften the blow of the guide to those who may object to such a move by Reform Judaism. Minhagim are seen as the "folk-customs and folkways which have their source in the creative activity of the people themselves and not directly in any deliberative and organized body."<sup>45</sup> The customs of a particular group of Jews which developed from their understanding of the observance of a mitzvah are as relevant and compelling as the mitzvah often is itself. This will give autonomy to a congregation or to an individual even as the authors present a guide based on their mitzvah-concept. But, as Doppelt and Polish point out, Mitzvot, Halachot, and Minhagim "flow from the wellsprings of Jewish life and thought, and all of which should find their way into the contents of a Guide for Reform Jewish Practice."<sup>46</sup>

With these points in mind the authors consider Shabbat as "a mitzva to observe...as a sign of Israel's continuous relationship with God, both in our personal lives and in the historical experiences of our people."<sup>47</sup>

In terms of a guide for observance they stress that the "observance of the Shabbat involves more than abstaining from work. This observance should be planned each week to include positive acts which help us to

experience, as did our fathers, the sanctity of this day..."<sup>46</sup> The rabbis who wrote the guide go on to emphasize the importance of the Sabbath meal and the customary candle-lighting, Kiddush, Motzi, and Grace after the meal. The synagogue should be attended by the entire family on both Friday night and Saturday morning "whenever possible" for "this is part of the Jew's responsibility for the preservation of the Shabbat which is one of the bases for the preservation of Judaism." Because of the primacy of worship, social functions should not take place on Friday evenings for this would be "a desecration of the Shabbat and harmful to Judaism." Similarly, all other interests, be they Jewish philanthropy or civic duties, should be relegated to other days of the week and on Shabbat time should be devoted rather to Jewish study, both by the family and individually.

At meals Z'mirot should be sung, a Havdalah ceremony should take place with allocations for charity sometime when the Shabbat is coming to an end.

The Guide written by Doppelt and Polish opened the door to more extensive inquiries into the need to make the Sabbath a more inspiring and meaningful day for the individual and his family. Less than ten years later the Conference again looked at the Sabbath from an official standpoint after a fifty year lapse of time. Our next chapter will delve into the work of the Conference as well as that of a number of individuals who sought to instil beauty into the ancient institution which had been on the wane. New guides were to come out and new approaches to the Sabbath concept were introduced into Reform Judaism.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SABBATH FOR THE SEVENTIES

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut raised the issue of the Sabbath before the Conference in 1965. He deplored the state of the Sabbath in the Reform movement but, more than that, condemned the Conference for constantly begging the Sabbath issue and for discussing Sabbath-related matters that, in fact, had nothing to do with revitalizing its degenerating conditions. "We talked on matters 'surrounding' the Sabbath: attendance at services, Bar and Bat Mitzvah; dances and committee meetings on the Sabbath...But we avoided the Sabbath qua Sabbath...and, since 1937 when our colleague Israel Harburg dealt with the matter, the Sabbath question as such has not appeared on our agenda--not once."<sup>1</sup>

Plaut believed that not only must the Conference come to grips with the Sabbath but must look upon it in a different fashion than did its predecessors. The Sabbath is an old institution for the cultures of the Near East but it is a unique institution for the Jewish people specifically. The Sabbath did not (reflect) one thought over the ages but was a "series of ideas" which developed throughout the history of an ancient folk. The early Conferences looked at the past and took only what they desired; they failed to incorporate the scope of the Sabbath. "We can learn much from our past...but we must not...choose only a part of this past--and the more distant the better--and pretend that it is still normative. Our past is alive, our whole past."<sup>2</sup>

Plaut objected to the concept of Samuel Holdheim, the early German reformer who said that Sabbath could be transferred to another day because it was merely a group of ideas. It was not the Sabbath transfer issue that was under consideration for Plaut for this was no longer a problem in Reform Judaism. It was his contention however, that the ideas of the Sabbath were paramount and these made a people change one day of the week that had no meaning, Yom Hashevii, to one that contained much of the essence of a people, Yom HaShabbat.<sup>3</sup>

The Sabbath for Plaut "encapsules the essence of all of Jewish life: The tension between the universal and the particular, the uniqueness of God's love for Israel joined to His love for all creation." It is manifest in the themes of creation and exodus which are found in the two decalogues of Exodus and Deuteronomy in these "reasons" for the Sabbath we see that the Sabbath "testifies to the divine possibility of joining the existence of the world to the existence of Israel."<sup>4</sup>

Plaut sees another theme, another idea, in the Sabbath. As a reminder of Hebrew slavery in Egypt, there is a social demand to the Sabbath as well where "The slave too deserves consideration, for every man is entitled to the divine dignity of rest."<sup>5</sup>

Rabbi Plaut derives yet a third Sabbath theme from the decalogues. While there is a personal relationship with God that the Sabbath underscores, there is also an element of community obligation. "The Jew who meditates alone or sees God in nature's revelations about him, lacks an essential element in his Sabbath observance. At some time on that day he must, together with others, re-affirm his obligations as a member of the k'lal."<sup>6</sup> The Sabbath, therefore, is not only for the sake of the individual Jew but, just as significant, for the strengthening of his communal ties.

It is the area of mitzvot associated with the Sabbath that Plaut makes a novel contribution in terms of Reform Judaism. The positive and negative commandments associated with the Sabbath have been overlooked by Reform. Plaut contends that even in this area against which the movement has fought for many generations, there is a need to re-evaluate the liberal attitude since the Sabbath has always included things one must "do" and one must "not do" in its observance. Without a return to the mitzvot of the Sabbath, there can never be a true revitalization.

Plaut discusses the history of many of the Sabbath ideas in Reform Judaism before he moves into his own thoughts on the problem. He believes that a major area of concern must be the strengthening of the Sabbath-idea itself as opposed to the worship-idea. While early Reform Judaism struggled with the liturgy, making it shorter, more understandable, and intellectual, they failed to note that their congregants were still not attending services. Plaut believes that the Sabbath itself is what maintains any semblance of worship which all the attempts at modernizing the liturgy may not do. "Make the Sabbath attractive as a precondition for people returning to the services."<sup>7</sup> Similarly, following Harburg's lead in 1937, Plaut believes that permissiveness in Reform Judaism is hampering Sabbath revival. Because the people have respect for the principles which forbid funerals and weddings on the Sabbath, he believes there is an untapped well of Sabbath legislation which the Conference should investigate. He implies that the people cannot show respect for an institution if the clergy does not. On the other hand, lead them to understand the halachic principles of Sabbath observance and many will adopt them in their own lives.

Plaut presents two premises underlying the possibility of success in his endeavor. He believes the concern for the Sabbath must be ongoing.

The Conference and the U.A.H.C. must have a Joint Commission to deal with the Sabbath on a very regular basis. Secondly, the concern must incorporate imagination and relevance for Reform Judaism in the context needs<sup>8</sup> of modern Jewry with "The wealth of past Sabbath treasures."

He deals with the Sabbath issue on the same basis as did Harburg who de-emphasized the synagogue as the sole place for a meaningful Sabbath. Acknowledging that some people cannot attend Friday evening services, Rabbi Plaut insists that the home has been neglected not by the individual Jew, but by the Conference and the U.A.H.C. He attributes it to a selfish attitude that gives primacy to the synagogue and it's Rabbi, and the attitude that the Reform Jewish family would not have a home service of any import were one to be written for them. Plaut wants this to change. He recommends a Sabbath Book for the home that is complete with songs, stories and prayers for a thorough Sabbath experience for Friday night. We must "cease considering Judaism a Temple activity," says Plaut, and bring it into the wider world as we have done in such areas<sup>9</sup> as social action.

Plaut's major concern was to adopt a manual for the observance of Shabbat, something that would inform Reform Jews of the halachic nature of the Sabbath and how it can be truly sanctified by positive and negative commandments that could speak to us in our own time and age. It would not necessarily be one based on a definite theology for "we only need to agree that in our opinion this ought, and this ought not, to be done."<sup>10</sup> This manual would be based on the premise that the Reform Jewish Community wants guidance in the celebration of Shabbat in order to renew its influence upon their lives and those of their children. It is also based on the premise that rabbis have a sense of obligation or

mitzvah which they instill in their confirmands who must attend worship services before their Confirmation. "Why," Plaut asks, "not tackle your not so defenseless confirmation parents or your boards of trustees" with the proposition that Judaism entails certain obligations?<sup>11</sup>

In 1965 Rabbi Plaut recommended an ongoing committee to deal with the Sabbath question. In 1966, at the Conference's convention, it presented its first report wherein it stated that the people would be the first consulted as to the potential of a Sabbath revitalization program. Over the next year there would be a pilot project of ten groups over the country. "Small havurot of carefully selected congregational members of varying age groupings, varying interests, and varying degrees of observance, and non-observance, will sit down with us for one year and think about the Sabbath."<sup>12</sup>

At the following convention, the Committee presented its results. There were five conclusions reached with regard to the Sabbath that would guide the Committee in the writing of the manual. It was found that the people tested had some cognizance of Friday night "but that no observance, or hardly any, characterized the day proper. The later functioned primarily as a non-school weekday."<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, there was some Sabbath observance at home even though worship services were rarely attended. They complained that they did not have enough materials or guidance on hand to give such family celebrations more content.<sup>14</sup> The rabbi was influential in terms of ritual attitude for "where the rabbi was known to be more observant in a ritual sense, this had some influence on the attitude, if not the actions, of the members. Where the rabbi was non-ritualistic, members both in attitude and practice would follow the rabbi's example."<sup>15</sup> And, as Rabbi Plaut significantly points out, "this may give us some hint as to the role which rabbinic leadership

will have to play in this area." <sup>16</sup> Plaut makes clear that guidance is desired on the part of the congregational members, not only ideas from the pulpit but "day-to-day guidance in their personal lives which they felt the Reform movement singularly lacks." <sup>17</sup> But the people were adamant as well in the principle of autonomy and Rabbi Plaut made quite clear that any Shabbat Manual would "not surrender individual choice...It will make possible for a Reform Jew to take either all or only a portion of the suggested procedures and observances and make them his own, to achieve habituation and, we hope, ultimate commitment." <sup>18</sup>

The determination of the Committee was quite evident in their progress. <sup>19</sup> In 1968 they discussed the format and contents of the Manual, and in 1969 stated that the principal theme of the project is that "it is a Manual, that is, a handle; it contains information, it presents opportunities, and at its core stands a Guide." <sup>20</sup>

In the Shabbat Manual Plaut discusses the relationship between the Sabbath and the Reform movement. He states that there has been a growing interest in much of the ritual that Reform Judaism had discarded, especially relating to the Sabbath and points to a number of specific reasons. Because of the events of the past thirty years, Nazism and the destruction of a large percentage of Jewry in Europe, Jews have developed a sensitivity to the theme of peoplehood and personal obligation with a re-emphasis on the mitzvah-concept. Similarly, economic conditions have changed and our concept of "work" and "rest" have consequently been in a state of flux. <sup>21</sup>

The manual discusses five major purposes of Sabbath observance which have developed from the Jewish past and which continue to have relevance for the modern Jew. The Shabbat affords us the opportunity



of having an awareness of the world, "the marvel of the universe which God has created."<sup>22</sup> Because of the unique relationship between the Jews and their God, Shabbat speaks of a regard for human dignity. The Jews were slaves and therefore "so must we strive to help all who suffer from every form of bondage and degradation in the world."<sup>23</sup> There is also the theme of the identity with the Jewish People in that Shabbat "calls upon each Jew to help further the high and noble purposes of the covenantal community and to use the precious hours...to deepen the unique historic fellowship of the Jewish people."<sup>24</sup> But Shabbat also is for the individual and another purpose of it's observance is the enhancement of the person through Kedushah (holiness), Menuchah (rest), and Oneg (joy). The spirit of Kedushah separates Shabbat from the other six days "so that those who observe it become transformed by its holiness."<sup>25</sup> The rest, or Menuchah, of Shabbat is "more than relaxation and abstinence from work. It is a condition of the soul, a physical and spiritual release from weekday pressures which results in serenity."<sup>26</sup> The Oneg of the Sabbath, or it's joy, "enhances our personal life and leaves us truly enriched for the week ahead."<sup>27</sup> The fifth purpose of Shabbat observance is a dedication to peace. Peace is the mood of the day in order to teach "its centrality in the Jew's hope for the world today and for the future."<sup>28</sup>

An entire section of the Manual deals with the question of mitzvot in relation to Shabbat observance. Plaut believed, as did Harburg, in the significance of commandments even for Reform Judaism which had virtually eliminated the concept from the matter of ritual. Plaut revives the mitzvah-concept, stating that it "is that which a Jew ought to do in response to his God and to the tradition of his people," not

because of a direct theological obligation but from "personal commitment."<sup>29</sup>

In terms of specific mitzvot relating to Shabbat and their particular meaning, Plaut uses the traditional two-fold division of mitzvot asseh, mitzvot of doing, and mitzvot lo ta'aseh, mitzvot of abstaining. Also, he divides Shabbat into Friday evening and the Sabbath day itself, emphasizing that a Shabbat experience must include a twenty-four hour period and cannot, as has happened in the past, have everything occur solely on erev Shabbat. The Sabbath day has too much potential to neglect and, perhaps, its desecrated state resulted from undo emphasis on Friday evening worship. The home is the place where a Shabbat atmosphere must germinate and the mitzvot begin by having the entire family prepare for--and celebrate Shabbat together. This would include cleaning the house, setting a festive table with flowers, dressing appropriately and "inviting a Shabbat guest for dinner."<sup>30</sup> "Dinner togetherness" is significant but there are special mitzvot associated with a distinctly Shabbat dinner that should be performed. The candles should be lit at home, even though they also may be lit at the synagogue, the Kiddush should be recited or changed as well as the blessings before and after the meal. Regardless of what ritual occurs in the synagogue, the customary Shabbat observances should be carried out at home. This is not to say that the synagogue has lost its significance for Plaut. He states it is a mitzvah "to join the congregation in worship," but Reform Judaism must again<sup>31</sup> emphasize the beauty and significance of family Shabbat observances.

There are mitzvot asseh associated with the Sabbath day as well, based on "the traditional principles of Torah (study), Avodah (worship), and Gemilut Hasadim (acts of social concern)."<sup>32</sup> Again, communal worship is one of these for the Torah is read and there should be a learning ex-

perience from the explanations of the scriptural readings. So communal worship on the Sabbath day involves the mitzvot of Torah and Avodah together. During the afternoon the individual and his family can perform acts of social concern, Gemilut Hasadim, by "rest; visit to friends; visit to shut-ins or the sick; engaging in Jewish or general communal activities which promote the welfare of the community; cultural activities."<sup>33</sup> While some of these activities might be questioned as to their strictly Shabbat nature, the manual notes that "special care should be taken to conduct oneself in such a manner and to participate in such activities as will enhance the distinctive Shabbat qualities of Kedushah, Menuchah, and Oneg"<sup>34</sup> discussed before. At the end of Shabbat "it is a mitzvah to recite Havdalah," the ceremony which bids the Sabbath farewell.<sup>35</sup>

The mitzvot asseh, or the positive commandments concerning the Sabbath, have never really created much of a problem. It is the mitzvot lo ta' asseh which perhaps could lead to crisis in terms of Reform Jewish thinking. Since Reform Judaism has expressed the religion as being the only element of Judaism that differentiates Jews from their neighbors, and has constantly emphasized autonomy, the idea of abstinence may be abhorrant. The manual, however, takes cognizance of this and states "the Shabbat is truly celebrated and enjoyed both by doing and by not doing. We do those things which express and affirm the spirit and the values of Shabbat. We refrain from doing those things which contradict the spirit and the values of Shabbat."<sup>36</sup> One should not "engage in gainful work on Shabbat," one should abstain from housework, refrain from shopping and not "participate in a social event during Shabbat worship hours," nor "schedule or participate in a public event during

Shabbat worship hours."<sup>37</sup> These negative commandments may pose a hardship for some, but as the manual points out, the spirit of holiness, rest and joy of the Sabbath must be preserved and for those who are truly interested in guidance in the proper observance of Shabbat, the mitzvot lo ta'aseh are as integral as the mitzvot asseh.

The manual for Shabbat observance includes more than just a guide. It is a handbook containing prayers for the meal (before and after), songs for the family, Biblical and rabbinic legislation on the Sabbath, and material from the vast literature that has developed on this central institution in Judaism, including poetry, midrash, short stories, responsa, and a guide to weekly Torah and Haftarah readings for those who desire to use Shabbat for the study of the sedra. It is a manual which is designed to be used as much or as little as the individual and his family desires. As its preface reads: "We can only begin where we are. Each individual and each family will decide where and how to begin and what and how much to do to make the Shabbat an essential element in the rhythm of life...The use of the following pages now depends on you."<sup>38</sup>

The Shabbat manual alluded to changing concepts of the Sabbath due to a change in the basic notions of "work" and "rest" in contemporary society. Because of decreasing hours of work and the restlessness resulting from it, the Sabbath day can no longer be seen as exclusively the day of rest. If Saturday is such a day, what about Sunday, or Friday, days on which many find that they are not working because of a four or a five-day work-week? It is a changing economic picture that may influence the Sabbath-concept for the future, and not any concerted effort on the part of organized Reform Judaism, or Judaism in general. As Dr. Norman B. Mirsky writes, "no discussion of the Shabbat, no pre-

scription for its restoration to primacy among Jewish holy days can take place without our attempting to examine that which the Shabbat is supposed to stand in contrast to, namely 'work.' For just as the Shabbat is more than the sum total of the rituals performed on the seventh day, so is work more than the time spent on a job."<sup>39</sup> In the State of Israel, where there is still a six-day work week, the Sabbath is the day of rest in addition to any other concept attached to it. This has changed to a considerable degree in America, however, where the entire weekend may be work-free or the type of work may involve mental labor rather than physical labor. This situation also leads to a changing concept of work since challenging mental employment might be a pleasure for the individual and the old idea of the dreariness of work is giving way as labor patterns change.

At the present, Dr. Mirsky points out, Americans, especially Jews, are in a state of flux. Despite the changing attitude toward work which is evolving, the Protestant ethic and, in turn, the American way-of-life is still entrenched in American thinking. While our ancestors who enjoyed the Sabbath in the ghettos regarded work as a very necessary evil, their sons and grandsons who emigrated to America found that work was essential, that "it was a way of proving one's virility" in their new home and that hard work was elevated to "mitzvah status."<sup>40</sup> What was to happen with the Sabbath concept? "For the majority of Jewish immigrants the question of the Shabbat was whether to keep it on Saturday or not at all."<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the status of work changed "from being merely a burdensome source of money to spend in one's leisure time. [Now] work itself is the objective of working. It is the organising principle in a man's life."<sup>42</sup>

Dr. Mirsky states that there is the possibility of a renewed in-

terest in Shabbat in contemporary America. As he states "one trend is the willingness of a small but significant group of Jews to observe the Shabbat in a way clearly different from an ordinary day off."<sup>43</sup> Because of a renewed sense of Jewishness or a concern arising from Jewish interest in the State of Israel, the once-deteriorating condition of the Sabbath is being altered to regain significance. Secondly, the concept of work is indeed changing, although slowly, and because of automation and a basic technological revolution "the concept of pray is returning to the realm of adult human possibility for the first time since civilization took Adam from the Garden."<sup>44</sup> Pointing to the "hippie" phenomenon as indicative of perhaps an extreme form of the coming significance of play, Mirsky states that "true freedom is the freedom to play, to invest one's libidinal energy not in that which has to be done but what ought to be, will be, freedom itself, the freedom to play."<sup>45</sup> In these contexts Shabbat may again become a viable institution for American Jews, both in terms of its adaptability to be a vehicle for Jewish expression and, perhaps more significantly, its potential meaning as the forerunner of a revised work-rest concept stemming from the latest technological revolution in America.

This latter theme has been developed by Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut in a lecture entitled "The Sabbath as Protest."<sup>46</sup> The nature of "work" and "rest" has changed, as has been indicated, but while work is becoming less of the ideal it had been over the centuries and leisure is developing into a sought-after goal, "idleness appears...when it is achieved, often as (life's) greatest threat."<sup>47</sup> We are not accustomed to the many "free" hours we are receiving and, as a result, we may be affected adversely by this new freedom. It is here that the Sabbath may play a

very crucial role. Plaut explains the traditional Sabbath ideas, stating that "the Sabbath becomes God's time," signifying the creation of the universe and His role in the exodus from Egypt.<sup>48</sup> The institution then developed into a "social time devoted to the liberation of every man from the fetters of work."<sup>49</sup> But regardless of its meaning the Sabbath was never a burden, "at least not in those days when work and rest still meant what since biblical times they had meant. Only when the cultural environment...changed to such a degree that labor and idleness, leisure and work, assumed different meanings, only then were the ancient categories of the Talmud first drawn into question and then largely abandoned by the multitude of the Jewish people."<sup>50</sup> A change of social and economic conditions that critically affect a people will lead to a change in concept of an institution that has in its essential structure the older social and economic order. Thus, Plaut says, "people will return when the Sabbath and what it means become important to them, not the other way around. And in our day the Sabbath cannot become important to people until it has been radically restructured, its foundations re-examined and its opportunities thoroughly reassessed in the modern context...A new Sabbath observance must begin with real and realistic relationships, with people where they presently are in their daily lives."<sup>51</sup>

People, as we have stated, are currently in a quandary, having a large amount of free time coupled with the attitude that work, rather labor, need not take up those spare hours. But there is a desire to use free-time creatively. Plaut states that herein lies the potential for a renewed Sabbath based on the old ideas of rest and sanctification. "We still need rest, but not primarily from work. Rather, we need rest

from unrest. We do need sanctification in our lives and particularly a sanctification of freedom, the cry for which is urgent in our time."<sup>52</sup>

There is also a need to link rest and sanctification with the Sabbath day although many would believe that such an organized and methodical connection is unnecessary in our time. "Experience teaches that while occasional and intuitive actions are in fact often more authentic religious responses than the regular and patterned practices of traditional religion, the former will tend to occur so rarely that their effect on one's life becomes negligible. The repetitive occurrence of the Sabbath is more likely to encourage rest and sanctification than the once-in-a-while, whenever-it-may-be spontaneity which sounds ideal and turns out to be Utopian."<sup>53</sup>

In terms of "rest from unrest" the modern Jew (and non-Jew) finds himself in a situation where he no longer is that concerned about the basic necessity of physical survival. In ages when the life-span was short and the individual was constantly faced with disease, famine and the like, his goals were established for him. Today, however, this is not a problem for although man is still destined to die his life goes on without wondering if he will be able to feed himself and his family the next day. "The problem is that we no longer know what the problem is. We no longer know what life's physical goal might be or even if there is one altogether. Further,...few men are sure what life's spiritual goals are. So they talk of happiness or use similar empty phrases with which to cover their aimlessness."<sup>54</sup> This is magnified by "the ever-increasing infantilization of our culture" where we do not wish to wait for attaining or obtaining what we want. While it is the youth who are expressing this the most, it is a characteristic of the future for all.



We want something now and "the moment now is experienced another now is at hand. Thus now becomes never, and never is the feeding place of restlessness."<sup>55</sup>

The Sabbath should lend itself to this problem, as Plaut views it. "[The Sabbath] is potentially an enormous relief from, and a protest against, these basic causes of unrest...It provides us with an opportunity to address ourselves to the who-ness rather than the what-ness of life, to persons rather than things, to creation and our part in it, to society and its needs, to ourselves as individuals and yet as social beings."<sup>56</sup>

The Sabbath also should act in alleviating the situation of endless competition. While we do compete for livelihood out of necessity, our competition often goes far beyond this and "the end is never quite defined. Our culture asks us to acquire and acquire ever more, but we are never told when we will have enough."<sup>57</sup> Man recognizes that there must be an end to this and can use the Sabbath as a chance to protest. "We must once again understand that doing nothing, being silent and open to the world, letting things happen inside, can be as important as, and sometimes more important than, what we commonly call the useful...What we need now is a purposive uselessness, an activity (or non-activity) which is important in that it becomes an essential protest against that basic unrest which comes from competition without end."<sup>58</sup> The Sabbath should not be a time for going to the hairdresser or to classes for all these are forms of competition, and not "self-improvement" or self-advancement."<sup>59</sup>

The Sabbath is a time for sanctification, "The sanctification of freedom." The time spent doing nothing should not just be free-time but sanctified free time since there will certainly be other free moments

during the week when men will engage in useless activities. Similarly, the "sanctification of freedom...has to do with that hope which attempts to make possible what is apparently impossible."<sup>60</sup> As a moment of reflection on man's capabilities, on his relationship with God and his own smallness, the Sabbath is "a truly sanctified segment of hope which lights up the dark horizon of pessimism. It is not only useless time, but non-rational time...(to be distinguished from irrational)."<sup>61</sup> This is not an easy task for modern man. He who spends his working moments in concrete action, in imagination and creativity may not feel this is a category of "labor" which puts strains on his physical existence. On the other hand, the ability to pull on the reins of one's creativity, regardless how strenuous-less it is, is an act of freedom. "To celebrate [the Sabbath] let a man do those things which liberate him from the ordinary and give him areas of free decision, of doing for himself and for others those things he wills to do rather than those which he must do; where he indulges in recreation both sacred and other which will help him to escape from the oppression of our civilization."<sup>62</sup> The Sabbath has always been the means for rejuvenation, both physical and emotional, and regardless of the social or economic conditions of the time, the emphases upon work or upon rest, man's needs do not change that drastically. Therefore the Sabbath can continue functioning in a similar manner as it has for generations even though specific observances and rituals may, indeed have to be altered.

A similar view is held by Dr. Alvin J. Reines of Hebrew Union College. He states that the Sabbath as expressed in the Union Prayer Book "is essentially a 'day,' a temporal and physical occasion, whose special significance is revealed to us in explicit 'commandments,' in obedience to which certain kinds of activities are to be pursued or

avoided."<sup>63</sup> Reform Judaism, however, has "officially" denied the premises of such a Sabbath in much of its theology yet maintains it in its own prayerbook, which for Reines is at the least problematical. In essence then Reform Judaism, according to Reines, adopted "the Orthodox common symbolism [as] the general model for [its] symbolism."<sup>64</sup>

This adoption of "orthodox" symbolism has led to the degeneration of the Sabbath, an institution which is often used as the measure of Reform symbolism in general. Similarly "festivals placed by the Jewish calendar into a routine, working day of the civil calendar cannot long overcome its destructive resistance...Hence, the Sabbath of traditional essentialism, a festival of fundamental importance, could not surmount the fact that Saturday, in the civil calendar, is an important commercial day...The 'seventh day' can hardly serve as a symbol that evokes a mood of deep spiritual peace when the total environment uses that self-same day as a symbol that incites to feverish pursuit of mundane goals."<sup>65</sup>

Reines believes that the answer must come from a change of Reform symbolism. Orthodox, or traditional, symbolism cannot yield a meaningful Sabbath experience because "symbolism can only flourish when it exists in an organic unity with its environment...The potent symbol must be rooted in the authentic ground of man, the economic, social, and educational matrix from which his existence emerges and on which his life lies embedded."<sup>66</sup> The necessity is for the Sabbath to be lifted from the seventh day, Saturday, if this will enable the Sabbath concept to have true significance for the individual. Being encompassed by economic and social conditions that make Saturday yet another weekday cannot evoke a meaningful Sabbath. "Shabbat will be conceived of as a

state of being and thus freed of its necessary connection with the 'seventh day.' The Shabbat will enjoy multiple causation: for some, the 'seventh day' will bring about Shabbat; for others a deeply personal measurement of time."<sup>67</sup> This would be in keeping with Reform symbolism as Reines envisages it, since "it is the sacred task of the Reform Jewish leadership not to propose any symbolism other than that which compels assent by its intrinsic value alone."<sup>68</sup> Thus, a future Sabbath concept for Reform Judaism must abandon its orthodox symbolism and remain open to the individual. Regardless of the day, the hour, or the moment, the Sabbath as a state of being can have relevance for the Jew unencumbered by old symbolism or the mundane pursuits of a weekday-like Saturday.

What, then, is the future of the Sabbath? One could barely make predictions about the outcome of the early controversies. It appeared that the deathknell rang for the Sabbath many times in the last one hundred years and yet in 1972, it is still the subject of detailed thought and concern. Sabbath services, while they are not always well attended, continue and new and creative liturgies have developed around the Sabbath. The old and the young seem to share some feelings about the Sabbath day or the Sabbath idea, and while they may be miles apart in their attitude toward the traditional Sabbath prayers of the Reform movement, there is always an attempt to make the Sabbath speak to them on a personal level.

Perhaps it is the economic and social picture of the future that will mold a viable Sabbath. It certainly appears that economics did indeed have a very influential part in the Sabbath concepts of the past. A more detailed analysis of certain periods in American economic history might indeed show that "religious" concerns about the day of

rest were molded more by inflations, depressions or stability than by strictly philosophical or theological considerations. This would have to be further investigated. In any case, with the probability of a shorter work-week and more free time, the need for a meaningful Sabbath is evident. Just as extremely hard labor and the uncertainty of tomorrow led the Jews of the past to see the Sabbath day as a taste of what the Messianic era would be like, so, too, leisure and less strenuous work might shape a Sabbath-concept that also, of necessity, has theological implications expressive of mankind in the 21st century. But the continuing dialogue between Reform Judaism and this ancient institution does show that the Sabbath is a phenomenon with which modern man, the future Jew, will have to contend.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1

David Philipson, The Reform Movement in Judaism, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1907), p. 275.

2

Ibid., p. 218; p. 261. At the conferences in Brunswick and Frankfurt the Sabbath question was merely introduced. It was realized that a Commission was necessary to adequately cover the gamut of the problem. This was left for the conference in Breslau.

3

Ibid... p. 219.

4

Ibid... p. 219.

5

Ibid... p. 277.

6

Ibid... p. 278.

7

Ibid... p. 284.

8

Ibid... p. 286.

9

Ibid... pp. 292-293.

10

W. Gunther Plaut, The Rise of Reform Judaism, (New York: The World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1963), p. 190.

11

Ibid... p. 191.

12

Philipson, p. 289.

13

Plaut, p. 191.

14

Ibid... p. 192.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER I (CONTINUED)

15

Philipson, p. 293.

16

Plaut, p. 193.

17

Ibid., p. 195.

18

Philipson, p. 300.

19

Ibid., p. 301.

20

Ibid., pp. 504-505.

21

Lefkovits, Maurice, [Memorial address on 100th anniversary of the birth of Samuel Hirsch], C.C.A.R. Yearbook, XXV (1915), p. 182.

22

Emil G. Hirsch, "The Crossing of the Jordan," My Religion, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1925), p. 358.

23

Emil G. Hirsch, [address], Report of the Services in Commemoration of Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Introduction of Sunday Services in Chicago Sinai Congregation, January 15, 1899, (Chicago: Press of S. Ettlinger Printing Co., 1899), p. 12.

24

Ibid., p. 13.

25

The American Israelite, March 24, 1898, p. 4. Wise's attitude toward the Sabbath will be dealt with in the coming chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

- 1  
Isaac M. Wise, Reminiscences, ed. David Philipson (Cincinnati: Leo Wise and Co., 1901), p. 71.
- 2  
Ibid., p. 73.
- 3  
The Israelite, November 5, 1858, p. 140.
- 4  
Wise, p. 73.
- 5  
Ibid., p. 157.
- 6  
The Israelite, p. 140.
- 7  
The Israelite, May 21, 1875, p. 4.
- 8  
Ibid., p. 5.
- 9  
The Israelite, November 5, 1858, p. 140.
- 10  
The Israelite, March 3, 1876, p. 4.
- 11  
The Israelite, August 6, 1875, pp. 4-5.
- 12  
The Israelite, January 30, 1880, p. 4.
- 13  
The Israelite, May 14, 1875, p. 4.
- 14  
The Israelite, August 20, 1875, pp. 4-5.
- 15  
The Israelite, July 9, 1875, p. 4.



## NOTES TO CHAPTER II (CONTINUED)

- 16  
The Israelite, August 13, 1875, p. 5.
- 17  
The Israelite, February 14, 1873, p. 4.
- 18  
The Israelite, January 8, 1858, p. 212.
- 19  
The Israelite, April 21, 1876, p. 4.
- 20  
The Israelite, October 28, 1859, p. 132.
- 21  
Ibid., p. 132.
- 22  
The Israelite, March 21, 1879, p. 4.
- 23  
The Israelite, October 13, 1871, p. 9.
- 24  
The Israelite, July 4, 1879, p. 4.
- 25  
The Israelite, April 22, 1887, p. 4.
- 26  
The Israelite, December 30, 1897, p. 4. The Conference did indeed look into the question of the Sabbath as will be discussed later. They began to deal with the problem after Dr. Wise's death and the Sunday Sabbath transfer was to be an integral part of the debates. ...
- 27  
The Israelite, August 6, 1886, p. 4.
- 28  
The Israelite, September 24, 1875, p. 4.
- 29  
The Israelite, December 2, 1859, p. 172.
- 30  
Allan Tarshish, "Permanent Contributions of I.M. Wise," C.C.A.R. Yearbook, LII (1942), p. 336.
- 31  
The Israelite, August 8, 1879, p. 4.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER II (CONTINUED)

32

The Israelite, May 30, 1879, p. 4.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

- 1  
Kaufmann Kohler, "The Sabbath Day of the Jew," The Menorah Journal,  
XI (September, 1891), p. 151.
- 2  
Kaufmann Kohler, "Jewish Reform," offprint from. Inter-Ocean,  
(August 22, 1873), pp. 3-4.
- 3  
Ibid., p. 4.
- 4  
Ibid. p. 5.
- 5  
Ibid., p. 5.
- 6  
Ibid., pp. 5-6.
- 7  
Ibid., p. 6.
- 8  
Ibid. p. 8.
9.  
Kohler, "The Sabbath Day....," p. 151.
- 10  
Kohler, "Jewish Reform," p. 2.
- 11  
Ibid., p. 2.
- 12  
Ibid., p. 3.
- 13  
Kohler, "The Sabbath Day....," p. 152.
- 14  
Ibid. p. 152.
- 15  
K[aufmann] Kohler, "Sabbath Observance and Sunday Lectures," [a ser-

## NOTES TO CHAPTER III (CONTINUED)

mon delibered on December 27, 1879 in Temple Beth-El of New York City,  
(New York: Steam Printing Office of the H.O.A. Industrial School, 1880),  
p. 6.

16

Ibid., p. 5.

17

Kohler, "The Sabbath Day...", p. 152.

18

Ibid., p. 153.

19

Kohler, "Sabbath Observance...", p. 6.

20

Ibid., p. 4.

21

Ibid., p. 5.

22

Kohler, "The Sabbath Day...", p. 155.

23

Kaufmann Kohler, "Sermon," Report of the Services in Commemoration of Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Introduction of Sunday Services in Chicago Sinai Congregation, January 15, 1899, (Chicago: Press of S. Ettlinger Printing Co., 1899), pp. 15-16. "Das neue Wissen..." was the motto of the day taken from Dr. Kohler's Inaugural Sermon of the same name.

24

Kohler, "The Sabbath Day...", pp. 156-157.

25

Ibid., p. 157.

26

Ibid., p. 157.

27

Ibid., p. 158.

28

Ibid., p. 159.

29

Kohler, "Sabbath Observance...", p. 4.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER III (CONTINUED)

30

Ibid., p. 5.

31

Ibid., p. 5.

32

Ibid., p. 6.

33

Ibid., p. 7.

34

Kohler, "The Sabbath Day...", p. 159.

35

Kaufmann Kohler, "Rocks Ahead," The Menorah Journal XI (November, 1891), p. 287.

36

Kaufmann Kohler, [Floor debate on Sabbath Question] C.C.A.R. Year-book, XV (1905), p. 62.

37

An article written in response to Mr. Eugene Cohn, a despondent follower of Kohler's Sunday-Sabbath position, who wrote in anger over Kohler's policy change. (cf. Kohler, "Rocks Ahead").

38

In 1892, 1898, and 1907 Kohler questioned the value of the Sunday-Sabbath and challenged the C.C.A.R. to make the traditional Sabbath viable for the times.

39

Eugene Cohn, "The Sabbath Day of the Jew, An Answer to the Rev. Dr. Kohler," The Menorah Journal XI (November, 1891), p. 277.

40

Ibid., p. 283.

41

Kohler, "Rocks Ahead," p. 285.

42

Ibid., p. 287.

43

Ibid., p. 287.

44

Ibid., p. 288.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER III (CONTINUED)

45

Ibid., p. 292.

46

Kohler, "Chicago Sinai Congregation," pp. 16-17.

47

Ibid., p. 17.

48

Ibid., pp. 17-18.

49

Ibid., p. 21.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

- 1  
Kaufmann Kohler, "Is Judaism Destructive or Constructive?", C.C.A.R. Yearbook, III (1892), pp. 111-112
- 2  
Joseph Silverman, [Floor debate], C.C.A.R. Yearbook, III (1892), p. 41.
- 3  
Emil G. Hirsch, "The Philosophy of the Reform Movement in American Judaism," C.C.A.R. Yearbook, V (1895), pp. 109-110.
- 4  
Israel Aaron, "Our Shifting Attitudes," C.C.A.R. Yearbook, VI (1896), pp. 97-98.
- 5  
Kaufmann Kohler, "A United Israel," C.C.A.R. Yearbook, VIII (1898), pp. 85-86.
- 6  
S[olomon H.] Sonneschein, "Judaism and its Religious Development in the Nineteenth Century," C.C.A.R. Yearbook, XI (1901), p. 115.
- 7  
G. A. Rubenstein [commenting on Rabbi Sonneschein's remarks, Ibid.] Ibid., p. 118.
- 8  
Jacob Voorsanger, "The Sabbath Question," C.C.A.R. Yearbook, XII (1902), p. 103.
- 9  
Ibid... p. 104.
- 10  
Ibid... pp. 104-105.
- 11  
Ibid... pp. 105-106.
- 12  
Ibid... p. 106.
- 13  
Ibid... p. 107.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER IV (CONTINUED)

14

Ibid., p. 107.

15

Ibid., pp. 108-109.

16

Ibid., p. 110.

17

Ibid., p. 111.

18

Ibid., p. 111-112.

19

Ibid., p. 113.

20

Ibid., p. 114.

21

Ibid., p. 115.

22

Ibid., p. 116.

23

Ibid., p. 117.

24

Ibid., p. 118.

25

Ibid., p. 119.

26

Ibid., pp. 119-120.

27

Ibid., p. 120.

28

Ibid., p. 121.

29

Jacob Voorsanger, [Closing remarks following discussion of his paper, Ibid.], Ibid., pp. 149-150.

30

Rabbi Voorsanger served as chairman with the following rabbis on the Commission: Sale (St. Louis), Heller (New Orleans), Deutsch



## NOTES TO CHAPTER IV (CONTINUED)

(Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College), Sonneschein (Des Moines), Harrison (St. Louis), Enelow (Louisville). Only Voorsanger, Sonneschein and Enelow responded to the assignment.

31

Jacob Voorsanger, [Correspondence to Commission members] C.C.A.R. Yearbook, XIII (1903), p. 141.

32

Ibid., p. 144.

33

S. H. Sonneschein, [Opinion on Question number one, regarding an official position on the Sabbath], Ibid., p. 147.

34

Ibid., p. 148.

35

Jacob Voorsanger, [Opinion on Question number three regarding "spiritual authority" of the Conference], Ibid., p. 149.

36

Ibid., p. 149.

37

Ibid., p. 151.

38

Ibid., p. 152.

39

Ibid., pp. 154-155. The plan consisted of an organization on the State level composed of the rabbis, presidents and three representatives of each congregation of the State to discuss local and communal administration. Each state conference would elect two rabbis and three laymen to a National Organization. At the meeting of this group, they would be divided between the clergy and the laymen, the Conference and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The Conference representatives would discuss and pass upon matters concerning religion and discipline; the U.A.H.C. would deal with education and administration. Both would submit their conclusions to be voted on by the joint organization. There would be nine laymen and six rabbis composing an Executive Council, the "center of all religious and administrative unity of American Jewish Congregations." All other Jewish organizations could affiliate and meet at the same time, "without disturbing the autonomy of any one of them," to report to one central agency.

40

Sonneschein, [opinion...], p. 147.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER IV (CONTINUED)

- 41  
H.G. Enelow, [opinion on Sabbath problem], Ibid., p. 157.
- 42  
Ibid., p. 158.
- 43  
Ibid., p. 158.
- 44  
Ibid., p. 160.
- 45  
Ibid., p. 161.
- 46  
Ibid., p. 161.
- 47  
Ibid., p. 163.
- 48  
Ibid., p. 165.
- 49  
Ibid., p. 167.
- 50  
Ibid., p. 168.
- 51  
Joseph Silverman, [Floor debate on report of Sabbath Commission], Ibid., p. 79.
- 52  
Ibid., p. 99.
- 53  
Ibid., p. 100.
- 54  
Joseph Krauskopf, [Presidential message], C.C.A.R. Yearbook, XV (1905), p. 195.
- 55  
Central Conference of American Rabbis, [Proceedings of 1904 Convention], C.C.A.R. Yearbook, XIV (1904), p. 97.
- 56  
Joseph Silverman, [Report of the Sabbath Commission], C.C.A.R. Yearbook, XV (1905), pp. 60-61.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER IV (CONTINUED)

- 57 David Philipson, [Floor debate on Sabbath Commission report], Ibid., p. 64.
- 58 H.G. Enelow, [Floor debate on Sabbath Commission report], Ibid., p. 65.
- 59 Samuel Schulman, [Floor debate on Sabbath Commission report], Ibid., pp. 73-74.
- 60 Central Conference of American Rabbis, [Proceedings of 1905 Convention], Ibid., p. 76.
- 61 David Philipson, Ibid., p. 77.
- 62 Isaac Moses, Ibid., p. 114.
- 63 Joseph Krauskopf, [Presidential Message], Ibid., p. 197.
- 64 The other members of the Commission were Rabbis E. G. Hirsch, C.A. Rubenstein, Leo M. Franklin, Samuel Hirshberg, M.L. Heller, Joseph Krauskopf, and Samuel Sale.
- 65 H. G. Enelow, "The Influence of the Sunday Service," C.C.A.R. Yearbook, XVI (1906), p. 87.
- 66 Ibid., p. 88.
- 67 Ibid., pp. 88-89.
- 68 Ibid., p. 90.
- 69 Ibid., p. 91.
- 70 Ibid., pp. 112-113.
- 71 Isador C. Philo, Ibid., p. 92.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER IV (CONTINUED)

72

Samuel Hirshberg, Ibid., p. 93.

73

S. H. Goldenson, Ibid., p. 98.

74

Moses J. Gries, Ibid., p. 98.

75

Central Conference of American Rabbis, [Proceedings of 1906 Convention], Ibid., pp. 99-100.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

- 1  
Jacob Z. Lauterbach, [Report of Responsa Committee], C.C.A.R. Yearbook, XXVII (1927), p. 203.
2.  
Ibid., p. 203.
- 3  
Ibid., p. 205.
- 4  
Ibid., p. 206.
- 5  
Central Conference of American Rabbis, [Proceedings of 1927 Convention], Ibid., p. 206.
- 6  
Solomon B. Freehof, Reform Responsa, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1960), p. 36.
- 7  
Ibid. p. 37.
- 8  
Ibid. p. 50.
- 9  
Ibid. p. 54.
- 10  
Ibid. p. 55.
- 11  
Solomon B. Freehof, Recent Reform Responsa, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1963), pp. 32-36.
- 12  
Ibid., p. 167-170.
- 13  
W. Gunther Plaut, The Rise of Reform Judaism, (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, Ltd., 1963) p. 260. One attempt at a Manual for home observance of the Sabbath was written by Rabbi Henry Berkowitz, of Philadelphia, in which he sought to revitalize the beauty of the Sabbath evening meal by writing a service "to foster a deeper

## NOTES TO CHAPTER V (CONTINUED)

Sabbath Sentiment," including "A woman of valor," the Kiddush, the Motzi, a blessing over the children, and a grace after the meal. Berkowitz also included songs, poems and legends about the Sabbath. Cf. Henry Berkowitz, Kiddush or Sabbath Sentiment, (Philadelphia, 1898 and 1921).

14

1937 was the year in which Columbus Platform was adopted. It's reference to the Sabbath was very vague.

15

Israel Harburg, "Observance of Sabbath," C.C.A.R. Yearbook, XLVII (1937), p. 325.

16

Ibid., p. 327.

17

Ibid., p. 328.

18

Ibid., p. 329.

19

Ibid., p. 329.

20

Ibid., p. 330.

21

Ibid., pp. 334-335.

22

Ibid., p. 336. This comment was directed against Dr. Mordecai Kaplan's insistence that many of mitzvot of Judaism were nothing more than "folkways," including the Sabbath. For Harburg, this sociological term connotes virtually the exact opposite of what mitzvot means and his article is an attack on Kaplan's "Judaism as a Civilization" - philosophy.

23

Ibid., p. 338.

24

Ibid., p. 339.

25

Ibid., p. 340.

26

Ibid., p. 340.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER V (CONTINUED)

27

Ibid., pp. 343-344.

28

Ibid., p. 344.

29

Ibid., p. 345.

30

Ibid., p. 348.

31

Ibid., p. 349.

32

Frederic A. Doppelt and David Polish, A Guide for Reform Jews,  
(New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1957).

33

Ibid., pp. 4-5.

34

Ibid., p. 8.

35

Ibid., p. 9.

36

Ibid., p. 17.

37

Ibid., p. 20.

38

Ibid., p. 27.

39

Ibid., p. 34.

40

Ibid., p. 36.

41

Ibid., p. 41.

42

Ibid., p. 42.

43

Ibid., p. 42.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER V (CONTINUED)

44

Ibid., p. 43.

45

Ibid., p. 44.

46

Ibid., p. 46.

47

Ibid., p. 97.

48

Ibid., p. 97. All following quotes refer to the author's suggestions found on pages 97-98.



NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1

W. Gunther Plaut, "The Sabbath in the Reform Movement," C.C.A.R. Yearbook, LXXV (1965), p. 168.

2

Ibid., p. 170.

3

Ibid., p. 170.

4

Ibid., p. 171.

5

Ibid., p. 171.

6

Ibid., p. 172.

7

Ibid., p. 184.

8

Ibid., p. 186.

9

Ibid., p. 188.

10

Ibid., p. 190.

11

Ibid., pp. 192-193.

12

W. Gunther Plaut, [Report of the Sabbath Commission], C.C.A.R. Yearbook, LXXVI (1966), p. 82.

13

W. Gunther Plaut, [Report of the Sabbath Commission], C.C.A.R. Yearbook, LXXVII (1967), p. 85.

14

Ibid., p. 85.

15

Ibid., p. 85.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER VI (CONTINUED)

16

Ibid., p. 85.

17

Ibid., pp. 85-86.

18

Ibid., p. 86.

19

W. Gunther Plaut, [Report of the Sabbath Commission], C.C.A.R. Yearbook, Vol. LXXVIII (1968), pp. 122-123.

20

W. Gunther Plaut, [Report of the Sabbath Commission], C.C.A.R. Yearbook, LXXIX (1969), p. 124.

21

Central Conference of American Rabbis, "A Manual for Shabbat," p. 5. Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut allowed me to examine and use the unpublished manual. It should be published before the end of 1972.

22

Ibid., p. 6.

23

Ibid., p. 6.

24

Ibid., p. 6.

25

Ibid., p. 6.

26

Ibid., p. 6.

27

Ibid., p. 7.

28

Ibid., p. 7.

29

Ibid., p. 9.

30

Ibid., p. 12.

31

Ibid., pp. 12-13.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER VI (CONTINUED)

32

Ibid., p. 13.

33

Ibid., p. 14.

34

Ibid., p. 14.

35

Ibid., p. 14.

36

Ibid., p. 15.

37

Ibid., p. 15.

38

Ibid., p. 3.

39

Norman B. Mirsky, "Shabbat, Work and Play in Contemporary America," G.C.A.R. Journal, XVI (January, 1969), p. 51.

40

Ibid., p. 52.

41

Ibid., p. 53.

42

Ibid., p. 54.

43

Ibid., p. 54.

44

Ibid., p. 55.

45

Ibid., p. 56.

46

W. Gunther Plaut, "The Sabbath as Protest: Thoughts on Work and Leisure in the Automated Society," (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University, 1970).

47

Ibid., p. 8.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER VI (CONTINUED)

48

Ibid., p. 10.

49

Ibid., p. 10.

50

Ibid., pp. 11-12.

51

Ibid., p. 12.

52

Ibid., p. 15.

53

Ibid., p. 15.

54

Ibid., p. 17.

55

Ibid., p. 17.

56

Ibid., p. 17.

57

Ibid., p. 18.

58

Ibid., p. 19.

59

Ibid., p. 18.

60

Ibid., p. 21.

61

Ibid., p. 21.

62

Ibid., p. 23.

63

Alvin J. Reines, "Shabbath as a State of Being," C.C.A.R. Journal,  
XIV (January 1967), p. 37.

64

Alvin J. Reines, "Halacha and Reform Judaism," Dimensions,  
IV (Spring, 1970), p. 22.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER VI (CONTINUED)

65

Ibid., p. 23.

66

Ibid., p. 23.

67

Ibid., p. 23.

68

Ibid., p. 21.

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- ✓ Mirsky, Norman B. "Shabbat, Work and Play in Contemporary America," C.C.A.R. Journal, XVI (January, 1969), pp. 51-56.
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