

Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman:
A Study of a Congregational Rabbi, Community Leader, and
International Pathfinder

Susan Naomi Shankman

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion

Cincinnati, Ohio

5761 2001

Referee: Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my grandmother, Miriam Shankman. She accompanied her husband, Rabbi Jacob Kestin Shankman, from the day of his ordination throughout his rabbinate. As a constant companion, she experienced the journey depicted in these pages and shared its rewards and challenges. She is inspirational in her strength and fortitude.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Rabbi Shelly Zimmerman who guided me through the research and the writing of this thesis. I owe him much thanks and appreciation for challenging me to see beyond the bounds of my own perspective and experience. For sharing his insights both into my grandfather, and the rabbinate, I am forever grateful.

To Hy Zuckman who has been a tremendous resource as the historian of Temple Israel, and is ever an enthusiastic and dedicated supporter.

To the rabbis and leaders of the Reform movement and the New Rochelle community who have shared their recollections with me.

To my family, who have shared memories and stories, encouraged and supported me throughout this venture.

To my daughter Isabel who has been a constant source of joy and inspiration.

To my husband Michael Namath whose patience, understanding, and love enabled me to reach higher and attain my goals.

DIGEST

The role of the congregational rabbi has undergone significant changes during the last century. The focus of this thesis is to examine these changes through the framework of the rabbinic career of one Reform rabbi and leader, Rabbi Jacob Kestin Shankman.

The compilation and cataloging of personal papers, correspondence, sermons, and other primary sources provided the bulk of the research of this topic. In addition, personal interviews were conducted and recollections were collected from various colleagues. The socio-religious history of congregational life was also interpreted in order to contextualize this study.

Chapter One examines the role of the rabbi within the congregation, in this case Temple Israel of New Rochelle. It follows the chronology of developments of both a religious nature, as well as those related to the demographics and needs of a growing community.

Chapter Two examines the experience of the rabbi as a chaplain in the United States Navy during World War II. This experience would have a tremendous impact on the outlook of the rabbi and his attitude towards Reform Judaism in America. It is illustrative of the experience of many of the rabbis who served as chaplains during this period.

Chapter Three examines the influence and interactions between the rabbi and the greater secular community as well as his broader involvement in conferences of the Reform movement. It focuses mainly on one issue, that of the separation of church and

state, and uses it as a model to demonstrate the rabbi's involvement in community affairs while remaining dedicated to the mission of the congregation he had been hired to serve.

Chapter Four explores Rabbi Shankman's role on the international stage. He was an active supporter of Zionism when it was still regarded negatively by Reform Jews. He went on to become the President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, following in the footsteps of noted leaders Claude G. Montefiore, Rabbi Leo Baeck, the Honorary Miss Lily Montagu, and Rabbi Dr. Solomon B. Freehof.

In the final chapter, the author summarizes her research, concluding that through setting a vision for himself and his congregation, these various roles were ways in which to achieve his goals. His involvement in each of these areas enabled Rabbi Shankman to fulfill his role as he saw it—to be teacher, preacher, and pastor to his congregants.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Digest	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Building a Congregation	7
Chapter 2: The Role of the Rabbi as Chaplain	36
Chapter 3: Community of New Rochelle Committees of the Conference	42
Chapter 4: The Rabbi's Role in World Affairs World Union for Progressive Judaism	58
Conclusion	67
Appendix A:	
Kiddush	71
Ten Commandments	72
Appendix B:	
Excerpts of letter from Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman	74
Letter to Dr. Julian Morgenstern	75
Letter from Rabbi Julian Feibelman	76
Letter from Dr. Julian Morgenstern	77
Letter from Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman	78
Letter from Dr. Julian Morgenstern	80
Letter from Rabbi Samuel H. Goldenson	82
Letter from Louis A. Rosett	83
Letter from Louis A. Rosett to Rabbi Samuel Wohl	84
Letter to Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman	85
Letter to Rabbi Joshua Goldberg	86
Telegrams to Temple Israel concerning Israel	87
Telegram to Golda Meir	88
Appendix C:	
Recollections of Rabbi Henry Karp	89
Recollections of Rabbi Peter Kasdan	91
Recollections of Rabbi William Leffler	93
Excerpt from eulogy by Rabbi Alexander Schindler	95
Recollections of Rabbi Robert Samuels	96
Recollections of Dr. Jane Evans	97
Recollections of Sister Dorothy Ann Kelly	99
Recollections of Rabbi Jack Stern	100
Bibliography	102

INTRODUCTION

Upon the Seventy-Fifth anniversary of the founding of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman wrote an essay entitled "The Changing Role of the Rabbi." In it he maintained that "Contemporary Jewish life is witness to an amazing paradox. At the very time when religion is both popular and successful, the rabbi--the leader of Jewish religious life--is the subject of serious criticism from within and without."¹ Considering the myriad of issues that confront congregational rabbis, it seems to be a profession full of contradictions and satisfying rewards at one and the same time. It is a constant challenge to meet all of the job requirements along with the expectations of a particular congregation. There is the growing concern over the personal life and emotional well-being of the rabbi. Although some of today's issues may be different, the American Reform rabbis of previous generations shared similar goals and views.

Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman explored the various roles of the Rabbi throughout his rabbinate, not just in the pages of the aforementioned article; but in his life as scholar and teacher, as preacher--and man of affairs, and as pastor--and counsellor. It is hard work for a rabbi to be able to possess the scholarly aptitude, the homiletical ability, and the personal touch needed to be able to achieve the standard to which many rabbis strive. It is rare for all these skills to come naturally. Rabbi Shankman kept each of these as frontlets before his eyes throughout his fifty-five years in the rabbinate. In this way he

¹Korn, Bertram Wallace, ed. Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. New York: The Central Conference of American Rabbis. 1965.

was able to hone his inherent talents and simultaneously work to develop those skills that he knew were necessary, but were not already in his possession.

Rabbi Philip Bernstein once said, "Rabbis can help this generation face its problems and uncertainties with the assurance of Joshua and Caleb: 'The Lord is with us; fear them not.'"² Through exploring the various mediums through which Rabbi Shankman was involved in the life of his congregation, his community, and his movement, I hope to begin to understand the sources of strength, courage, and wisdom necessary to confront the challenges which rabbis encounter daily.

Candidates for the rabbinate search for mentors and models, rabbis who will be teachers not just through what they teach, but through how they live their lives. There are standards and expectations towards which we each strive, while attempting to balance our own needs for honesty to self, with the needs and demands of congregations, communities, and those with whom we work. How is it possible to live up to one's own personal ideals, and stand up for one's beliefs while keeping the best interest or even the desires of an entire community in mind? At times a rabbi must stand up as a role model for his or her community. One's personal ideals may conflict with the congregation by whom the rabbi is employed. Is a rabbi merely an employee of a congregation? In today's culture, this may often seem to be the perception.

Given the length of his rabbinate, Rabbi Shankman observed, was intimately involved in, and directed a number of trends that transformed the Reform movement, and greatly affected his own congregation. His rabbinate at Temple Israel in New Rochelle embraced a number of different levels, all indicative of his leadership, creativity and vision, and all a part of the major changes in Jewish life. At the time he arrived Temple

²CCAR Journal, June 1958, "Time and Estrangement."

Israel was already a participant in the shift towards the precepts of the Columbus Platform. He lived through the suburbanization of America and personally and professionally experienced the effect this phenomenon had on the Jewish community. He became a part of the building of the great American and international centers of Jewish life. He was still active in the congregational rabbinate and Reform movement leadership when the Six Day War finally directed much of American Reform Judaism towards Zionism. What did it mean to live through those moments, and create, sustain, and lead that congregation?

This is the image of a unique rabbi, one who was particularly skilled to be able to create strong, effective outreach as well as inreach. He was a teacher of and preacher to children, a role model and pastor to adults, and a statesman known throughout the Reform movement and the greater Jewish community. Rabbi Shankman served as an exemplary congregational rabbi, while playing a major leadership role in the development of Reform and Progressive Judaism worldwide. He was a leader of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, as well as of the Central Conference of American Rabbis at a time when such positions were strictly of a volunteer nature. Throughout his endeavors on behalf of Reform Judaism, he kept intact his values regarding the centrality of the synagogue. What did that congregation mean at its best?

I will examine his role within his congregation, Temple Israel of New Rochelle; within the wider community of New Rochelle; and within the Reform movement, both in North America and throughout the world. Each one of these areas gave him the opportunity to be teacher, preacher, and pastor to the benefit of those respective communities.

His choice to enter the rabbinate came as no surprise to his family. "Rabbi" had been a main occupation on both sides going back for generations. He would however, be the first rabbi in the family born and trained in America. Jacob Kestin Shankman was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts on October 22, 1904, the third of eight children born to Isaac and Dina (Kestin), Russian-Polish Jews who honeymooned in the United States and never left. He was often called a boy prodigy, entering Harvard University at the tender age of 14 at the end of World War I, and being the youngest student to ever receive a Master's degree from that institution, doing so in 1925. He had dreams of becoming a doctor, but was inspired to study for the rabbinate at the suggestion of Professor George Foote Moore, who was not Jewish.

Jacob Shankman arrived at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati in 1925 to begin his studies in the Rabbinic Program. He became involved in all aspects of life at the College, and cherished the years he spent there as a student.

Shankman was an active contributor to the *HUC Monthly* throughout his time at the College, often contributing to the Editorial Board. During his first few years at the College, students were occupied with many of the issues that have resurfaced throughout the last century. Students then struggled to achieve a balance between the emphasis on learning done inside the classroom versus the level of learning achieved in what were considered more practical venues.³ The status of the curriculum of the rabbinic program was of great concern and ever changing to meet the needs of various constituencies.⁴

³ Hebrew Union College Monthly, Vol. XII, No. 4, pg. 17.

⁴ Hebrew Union College Monthly, Vol. XII, No. 6, pg. 8.

Another interesting parallel about which Shankman wrote, was the experience of student positions as "rabbis" in small towns. He provided both insight and guidance to his fellow students on how to succeed in their assignments:

"Therefore, if we come humbly and perform our duties modestly, if we speak sensibly on the accepted truths of Judaism, and if we ardently endeavor to keep alive the small but perpetual flame of faith that burns in the souls of our co-religionists, then we can hope that some day that flame will burn more brightly and more consistently."⁵

Some of the same attitudes are expressed towards rabbinic students of Shankman's era, as today: "Visiting Alumni tell us that our college men lack the old fire. They no longer see the quiet of the Chapel routed by fervid indictments of the social order coming from student lips. Senior sermons no longer inspire the Administration with fear for the sensitivities of supporters..." The existence of the dormitory is blamed as shaping Shankman's generation of students into one that was lacking in principles and diligence.⁶ One can hear these same words today as alumni talk of the College.

Other interests which he expressed through the pages of the *Monthly*, were hospital chaplaincy (Feb. 1, 1928), Zionism,⁷ the Judaizing of HUC students through his *Cheder Silhouette*,⁸ as well as such articles entitled "*The Lost Art of Cooking*,"⁹ and *A Wandering Aramaean*.¹⁰

Shankman's leadership among the students was reflected in a variety of ways: He was the Bookstore Manager for the years 1926-1927, and 1927-1928. He served as an Associate Editor of the *Monthly* in 1928-1929 and became a Contributing Editor in 1929 under the Editorship of his good friend William Braude. He was Vice-President of the

⁵ HUC Monthly, Vol. XIII, No. 1 (Nov. 1, 1927) *Apologia Pro Holiday Positions*, pp. 2-3.

⁶ HUC Monthly, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (December 15, 1927), pg. 8.

⁷ Monthly, December 1, 1928.

⁸ April 1, 1930, pg. 3.

⁹ HUC Monthly, Vol. XV, No. 4, pp. 10-12.

¹⁰ April 1, 1930, pg. 29.

Student body for 1928-1929, and President of the Student Body the following year. In that capacity he had the honor of being the spokesman at a dinner to honor Dr. Henry Englander. Dr. Henry Englander was both a rabbi, as well as a biblical and medieval Jewish scholar, who served on the faculty of Hebrew Union College. An excerpt of his speech appeared in the volume of the *Monthly* that was issued March 1, 1930. At the end of that year, he conducted a survey of the Student Body drawing some comparisons between 1900 and 1930.

In 1955, when Jacob Kestin Shankman received his honorary doctorate from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Dr. Nelson Glueck described him as

"Consecrated Rabbi in Israel who has served his faith and people with ardor and distinction; champion of the rights of men, whatever their condition, color or creed; valiant servant of his country, who in time of national emergency responded with alacrity to the call of patriotic duty; lover of mankind, who ministers also to the distraught, the defeated, the friendless with sympathetic understanding; teacher and exemplar of the true religious spirit, by whose guidance and personal influence many are led into the ways of righteousness."

Almost thirty years later, when Rabbi Jacob Shankman reflected on his own rabbinate, not much had changed. "One of the things I learned to do was to be able to occupy the pulpit with dignity, to write with clarity, understanding, to speak frankly, to love people, to work hard."

"My deepest values are truth and goodness and beauty; to have an appreciation for everything that's beautiful. To know that when I plant a tulip bulb in November, there will be a flower in April or May and that I have a partner and that partner is God in nature."¹¹

¹¹ Interview with Rebecca Shankman, 1984.

CHAPTER 1

Building a congregation Role of the rabbi

Rabbi Shankman's first positions subsequent to his ordination from Hebrew Union College, were initially in Kansas City, but Berith Shalom of Troy, NY became his first full-time pulpit in the fall of 1930. Always guiding him and important in these early years were the words of his two closest classmates and colleagues: Rabbis Joshua Loth Liebman, and William (Bill) Braude who went on to serve at K.A.M. Temple of Chicago and Beth El of Providence, Rhode Island respectively. Together they constituted the "triumvirate" as they called themselves. In their correspondence they mulled over such topics as subjects for sermons and lecture series, evaluations of sermons and programs that each had initiated, and not least of all the subject of jobs. The high esteem in which Liebman held his friend "Jankele" is apparent from the way in which he bounced ideas off of him.

In a letter dated September 26, 1934, Liebman wrote of the role of the rabbi that "the only way the pulpit has any significance is through a courageous and fearless stand on social and economic problems by its spiritual head..." Such thoughts obviously influenced Shankman over the years, as the two shared similar ideologies and philosophies in terms of the spoken word. The emerging rabbinate was one which often employed the pulpit in a literal sense. During the Depression, there was a great need for rabbis to provide emotional support while simultaneously raising material sustenance for their members. To create an impetus for societal change was of great religious value within the Reform community. Often touted as "Prophetic Judaism," the Reform

movement gleaned important messages from the words of the Prophets; words that helped to shape the philosophy and ideology of the movement's lay leadership.

The Reform rabbinate emphasized social justice as part of the Jewish ethos. The primacy of ethics through the prism of communal concern and improvement became the renewed understanding of *Tikkun Olam*, the repairing of the world. Finally, Jewish values had practical, political, and social implications in the world which welcomed the Jews. Rabbis were seeking to initiate change both at home and abroad, so that the consequences of one war would not lead to another. Politics and religion appeared to be more closely linked at that time, as the support for Zionism continued to spread. Rabbi Shankman began to look for a pulpit that would offer him the opportunity to fulfill this perceived role. He understood the need to take the values intrinsic to Jewish social and religious understanding and reach out in ways previously unavailable in Jewish history, at times when Jews were strangers in strange lands. He exemplified the words of Jeremiah's letter to the Jews of Babylonia: "Seek out the welfare of the city in which you live for in its security (welfare) shall you have peace."¹

Letters from 1934 communicate the notion that Shankman was inquiring into a position for an assistant rabbi at Temple Sinai, on the north side of Chicago. The position was a coveted one as it had been the pulpit of Rabbi Emil Hirsch, who had been a giant within the movement, and whose vision had left a permanent mark in shaping the culture of the congregation. Temple Sinai epitomized the values for which Rabbi Shankman and his friends stood. The congregation was committed to bettering the socio-economic situation not just of its members, but also that of the members of the greater society of which they were a part. Temple Sinai was at the forefront of the changes taking place

¹ Jeremiah 29:7.

within the Reform movement, and the rabbi who occupied its pulpit would be assured an important place in the movement's leadership.

The process through which both rabbinic students and rabbis in the field attained pulpits in those days, was through the College itself. "Morgie", the epithet by which students referred to Dr. Julian Morgenstern, then the president of the College, was the one who made decisions as far as where rabbis were placed. He consulted on placement issues. Liebman remarked in optimistic letters to Shankman that Morgie was Jake's friend, and as he was meeting with the board, could help in his favor. Shankman spoke at the congregation, and according to Liebman, Rabbi Hirshberg was convinced that Jake Shankman was the man for the associate position. There were not many assistant or associateships out there at the time, and regrettably Shankman was not to serve as one of them.

A few years later he was interested in a position at Temple Sinai, New Orleans.

The following enclosure is from a letter of recommendation written by Dr. Morgenstern to Mr. S. Walter Stern, in June 30, 1936:

"Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman graduated from the Hebrew Union College in 1930. He came to the Hebrew Union College as a graduate of Harvard University and the youngest man to have ever received the degree of M.A. from that institution. He was one of the ablest students in his class at the college. During these six years he has ministered with distinction to the Congregation at Troy, New York. Under his leadership that Congregation has thrived and progressed remarkably in every way. He is a man of unusual intellectual ability, a most able preacher, a splendid teacher, and religious school administrator, a man consecrated to his tasks and sparing no effort and self-sacrifice to serve his congregation and community and lead them forward along the lines of true spiritual progress. He is possessed of a delightful personality, is earnest, sincere, highminded, idealistic and resourceful in all that he undertakes. He is a man of culture, integrity, and fineness and delicateness of character which would enable him to fit in well into a southern congregation and community. He merits your most careful and sympathetic consideration. He is married to a very charming and cultured young lady, a graduate of the University of Cincinnati. They have one child. His address is 30 Pawling Ave., Troy, New York."

In competition for the position, Shankman apparently wrote a letter informing his friend and colleague, Julian Feibelman, that he was also up for the position. Feibelman replied very warmly: "No fellow deserves "advancement," as you call it, Jake, any more than you."² Unfortunately for Shankman, Feibelman ended up with the position, yet good wishes were mutually sent by the two colleagues.

The struggle to secure a congregation with real growth potential would continue for a few more years. Eventually a job opened up in New Rochelle, a burgeoning suburb just north of New York City. Dr. Morgenstern dictated a letter on October 22, 1936 (Shankman's birthday), in which he made reference to the fact that Shankman was interested in a change of position:

"It is a source of great disappointment to me that no opportunity for advancement has turned up for you as yet. That you richly deserve advancement and that you are amply ready to deal with a larger field I am firmly convinced. It would be a source of great satisfaction to me to be able to assist you to get placed in the kind of congregation you deservedly aspire to.

I know all about the situation in New Rochelle; in fact, it was largely through suggestions which emanated from me that the period of Luchs' service to his congregation was extended from January 1 to April 1. Actually, I think that it will be extended until at least July 1 or September 1, although the congregation will no doubt begin to negotiate for a successor on or before April 1. I hardly imagine, however, that any competent and self-respecting person whom they might select would be able and willing to leave his present congregation on short notice less than two months before Shavuot. For this reason, I say, I imagine that Luchs will actually be with the congregation until September 1, 1937, although they may have elected his successor some months before that time.

There is accordingly still ample time to deal with that situation. Of course, if the congregation does communicate with me, as in all likelihood it will, knowing that you are interested I shall of course be only too happy to present your name with a very favorable recommendation. But already I have received a number of requests from other men who, like you, are taking time by the forelock. And to all of them I have had to give much of the same reply. For this reason it would be well if, at the proper time and in a dignified way, you would either have your name presented to the congregation, or would yourself make formal application for consideration by the congregation. You need not hesitate to do this, so long as you do it in a dignified and self-respecting manner. Of course, in so doing, you are at full liberty to use my name for reference. Should the congregation

² Letter of July 25, 1936 from Julian Feibelman.

then ask for information about you, it will give me the opportunity to speak a strong word in your behalf."

Shankman was obviously disappointed about not obtaining Sinai, Chicago and he and chums (Liebman and Jacob Mann) perceived that the rabbinical selection committees of congregations did not always pay attention to applications. They based this perception on their own experiences of being "called" to their pulpits. Shankman, now looking towards heading to New Rochelle, was not sure where he stood with Dr. Morgenstern following the Chicago disappointment. After a conversation with Julian Morgenstern, Shankman's classmates shared their perception as they understood it. It appeared to them that Dr. Morgenstern took the stand that the writing of a "dignified, self-respecting letter, explaining his qualifications and asking to be considered as a candidate" was the best means towards obtaining one's desired job. Josh Liebman appraised Morgenstern in terms of Shankman, and shared Morgie's words with Jake:

"The present occupant of the pulpit will be there, no doubt, until after confirmation. I told him that I would like very much to see you there, and he said, 'Well, I do not know whether this is a sufficiently important position of advancement for Jake, because if he goes there he must be prepared to stay five or six years at least, and in the meanwhile, very big positions must open, and I feel very confident that Jake will qualify for one of these...'"³

Liebman asked Morgenstern what he (Liebman) could do for his friend, and was told;

"What you can do is to write a strong letter to your family there urging them to ask the Board to communicate with me at the H.U.C. asking about Rabbi Shankman's qualifications. Then I will be in a position to write a most glowing and powerful letter in return, and he will be the only one considered by myself. That is, if they merely write in to me and say, 'Will you please recommend some names,' I am compelled to give five or six names—but when they write in and ask about a definite individual, I feel myself free to urge the election of that individual. I will certainly do that in Jake's case."

³ Letter dictated November 3, 1936 from Joshua Loth Liebman.

Rabbi Shankman was considered by the congregations in both New Rochelle and Mt. Vernon, New York. Morgenstern told him in a letter dated December 15, 1936 that "both congregations are desirable, and would, I believe, constitute a promotion over Troy. New Rochelle is the larger and, I believe, the more desirable, of the two..."

Rabbi Gustave Falk, Regional Director of the North East Religious Union of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations at the time, wrote a confidential letter concerning the job search. In it he expressed his desire that Temple Israel would hire Rabbi Shankman:

"I understand that you are to speak at the Tremont Temple in the near future. At that time a Committee from the New Rochelle Congregation which, by the way is the one that I would like to see you obtain, will be there. I can assure you that I shall do everything to see you obtain the New Rochelle position, as I would like to have you among the Metropolitan rabbis."

Rabbi Shankman made inquiries about the New York area to some of that region's rabbis. Samuel H. Goldenson, rabbi at Congregation Emanu-El of the city of New York replied to Shankman on Dec. 2, 1936:

"I wish I could talk to you about conditions around here before you set your heart upon coming to the New York neighborhood. I have found that Temples and Synagogues play much smaller role in the lives of our people in and about New York than elsewhere. The rabbis with whom I have had talks complain bitterly about the lack of interest and loyalty of our folk in these parts. The congregations in the outskirts of New York are made up of shifting memberships. The meaning of that will be clear to you."

Evidently, Rabbi Shankman looked past the negative aspects of a New York rabbinate. A letter from Louis A. Rosett, President of Temple Israel dated September 17, 1937, confirms that he had been retained as Rabbi for a term of two years commencing

on August 1, 1937. Their hope was that Rabbi Shankman would "bring unity, peace, and spirituality to the Congregation."⁴

His formal installation took place in September, during Sukkot. Dr. Nathan Krass, Rabbi Emeritus of Emanu-El of New York sat on the bema. Gustave Falk, the aforementioned regional director, led the service. Joshua Loth Liebman gave the charge in which he stated; "Rabbi Shankman is one of the most gifted of all spiritual conductors among the younger Rabbis. You are the orchestra. If you do not join with him he can do nothing. If you work with him he can transform this congregation into a beautiful symphony."⁵ This high praise was not merely the compliment of a close friend; Rabbi Shankman's reputation was held in high regard among his classmates, as well as among future colleagues. This perception is manifest through many of the subsequent awards and dedications made to him in the ensuing years.

Liebman spoke of the rabbi as a "philosopher, challenger, ambassador." In a fitting reply to his friend's touching praise, Shankman articulated these words: "The gracious tribute of my beloved friend and the significance of the charge that has been given me has put me on my guard against becoming sentimental. I might pause to acknowledge this dear tribute. But I would rather think of the challenge placed before me. As your philosopher I shall attempt to unify this congregation. I shall always insist on the sacredness of human beings. I shall regard all of you as children of a living God. In my humble way I shall try to bring this teaching to you—not that I shall expect you to be saints—for none of us are perfect.

⁴ The History of Temple Israel, pg. 57.

⁵ Standard-Star, New Rochelle, NY 9/16/37.

Should the occasion arise I shall reproach you. It shall be because I know you can be generous and self-sacrificing.

I shall insist you be dignified—noble of character—particularly when conditions in the world are what they are today, and criticism is so prevalent.

I shall try to make you proud of your tradition and to fight against the ignorance about Judaism.

As your spiritual leader I shall try to make you aspire to God with aching spirit. I shall try to make you hear the words of the Prophets. I shall try to make Justice a throbbing reality. I shall try to make your spirits ache for peace.

If I can bring to you these things my pain will not have been in vain.

I shall try to be your spokesman. I shall devote myself to working for the building of a better country and so speak out proudly for the part done by Jews.

I hope your faith sustains you as it has sustained me, and enable us together to face the world and make progress."

As he stood on the threshold, these words spoken at a moment prior to any achievement in New Rochelle or on the national level of the Reform movement, would influence the next fifty years of his rabbinate. Rabbi Shankman herewith outlined the way in which he would approach personal relationships, and his expectations for the congregation in response to challenges he would set. He suggested his goals in terms of spirituality, social change, and nationalism. He promised to be a sincere and worthy representative to the greater community, and established his sense of patriotism. He hopefully regarded the potential that lay within arms reach, and declared in no uncertain

terms that he would push and encourage Temple Israel's members to live their lives according to the precepts of Reform Judaism.

When he arrived in 1937, Temple Israel had 210 members on their roster. There are warm recollections of the incipient relationship between Rabbi and Congregation. "There was a new spirit at Temple Israel...harmonious, cooperative, confident...a genuine *entente cordiale* arose between Rabbi Shankman and his people..." He became involved in all aspects of the life of the congregation, and was given "complete freedom of the pulpit—even when his personal convictions, publicly and vigorously expressed, conflicted with 'the establishment.'"⁶

At the close of his first year at Temple Israel, Rabbi Shankman reflected:

"One of the names by which we Jews are known is the *K'nesseth Israel*—the Community or Congregation of Israel. To deserve such a name, a Congregation must be a unit, a holy family that lives in harmony and is bound by common interests and common aspirations. Such a family must be animated by a spirit of reverence, for it is a family that is formed for the purpose of discovering and leading the religious life. To unify such a family and strengthen the bonds which hold it together—these constitute the first motive of my work. The second motive was the desire to intensify the Jewish life of our Congregation—to make our people conscious of our Jewish heritage and proud of it; to present Judaism as a worth-while, but above all as a livable way of life."⁷

At a time when the Jewish community was experiencing threats to its very existence, this was a significant goal. The idea that the congregation was a family, was one which affected, counseled, and guided Rabbi Shankman throughout the decades of his rabbinate. Over the years the membership of Temple Israel became an extension of his own family, and his family came to view the congregation as the same. He perceived the nonchalance with which many of his congregants observed and preserved their

⁶ *The History of Temple Israel*, pp. 59-60.

⁷ Annual Report May 22, 1938, pg. 2.

Judaism. He lamented over the apathy directed towards Jewish life throughout those years. It was from this perspective that he began to build the foundation for the prosperous future of Temple Israel. Regional demographics helped build the membership of the congregation, but there were some internal adjustments and programmatic advances that needed to be made in order to lay the groundwork needed to meet his objectives.

Shankman felt that it was crucial to help connect individual Jews to the congregation in order for them to feel as though they were an "integral part of the Congregation."⁸ Towards this end, in his first year at Temple Israel, Rabbi Shankman introduced a number of new *minhagim*, customs observed by the congregation. He hoped these observances would serve towards improving both the sense of community, as well as the attitude towards Jewish observance among congregants. A consecration service was celebrated to mark the introduction of new students to the religious school, replete with a ceremony for passing the Torah down through three generations. Another type of introduction through a prayer and babynaming ceremony welcomed the newborn infants to the congregation. A consecration service commemorating the commitment of the Confirmation class on the first evening of Shavuot was established as a new way to recognize the female students along with their male counterparts through an egalitarian coming of age ceremony.

Holidays were observed as a community with the establishment of a congregational Chanukah dinner and a Pesach seder. The act of observing the holidays with festive meals at the Temple helped to create a stronger sense of unity among congregants. The ritual of shaking the lulav and etrog during Sukkot also met these

⁸ Annual Report, 1938, pg. 2.

goals. These were radical changes for the period immediately prior to the adoption of the Columbus Platform by the Reform movement. Normally the family served as the transmitter of these rituals and values. But with the diminution of home observance and the spread of Jewish illiteracy and apathy, the Temple needed to become a new kind of center—the hub of the wheel that was Reform Judaism. Thus, rituals were introduced within its walls which had traditionally been home rituals. The absence of this style of observance was not specific to Temple Israel of New Rochelle—these ceremonial rites and celebrations did not exist in most congregations of the 1930's. Through his introduction of these rituals to the synagogue, Rabbi Shankman became a leader in both using and shaping the Temple as a place of observance and education.

There were other transformations that Rabbi Shankman innovated in that first year. The Kiddush was recited at Sabbath Evening Services. This was a significant change, as previously there had been a definite delineation between the home and the synagogue. Certain rituals had their place in private realms, and others in public. By bringing the observance of Kiddush to the congregation, Rabbi Shankman made two statements. The first was a statement both of teaching and of enabling congregants to observe that which they might not have previously. The second, and perhaps more important, echoed the theme of the Chanukah dinner and Pesach seder: Temple Israel is a family. It was as though the rabbi was saying--We are a family. We worship together, we observe together, we learn together. This sentiment was significant in light of the changes that had wrought a weakened American Jewish family. As Jews moved out of the urban areas into the suburbs, they left the insulated Jewish communities and were exposed to a plethora of options. Jewish identity and knowledge became a lesser priority;

as it did, Temple Israel played a crucial role in bringing Jews together to experience all the aspects of Jewish life which were no longer the inherent fabric of their society.

The presence of acceptable social outlets was extremely important to the Reform Jews of Westchester County. The ubiquitous Sisterhood and the introduction of a Brotherhood indicate that there was much more going on at Temple Israel of New Rochelle than merely religious affiliation for the sake of observance and worship. At a time when Jews were not accepted into most of the country clubs and social clubs in Westchester, these affinity groups provided a social outlet for temple members. Thus, the congregation was becoming a center for Jewish life on a variety of levels. Members could socialize and pray with each other; they also had many opportunities to study and learn more about their heritage.

Rabbi Shankman taught American-Jewish history to a recently formed Parent-Education group of Sisterhood, and presented a Jewish Current Events program to the Sisterhood and the newly organized Brotherhood. Courses to be added included studies in Biblical interpretation and Jewish history. He hoped to steer the Sisterhood towards increased involvement in the synagogue, to help build Jewish awareness and education in their own homes as well as in the congregational home. The same was true for the Brotherhood. This movement towards an organized program of adult education was but one piece of Rabbi Shankman's vision of what the congregation could become. Over time, these initial efforts would progress into a full-fledged curriculum that included more than just the obligatory Torah study. There were lecture series, scholars-in-residence, and the monthly Brotherhood Breakfast study program. Through these and other mediums, Rabbi Shankman empowered his congregants to develop those skills that

would preclude his always having to be present. He was not looking for a way to be less involved; rather, he was attempting to find ways to encourage others to become more involved.

The successes were accompanied by some setbacks. Problems existed in the Religious School. There were many criticisms, and he chose in that first year to focus on the issues of space and some of the adjustment that naturally occurred with the transition of having a new rabbi. 100 members had joined the congregation that year, and more than 140 children were added to an already full school.

Rabbi Shankman was kept busy in terms of his pastoral duties. The first year he officiated at 2 b'rit milahs (circumcisions), 2 conversions, 6 weddings, 10 funerals, and 14 Bar Mitzvahs (the largest number in one year up to that time). His goal was to have visited half of the membership in home visits (births and illnesses), but lamented about not being able to find the time to call on all his congregants in their homes.

It is not surprising that Shankman was not all that active in the community during his initial year in New Rochelle. Most of the activities in which he participated were in some way related to the Jewish community, whether Hadassah or other Zionist groups. Rotary Club, Westchester Negro Youth Institute, Council of Social Agencies, Committee on Civic Forums, and the New Rochelle Clergy Council topped off the list. These organizational affiliations demonstrated that the new rabbi in New Rochelle was concerned not merely with his congregants' spiritual well-being, but also with their status within the larger society. By the end of that year, it was clear that Temple Israel was to be the beneficiary of Rabbi Shankman's tireless efforts both within the congregation, and throughout the larger community:

"To unify that group and to intensify its Jewish life are the aims of your Rabbi. Both goals are attainable. Our Synagogue must be not only a beautiful sanctuary; it must be the hub from which the Jewish life and the Jewish leadership of Westchester County should radiate. It should house within its walls an ample Jewish library, a collection of Jewish ceremonial objects, pictures of Jewish interest and artistic merit—and above all be the home of a vital and meaningful Judaism."⁹

This vision that he shared, was that of the new synagogue that was just beginning to emerge on the American scene. By possessing a substantial library, a collection of Judaica as well as Judaic art, Temple Israel would make a statement. The Temple did not merely exist to meet the worship needs of its members. They could find all the qualities of a spiritual home—objects they could find within their own homes—in their synagogue. Their physical structure and spiritual congregation would thereby represent a vibrant, aesthetically significant, ritually alive, and leadership training center. A new institution was being created—the synagogue would play a pivotal role as the center of the community and a locus from which Jewish leaders emerge.

By 1938, there were 325 member families, 375 students in the religious school, and 500 members recorded in the annals of the sisterhood. Shankman recorded the growth, both numeric and nominal in his annual reports. These were delivered at the annual congregational meeting and subsequently distributed to the entire membership. They provide a great deal of insight as to the development of both the congregation, and its rabbi. When his second annual report was delivered to the congregation on May 21, 1939, some of his goals had already been realized. The introduction of new artwork, music at Shabbat morning services, and the addition of classrooms in the religious school contributed greatly to the improvement of the synagogue. The aesthetic additions not

⁹ Annual Report, 1938, pg. 6.

only helped to create a more inviting, visually pleasing atmosphere. The art and music and other innovations contributed to the spiritual atmosphere. Rabbi Shankman realized that not all congregants find meaning in worship. For some, the reading of books might meet that need; for others, pleasing artwork, or certain hymns, or the strains of a cello would generate the right tone. In this way, Rabbi Shankman anticipated the needs of his congregants through his own cognizance of modern sensibilities and attitudes. This reintroduction of spiritual creativity into Jewish religious life reflected the inherent message of Reform Judaism. In successfully merging the rich traditions of Judaism with the vibrant contemporary culture, one's understanding and practice of Judaism could be enhanced. Once congregants perceived that all they were looking for in the mainstream society was present and flourishing within the walls of the synagogue, they would naturally want to become more active and involved in the life of the congregation.

Rabbi Shankman continued to believe and espouse the idea that "there can be no enduring and worthwhile ministry unless the standard of personal and intimate relationship is established between the Rabbi and the Congregation."¹⁰ He and his colleagues who agreed with this view, would create the new generation of rabbis. His would be a generation that still valued the spoken and written word, but used those as tools in reaching out to the people. How much more effective could they be with their sermons, if they actually connected to the lives of their congregants! He viewed his role somewhat differently from other rabbis of the same period. Many rabbis spent their time literally and figuratively locked away in their studies. Scholarly aptitude was important to Rabbi Shankman, but only if it was to be imparted to and shared with congregants.

¹⁰ Annual Report, May 21, 1939, pg. 3.

Rabbi Shankman noted at this early juncture of his career, an obstacle that would continue to trouble him in attaining his goals. "Countless meetings, administrative routine, the preparation of sermons and lectures, and the precious time for reading and study which are indispensable for the proper and fruitful growth of the Rabbi—these necessarily conflict with the sole preoccupation with pastoral duties."¹¹ The passage of time has not alleviated this dilemma which has been articulated by innumerable rabbis during the subsequent decades.

Various tactics would eventually foster the type of change which the Rabbi and his leadership envisioned for the congregation. In order to unify the membership and breath life into its spirit, Rabbi Shankman saw his role as teaching and guiding his flock towards a modern, thriving Reform Judaism. He utilized the innovations, like a newsletter, temple youth group, and an organization for young adults, that were manifest in but a handful of congregations. Adult education and the expansion of the existent library were intended to aid in educating and inspiring the membership to strengthen their faith as well as their general involvement in Temple life. This was also achieved through columns in the *Temple Topics*, Temple Israel's newsletter, at countless Sisterhood and Brotherhood luncheons and breakfasts, activities with the Junior Society (the youth group, which he supervised), advising the Young Adults group (the Junior League), and meeting with parents of religious school students. Every age group was touched in some way by the rabbi's presence and attention, and he would continue to be involved on such an intimate level.

The extent to which his personal passions had taken root within the leadership of the congregation were manifest through the support demonstrated in the form of a

¹¹ Ibid; pg. 4.

Sisterhood scholarship for the Hebrew Union College in 1939, and a Board of Trustees donation towards the efforts of Liberal Judaism in Palestine. His commitment to the organizational bodies of Reform Judaism was further expressed by the congregational contribution to the CCAR Pension Fund. Rabbi Shankman perceived all of these gestures as representing the spiritual growth and dedication of his membership.

Yet despite these successes, not all was quite what it should be in the eyes of the rabbi. A complaint which would be echoed repeatedly throughout the rabbinate, was the apathy of the congregation. Even with the wide variety of activities and programs that had been initiated, the low level of participation in worship services frustrated Rabbi Shankman. The present generation of rabbis continues to struggle with this issue. It is not, as Rabbi Shankman stated, "a matter of demonstrating affection, loyalty or respect for the Rabbi..." "A synagogue is not a theatre; a pulpit is not a stage where a star is performing. 'My House is a House of Prayer'—it is the home of congregational worship. That's why a Rabbi expects a congregation to be there, to worship..."¹² He would channel much time and energy into remedying that situation. He desired that his congregants would realize that Jews must be Jews and not live vicariously through their rabbis.

On June 16, 1941, Rabbi Shankman presented his fourth annual report. At a time when the tensions of war were unavoidable, he hoped that the synagogue would be a kind of refuge for his congregants. He did not realize that in time, it would become one for him. He would go on to serve as a Chaplain in the Navy, but throughout that time he remained closely connected with Temple Israel. Despite the fact that there was a substitute rabbi while Rabbi Shankman was based first in Jacksonville, Florida and then

¹² Annual Report, June 3, 1940, pg. 3.

in Sampson, New York, Rabbi Shankman would write weekly letters, sermonettes, to his congregants. Whenever he had the opportunity he would return home to his beloved Temple Israel.

In building for the future of his congregation, Rabbi Shankman foresaw the importance of preaching to children. At the 1953 CCAR Convention in Buffalo, he submitted a piece entitled "Preaching to Children" as part of the Symposium on Preaching. In it he stated that his objectives for such sermons were to "make the sermon a pleasurable experience; it must be moving and vital. Children must feel that they are listening to something interesting."¹³ While that may seem like an obvious aim, his method as well as the focus on this particular age-group were innovative. The Reform movement had developed a sense of rigid formality and a devotion to dignity and decorum in its attempt to break away from its traditional roots, along with the perceived and experienced chaos and noise of traditional services. As a result, the younger congregants, specifically children, were often omitted from many of the activities of the synagogue. No place was this more evident than in the context of worship services. Many Reform congregations, including Temple Israel, operated by the adage "children are meant to be seen, not heard." Decorous silence had to be maintained. Rabbi Shankman disagreed. He sought to find ways in which he could connect to his youngest congregants, and thus connect to their parents and extended families. He recognized that in making services more interesting to children, the entire congregation could benefit. In order to facilitate that goal, he developed and introduced family worship services which included birthday blessings before the Ark, and introduced a children's service on Yom Kippur Day in the Sanctuary.

¹³ CCAR Yearbook, Volume LXII, Buffalo, N.Y. 1953, pg. 526.

A story, according to Rabbi Shankman, was "the preacher's basic and indispensable tool," but not through mere repetition. Using clear, understandable language paired with honesty and humor were keys to success. For a sermon to truly reach its audience, such stories needed to come alive for the listeners; "it must be told with enthusiasm, animation, energy and high spirits. A Chassidic Rabbi once said that a story must be told in such a way that it constitutes help in itself."¹⁴ Participation was the key in reaching children, and the parents who accompanied them to services. Despite the formality that existed within the structure of worship services at Temple Israel, Rabbi Shankman maintained; "A rigid formal atmosphere, even in the Temple, is not for children. We want their interest in the question, in the story, in the sermon."¹⁵

How did Rabbi Shankman gain the interest of children? He supplied the following example to the Symposium:

"I wanted to preach a sermon on the importance of little things. I began by holding up an ordinary white envelope and asked the children, 'What is in this envelope?' The guesses and answers were many, varied, and childish. Then I told the children that I had a mountain in that envelope, a *mountain*. I opened the envelope and poured out a few grains of sand and explained that a mountain is made of little grains of sand and rock. In that sermon I recalled the story of Kamza and bar Kamza, Jerusalem was destroyed because of a little thing, a blemish of an animal. A little thing, a lever can do big work. A little thing, the smile of a child, can move a parent. Little things have big consequences."¹⁶

He often combined his different passions so as to attain various goals. When trying to raise money for the Leo Baeck School in Haifa, he asked his children "Can you draw a picture? With pencils? Crayons? Water colors?"¹⁷ From that point, Rabbi Shankman continued with a discussion of the school, focusing on the Israeli students'

¹⁴ Ibid; pp. 527-28.

¹⁵ Ibid; pg. 528.

¹⁶ Ibid; pp. 528-529.

¹⁷ Ibid; pg. 529.

lack of art supplies. To this day, children who grew up at Temple Israel recall his use of the poem "Casey at the Bat" on Yom Kippur to illustrate the concept that through teshuvah, repentance, all receive a second chance. Baseball was one of his favorite topics, and a timely one for the High Holiday season in an area that was rife with baseball fans. Rabbi Shankman espoused the idea that effective stories could and should be drawn from Jewish tradition, as well as from literature and life. His philosophy was simple and yet profound. A sermon was one way to engage children in an activity with which they would want to associate. It was a way to connect them to each other, Temple Israel community, and the greater Jewish community. Most importantly, he cautioned that "of no congregation is it truer than of a congregation of children that '*dvoreem ha-yotzeem min ha-lev nichnaseen el ha-lev.*' Ye sages, be heedful of your words."¹⁸ In preaching to any age group, he made use of this fact he had learned from Dr. Bettan, his professor at HUC, that "The best way to end a sermon, is to stop talking."¹⁹

Beyond preaching to children, Rabbi Shankman was adept at teaching all of the age groups within his constituency. One of the teaching techniques that Rabbi Shankman developed, was his renowned Confirmation program. One piece of it was a digest of the entire class. In review form, it consisted of 15 chapters, and a total of 102 questions including some that students were expected to have memorized by Shavuot. The topics addressed everything from general religion, the Bible, and God concepts, to the Mission of Israel, the Jewish calendar, and the Ten Commandments. Rabbi Shankman authored

¹⁸ Ibid; pg. 530.

¹⁹ CCAR Yearbook, Volume LXII, pg. 531.

an elucidation of the Ten Commandments which was included in the Confirmation Service.²⁰

Even more striking was the fact that despite the growth of the congregation over the years, Rabbi Shankman still came to know each of his students and regarded them as individuals. One of the remarkable aspects of the Confirmation Service, was the personal blessings which he bestowed upon each student. Eventually the sheer number of students prevented him from being able to bless them individually, and so the tradition began that Confirmands would receive their blessings in pairs. Despite not being able to enjoy a private moment with the rabbi, the content of these continued to convey the mutual familiarity and personal relationship enjoyed by the rabbi and his students.

What did it mean to develop these specialized aspects of worship? How did he reach out to the members of the congregation, and build a spiritual home for all its members to such an extent that the Temple Israel continued to grow? As the membership flourished, how was it possible for him to maintain the personal contact which was so enjoyed? Rabbi Shankman used the tools he had at his disposal—his innate talents and charisma, complemented by the skills he had been taught in rabbinic school. He used homiletics and liturgy to build a spiritual atmosphere that would be attractive to and meet the needs of a contemporary "Reform" congregation.

One factor for success in this process, the importance of which was not lost on Rabbi Shankman, was a strong lay leadership. He built a solid relationship first with Louis Rosett and later with Charles Raizen (as well as others who followed), both of whom served as President of the Congregation for many years. Rabbi Shankman never

²⁰ Appendix

underestimated or took his leadership for granted. He honored them with words such as these, spoken in reference to Louis Rosett:

His labors for this Congregation have been constant and invaluable, his services to our community have been manifold and unstinting, and his concern for the whole household of Israel, as expressed in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and other agencies, has been intense and unceasing. For me, as Rabbi, it has been a distinct privilege and a genuine pleasure to work at his side.²¹

Educated lay leadership had been cultivated, to the point that when Rabbi Shankman was away, there were others in the congregation who were capable of leading Shabbat services. Charles Raizen often led services in the rabbi's absence, and knew the cues. Other names were often referred to as possible substitutes on alternate Sabbath evenings. Rabbi Shankman supplied itineraries, as well as local rabbis to be contacted if any such need arose while he was away. Of Mr. Raizen, Rabbi Shankman affirmed that "he is a good Jew, a total and complete Jew. Men like him have preserved our faith and will continue to make it strong. May he ever know the deepest joy, the joy of service, of good service in a righteous cause."²² He would instill in Charles Raizen the zeal he himself felt towards the World Union for Progressive Judaism, and Raizen would eventually serve as Treasurer of the organization.

Other lay leaders took on impressive mantles of leadership within the Reform movement. Frieda Rosett and Marge Rukeyser each served as the national president of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. Charles Friedman, along with Charles Raizen, also received high leadership positions within the World Union. Tantamount to these was Harry Gutmann, who became Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. These women and men who worked tirelessly on

²¹ Annual Report, June 7, 1942, pp. 11-12.

²² Federation Presentation to Mr. Charles S. Raizen, January 30, 1955.

behalf of Reform Judaism, were supported and encouraged by their rabbi. He wanted to share the challenge of leadership with these and other devoted members of his congregation.

The most important role that Rabbi Jacob Shankman performed for his congregants, was that of spiritual leader. He successfully did this by living his life according to the precepts he preached from the pulpit. He was not afraid to talk about faith and God, even before that was fashionable within the Reform movement. In 1942 he shared these words at the Congregational Meeting:

"The faith which I have wanted you to share with me has always been a religious faith. It is a faith in the great, mystic Spirit by Whose will law and order prevail in the heavens, a Spirit who clothed the world in ineffable beauty. In the poetry of nature, I caught sight of that God. In the stupendous spectacle of a sky aglow with the fiery pageant of a sunset, in the brilliant trail of shooting stars, in the wondrous symmetry of crystal and snowflake, in all these I saw God and tried to point Him out to you.

Before Him I have been tongue-tied and in His Presence I have stammered. My shortcomings have always been before me. Yet how could I know Him better when Moses trod upon His holy ground and failed to untie his shoes? How could I look upon His radiance when that same Moses could not behold Him face to face? Feeble has been my approach to that God, and only infrequently at a great distance have I caught a glimpse of His majestic ways. But a loving Father will forgive this dereliction.

I tried to teach you to aspire to the Pure Holiness of this God with aching hearts and outstretched spirits. It is my belief that the worship of God is linked inseparably to a bright and insistent social message. I find justification for this faith in the lives and words of Israel's prophets and sages. They warm my faith with a luminous, prophetic glow and inspire me with the vision of a better world. If I have brought you something of the spirit of the great giants of our people, if I have made you hear only a faint echo of their words; if I have made justice only part of the throbbing reality that it was to Amos; if I have interpreted love as Hosea knew it—compassionate and of tender understanding; if I have made you long for peace as Isaiah wished it; and if I have shown you the way of nobility of heart as practiced by Jeremiah—then my ministry has not been altogether in vain, and these five years have been more than mere seeking of shelter from the winds which howl about us.

Friends, this is the sort of faith that I have tried to teach in the five years we have lived together; faith in the essential and indestructible dignity of my fellow man, faith in the imperishable worthwhileness of Judaism's teaching and in its urgent need for our world today, faith in God Whom we must continue to seek with all

our hearts and souls and might, and finally faith even in a better world yet to be."²³

These words portray a rabbi committed to the essential values which lay at the very heart of Reform Judaism. He believed wholeheartedly in the words of the prophets and their message of social justice, the faith in a God present in nature, and the hope that the world was soon to be redeemed. The beauty with which he expressed these ideas was not what captivated his congregants. It was the way in which he lived his life and raised his family according to these ideas that drew them to become active participants in the life of the synagogue.

The Judaism by which Rabbi Shankman defined himself was unquestionably that of America. He reflected on his upbringing and the direction in which he steered his Jewish life in contrast to that of his father in a 1955 CCAR Journal article entitled "My Father and I: Thoughts on Approaching the Tercentenary."

His was the world of Eastern Europe—with its *schul*, now deserted and locked, its *cheder* become a nostalgic etching, its *yeshivah* ground into the dust and forgotten. It is a world now gone. It was a different world into which I was catapulted. With five other Jewish lads who attended the local high school—all children of struggling immigrants, from similar backgrounds and families—I stormed the Brahmin gates of America's oldest university. What a jump from my father's Eastern Europe to my Harvard Square!²⁴

There were many other differences between this father Isaac and his son Jacob. The senior Rabbi Shankman never entered a church and taught his son that it was forbidden to do so. Yet after attending a baccalaureate service in the chapel at Harvard, Jacob opened his heart to the worship of other religions and to the ability of Jews to share worship experience with non-Jews. This perspective would propel him to spend countless hours

²³ Annual Report, June 7, 1942, pp. 7-8.

²⁴ My Father and I: Thoughts on Approaching the Tercentenary, Jacob Shankman, Off-Print from CCAR Journal, October 1954, pg. 6.

nurturing interfaith relationships, visiting Christian churches and cathedrals around the world, and inviting clergy into his home and to his seder table.

As a Rabbi I have addressed countless Christian groups, spoken before church societies and preached in their houses of worship. Christians and Jews, we have learned to pray together to the One God on Thanksgiving Day, Race Relations Sunday, and at other Union Services.²⁵

Much of the interfaith work in which Rabbi Shankman participated, grew out of the deep sense of gratitude he felt towards his native land. He was an American Jew, and proud of the heritage that fact assigned him. This was a marked departure from the philosophy which he had observed in his childhood:

My father had no sense of nationalism in the land of his birth. Mother Russia showed him no love; the Czar was little of a father! He was a soldier in the Imperial Army, but he had no rights of citizenship or residence. He was but one of many millions disabled by a cruel despotism... How different were my emotions when I volunteered to serve as a Chaplain in the U.S. Naval Reserve and how great was my pride to wear my country's uniform! This is my own, my native land!²⁶

The patriotic theme was only one on which Rabbi Jacob Shankman regularly preached. His High Holiday sermons explored holiness and Reform Judaism, and perpetually addressed the issue of living an active Jewish life. He questioned and challenged his congregants to examine the relevance of Judaism to their lives and the importance of Temple Israel among their various obligations and commitments. On Yom Kippur 1955, he asked congregants to consider why they were Reform Jews:

Are we here because we have a sound, first-class religious school which is good for our children, or is it because we like the activities of this congregation, the bazaars are socially pleasurable and the luncheons are delicious! Or are we here

²⁵ Ibid; pg. 7.

²⁶ Ibid.

perchance because we feel that we want to be Jews, but in an easy-going and comfortable way, and Temple Israel makes it as gentle and painless as possible?²⁷

Rabbi Shankman criticized the way in which Reform Judaism was often practiced, even by his own members. He viewed its evolution as straying from the intentions of its founders. The goal of creating a service marked by dignified decorum, had developed into a service devoid of meaning, existing as a formality. "Prayers," he said, "are read politely, but they have a hollow sound when they should carry the ring of conviction. We have hollowness, not holiness."²⁸ The objective of his sermon was to point out what was lacking from the lives of his congregants and spur them on to become more spiritually focused. He lamented further:

There is often no consuming inner light, no enkindling warmth of soul, no transfiguring holy flame. When we leave our sanctuaries we are not ready to reform and refashion our lives nor are we imbued with the zeal to make the world a better place. We read our ideals in the prayer books, but when we leave our Temples we leave the prayer books in the pews. We do what Judaism never intended to do and what it always stubbornly resisted—we compartmentalize Jewish life—and fail to spread the luminous incandescent glow of the House of God into our everyday lives and our workaday world.²⁹

In this same sermon, he gave his vision of the minimal requirements to be expected of a Reform Jew:

First, a Reform Jew must be an informed Jew! A Jew who knows all about Eddie Arcaro should know at least a little bit about Joseph Karo. He should know the framework of the Bible and be able to recognize the names of the prophets; he should be aware of the sweep of Jewish history and be familiar with a few of the people of the Talmud; he should understand the meanings of Jewish holidays and even have some fluency in simple Hebrew. He should understand some of the basic ideas of Judaism—its essential optimism, its faith in man, its hope for the future, its healthy-mindedness and its wholesome balance. He should know what we teach about an eye for an eye, or love of neighbor, or why we don't accept Jesus. To be a Reform Jew, he must sense a pride in his heritage and that pride must be rooted in knowledge.

Second, a Reform Jew must be a reverent Jew. It's time we stopped being hollow men and became holy men. With all of its insufficiencies, there's dynamite in our prayer book. Who

²⁷ "Hollow-ness or Holiness." A sermon preached by Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman, at Temple Israel of New Rochelle, Yom Kippur, September 26, 1955.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

among us is so unblemished that he does not need the prayer "guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking guile?" In our arrogance which one of us does not need the humility of the prayer that asks What am I, Lord—what is my power—what can I say before Thee?" How many of us have forgotten to say, "Thank you, Lord, for the food we eat, for the air we breathe, for the stars that shine;" how many of us will forget to thank God tonight when we sit down to break bread. A Reform Jew is free to choose his ceremonies and his symbols, but he should enrich his life with their poetry and drama, with their mysticism and beauty. He must capture the mood of open-eyed wonder and reverence as he stands before God. There should be a song of faith on his lips, but it should come from the depths of his heart. He should be reverent.

And finally, a Reform Jew should be a noble Jew. Our ancestors were the people of the Bible. Are we going to remold them "in our image" or fashion ourselves in theirs? What kind of people were they? Is it not curious that whenever we talk about them, whenever we describe them, we never say that they were smart or rich, clever or funny. We do say, though, that they were people of character, that they walked with God, that they were His partners, that they were men of righteousness and moral grandeur. We are their children, and we have the mandate to walk in their footsteps, to make our personal lives models of integrity, and to carry their ideals with us as we travel the high roads of the world. A Reform Jew should be an informed Jew; he should be a reverent Jew; he should be a noble Jew.³⁰

Other themes were important to his congregants, and so Rabbi Shankman expanded his horizons to address those subjects which initially did not seem quite within his parameters. Thus on Yom Kippur, 1969, he gave a sermon titled "The Rock Music Festival of the Jew." In it he reflected on a gathering of young people that had recently taken place in Bethel, New York, Hebrew for House of God. In what ways was Woodstock parallel to the gathering of Jews that occurs on Yom Kippur? He explored those aspects of Yom Kippur that draw us to the synagogue, and suggested that both the conditions and the intentions were not all that different. The thousands of young people who had flocked to Woodstock "were willing to gather under uncomfortable conditions to hear the melodies that touched the core of their beings." Rabbi Shankman asserted that to be the very reason Jews flock to their House of God for Yom Kippur. Kol Nidre, for Jews, has the same effect as Woodstock. It is, in effect, the Rock Music Festival of the Jew.

³⁰ Ibid.

"I Couldn't Find a Place to Park," was the title of another Yom Kippur sermon that encouraged congregants to take stands and make decisions. It recalled the story of a young woman, who when asked by her prospective mother-in-law where she had attended college, replied that she would have gone to Southern Cal, but "I couldn't find a place to park." Rabbi Shankman pleaded with each and every one seated in the sanctuary that evening to take charge of his or her own life, and to actively accept responsibility for its direction.

In 1957, the Board of Trustees elected Rabbi Shankman to life tenure. He agreed under the condition that he would retire by the age of 70. And so he reminded them a few years shy of that date, so that the Board could organize a search committee. After 37 wonderful years, Rabbi Shankman adapted to a new role and a new lifestyle as Rabbi Emeritus. His official "farewell" sermon was entitled "The Blessing of Jacob," and in it he reflected on his many and bounteous years in New Rochelle.

When I came to this congregation as a young man, I stated my aims very clearly. I said that my aims were three-fold. That they were first of all to unify this congregation; to make people rise above petty concern for self; to rise above those miserable aims that end with self; that I wanted to intensify the Jewish life of this congregation, in spite of the black tragedy confronting Jewish life. I wanted the people of this congregation to appreciate our heritage, to see its beauty and its drama, to respond to its mandate of morality and to accept and share in its ethical responsibility.

And I wanted this congregation to take its place in sharing in the spirit of Jeremiah and in the spirit of our Talmudic teachers in all those good community causes which make this community and our land a beautiful place to live. And so over these years of our ministry together, we built—despite a paralyzing depression, despite the rise of Hitler, despite a world war and the tragic loss of sons and brothers, despite the whirlwind of the Holocaust and the unforgettable memory of six million Jewish dead—we built.³¹

For thirty-seven years, Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman had given his congregants the tools necessary to enable them to build. Together they had succeeded in achieving the

³¹ "The Blessing of Jacob." A sermon delivered by Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman, October 19, 1973.

lofty goals he had set out so many years ago, and his vision had become the congregation's self-image.

CHAPTER 2

The Role of the Rabbi as Chaplain

In November of 1937, before the United States had even begun to sense its role in the impending hostilities in Europe, Rabbi Shankman spoke of the "Four Don'ts About War and Peace." In this sermon on the Torah portion *Toledot*, he declared that he was categorically and unequivocally a conscientious objector.

In the face of Pearl Harbor, on December 12, 1941 Rabbi Shankman issued a statement to the congregation of Temple Israel entitled "Facing the War." In it he addressed the issues about which American Jews were concerned. He talked about war itself, his own professed pacifism and about the ideal of peace which then seemed so elusive. He shared his own struggles regarding how to face the war.

Now I have been a man of peace and I have been persuaded that the greatest good is peace. Even in these days of torture, I have struggled for that ideal. I have tried to see that war is madness, stark madness to consume countless billions of dollars, to destroy property preciously achieved, and to waste human lives in which the divine spark gleams. I have tried to hold on to this ideal, but it has become too high and unattainable for me.¹

In December of 1942, Rabbi Shankman received a letter from his close friend, Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman. He informed "Yankele" that he had been appointed to the Army and Navy Committee of the Jewish Welfare Board and of the CCAR. In that capacity he had been asked to contact certain men within his age group regarding the expectation that they would enter the service as chaplains. Rabbi Liebman wrote of his desire to meet with his friend later in the month so that the two could discuss the issue face to face. As a result of the meeting, Rabbi Shankman responded that he would not

¹ "Facing the War" A Statement Addressed to The Congregation of Temple Israel, New Rochelle, New York, by Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman, December 12, 1941.

avoid fulfilling his obligation to his country. He was not prepared to follow through on that duty until "certain considerations of fairness which withhold me at present from immediate action" were appropriately handled.² He felt as though those who had been rejected already, should be publicly named so as to avoid resentment among those who were yet to be asked. He referred also to the fact that he had to be able to convince the Temple Israel Board that "it is the responsibility and the moral duty of men of my years and with my number of dependents to volunteer as Chaplains."³

From the time he was officially asked to serve as a chaplain in the Navy, Rabbi Shankman was extremely reluctant to enter the service in any capacity. A collection of correspondence exists that demonstrates his unsuccessful attempts to be excused from fulfilling the quota for Jewish chaplains. The CCAR Committee on Chaplains was responsible for deciding which rabbis were qualified, and supplying those names to the War Department. Rabbi Shankman had apparently asked a number of questions as to the fairness of this type of draft. From Rabbi Louis I. Egelson's response of January 13, 1943, it is obvious that Rabbi Shankman had inquired as to whether the CCAR had already exhausted its supply of single men, and those men who were married but without children before taking his name into consideration. He also raised the issue as to those who had been physically disqualified.

Despite his minor skepticism towards his necessity in the service, Rabbi Shankman reported for duty at the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, Florida on September 15, 1943. He would remain there until he was transferred in December, 1944 to the Naval Training Center at Sampson, in upstate New York. At their inception, he

² Letter to Dr. Joshua L. Liebman, December 28, 1942.

³ Ibid.

was quite unaware as to the effect that these few years would have on his outlook and his rabbinate.

In a letter dated October 16, 1943, he described his arrangements to colleagues who were then stationed in New York: "My work here is gradually taking shape and I am beginning to be familiar with the set-up and bringing my ministrations to the men of the outlying stations. Jacksonville Naval Air Station is tops. Our set-up here is superlatively good, I am quartered luxuriously, and work only eighteen hours a day..."⁴ He eventually learned how to adapt to surroundings which were not always sufficient to the Jewish community, a skill which would enable him a much greater creativity once he returned to his pulpit in New Rochelle. There was little to the Jewish chapel at the Jacksonville naval station, especially when compared to the Protestant or Catholic houses of worship on base. Rabbi Shankman soon realized that he would have to learn not only how to find and order the appropriate temporary ark for his congregation, but how to survive the bureaucracy involved as well.⁵

During his years serving as a chaplain, Rabbi Shankman wrote weekly letters to his congregation in New Rochelle. In these he reflected on the work that he was doing with servicemen—Jewish and non-Jewish. He described the worship services themselves as "composite in nature: the theology of the Orthodox siddur is blended with the musical responses of the Union Hymnal."⁶ He spoke about the other men with whom he worked, the chaplains as well as the officers and the enlisted men. He would share stories from the life of one of the many men who impacted his own life irrevocably. Through his words, Rabbi Shankman gave the war a name and a face that his congregants could

⁴ letter to Chaplain Joshua L. Goldberg, October 16, 1943.

⁵ Chaplain Shankman's Letter, November 12, 1943.

⁶ Chaplain Shankman's Letter, October 5, 1943.

recognize. Through this humanity, he taught that differences of race or religion were happenstance. The significance was in how one chose to apply those in daily life. For in the end, all these men were Americans—a noble breed in his mind. While still in Jacksonville, he wrote a column for the station's weekly newspaper on the occasion of National Citizenship Day.

"I am an American!"

That is a magnificent statement. Everyone who says it ought to be proud, but no one who utters it should be arrogant. For these words suggest more than the remembrance of past glories, they are more than the boast of our present military might—they are a declaration of faith in the future. As such, they should inspire and challenge us.

We take our Americanism for granted so often that we frequently lose sight of what it means. It is good, therefore, that those who come of age politically and become partners in this nation should have their attention directed to some implications of this heritage. And particularly when a day is set aside for this purpose by presidential proclamation, it should be profitable to us all to think about it.

I am an American! What does it mean?

It means that I came from every country of the earth to build a new, free land with fellows like myself. I am Scotch and French, Irish and Pole, Welsh and Italian, Scandinavian and Czech. I am Protestant, Catholic, and Jew - white, and black and Red Indian. I know the feel of Georgia clay under my bare feet and the cool taste of New England's fresh water streams. I know the smell of the Maine woods and the sultry heat of Kansas City. I watch the harvest moon rise over the Wabash and I grow champion corn in Iowa. I ride the plains of Texas and crowd the subways of New York. I am young and my body is strong.

I am an American! What does it mean?

My musket fired a shot at Lexington which was heard 'round the world. My blood watered the ridges at Gettysburg. I wore blue and I wore gray. I remember the Maine and I remember the Marne. Poppies wash the beachheads where I lay down my life. Mine is red blood, rich as wine, and courageous too. I want to live, but I am not afraid to spill that blood in freedom's cause.

I am an American! What does it mean?

I can sing "The Star Spangled Banner" and the songs of Tin Pan Alley, too. I can recite Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and the National League batting averages. I like the Declaration of Independence, and a coke with my hamburger. I yell "Robber" at the umpire, but I stand by the Bill of Rights. I believe in fair play. The Statue of Liberty is my badge. "Government of the people" is my motto. The little white church is my shrine. The ideals of the Founding Fathers are in my marrow. Brotherhood is my creed. Democracy is my faith. I am a Yankee Doodle Dandy.

I am an American! What does it mean?

My heart bleeds for massacred Armenians and my eyes weep for China's innocents. My sympathies are broad, like this continent. I open my purse for starving Belgians and respond to the call of Greek Relief. I am an American. I

am generous. My motives are clean. I saw this nation rise out of a wilderness and I want to see all men stand on their feet and build tomorrow's world. I want to show them that sectional interests can be merged, that religious differences can be forgotten, that racial antagonisms can be obliterated. I am an American. I am a leader.

Strong of body and red-blooded, I sing the song of human brotherhood and dream the dream of world fellowship.

I am an American! This is my heritage! This is my faith! This is my future!

How his congregants loved to receive his letters through the Temple Topics! One congregant expressed the sentiments of many when she wrote to her rabbi, "I am sure there is not another Clergyman in the world that makes people feel like you make them feel, and I know there simply cannot be one who is admired and loved more than you are." She went on to encourage him to continue his "wonderful letters, and whenever you write, you can picture me reading every single word and wishing I could hear your voice and look up and see you in the Temple as in the past."⁷

Rabbi Shankman gained a great perspective from his chaplaincy experiences. He grew and evolved through the relationships he formed with the men to whom he ministered, as well as through the pain and hardships he observed in their lives, and about which he counseled. This would become manifest years later when, in 1969, he finally spoke out from the bema about the situation in Vietnam. He reflected on his earlier self and how he had evolved as a result of his experiences. "I still believed in peace but I could not stand by – I wrestled with my soul then and I abandoned my absolute pacifist position and on this pulpit I prayed that I was not betraying peace nor being false to my God."⁸

⁷ Letter from Mrs. Ivan Selig, May 13, 1944.

⁸ "Peace, Peace—But There is No Peace." October 17, 1969.

Following his years as a Navy chaplain, Rabbi Shankman became an active member of the National Jewish Welfare Board, serving on its Commission on Jewish Chaplaincy. He was a member of the Prayerbook Committee, a group of rabbis from all denominations who were looking to compile a text whose liturgy would be a bit more representative, and acceptable to the various streams than the current (at that time) incarnation. As he began to travel around Europe for the World Union, he made a point of contacting the Jewish chaplains in his various destinations. He was later nominated to conduct Torah Convocations for two Air Force bases, and traveled to Alaska in the spring of 1959 to do so.

Ultimately, he saw his role as a chaplain in the Navy in the same light as he viewed his role as rabbi to his congregation. He was to reflect on his faith, speak from his heart, and teach through his understanding of both. Rabbi Shankman did this passionately and eloquently:

Oh, let peace be our goal – that someday the hushed glow of a fading sun, when the sky is rich with its soft tints – and purple, rose and saffron merge in the afterglow – when the leaves of trees murmur quietly in a faint breeze – and the magic flight of a winged bird etches itself against the sky – when the heart of man is truly at one with the glory of the sunset and the world is filled with sweetness and serenity – that all men may feel that they are truly brothers – that all men may live in peace.⁹

⁹ "Four Don'ts About War and Peace," November 5, 1937.

CHAPTER 3

Community of New Rochelle Committees of the Conference

On December 1, 1951, the New York Times reported that the previous day, the New York Board of Regents had urged the recitation of daily prayer in all schools.¹ The proposed prayer, which would follow the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, read as follows: "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our country."² The response from the Jewish community was immediate and vehement. Jewish organizations located in New York State issued statements indicting the Board of Regents for fostering divisiveness and alienation within the public school system. Most Jewish as well as Christian groups opposed to this proposal, stated their conviction that prayer properly belonged in the realm of home and house of worship. Inserting prayer into the public schools would blur the line for students between authentic religious experiences and this superficial attempt to inject godliness.

The community of New Rochelle, New York, found itself at the heart of the debate. Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman, the senior rabbi at Temple Israel of New Rochelle, became very involved in this controversy. At this critical time, Rabbi Shankman was the chair of the CCAR Committee on Church and State. Through examining the New Rochelle responses as a microcosm of what was happening throughout the state, it is possible to gain a picture of how the Reform Jewish community of New York addressed

¹Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman, Manuscript Collection #292, Folder 4, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio [AJA].

²"Rabbi Lauds Plan for School Prayer," New York Times, December 9, 1951.

this issue. In order to do this, it is first necessary to understand the background of both the Reform movement's involvement in the issue, as well as those cases which preceded that of New York State in 1951.

The CCAR had often addressed previous incidences of infringements on the wall of separation of church and state. In fact, such infringements prompted the creation of the CCAR's Committee on Church and State. The CCAR had first become concerned with religious legislation in the United States in 1892-1893. These early American Reformers took the words of the founding fathers very seriously, and saw such legislation as diametrically opposed to the idea of religious liberty espoused in the Constitution. Thomas Jefferson and the founding fathers envisioned a society which maintained a wall of separation between church and state. They believed that those times at which church and state become connected, imperil both free democracy as well as Judaism.³

In 1901, the legislature of the State of Virginia removed the word "Christian" from the Bill of Rights of the Virginia State Constitution. The CCAR commended Mr. Pollard, who introduced the resolution which eliminated what they viewed as unnecessary and discriminatory.

A few years later, in 1904, Dr. Joseph Krauskopf, president of the CCAR, commented on what he perceived to be the growing sectarianism imposed upon public schools. Many schools at that time were using Scriptural readings to open school sessions, hymns were being sung at school functions, and Christmas and Easter observances and celebrations were not uncommon. Krauskopf did not oppose the reading of the Bible in school, as long as it was used as literature when being taught in the public

³CCAR Yearbook, 1893.

schools, and not for religious purposes. It was due to these experiences, that he called for the creation of a committee which would address such predicaments as they arose.⁴

In response to Dr. Krauskopf's proposition, the CCAR adopted a motion to establish a committee on Church and State in 1904. There would be five main objects of this committee:

- (a) To create necessary literature on questions kindred to those dealing with all phases of church and state;
- (b) To serve as a bureau of information for communities that shall be engaged in any controversy on the subject of the committee's scope;
- (c) To keep in touch with other organizations working for the same end;
- (d) To examine school textbooks for Christological material and take proper steps against them;
- (e) To watch, or if need be publicly or privately, to correct the public utterances of men recognized as responsible whose words carry weight because of their public or official position.⁵

The CCAR revised their Constitution and By-Laws in 1908 to further develop the purposes of the Committee on Church and State. The modification appears in Article III, Section V, which states that "the Committee on Relations of Church and State shall report on encroachments upon rights of conscience in our country, and shall collect literary material helpful toward the protection and preservation of these rights." The Committee on Church and State was restructured in 1913 in order to have representatives in every state to report on infringements of the principle of separation of church and state. For example, the Committee protested against the reading of the Bible in public schools, and called for a formal rendering of the separation of church and state (in terms of the Bible reading issue) by means of legislation or a vote. Soon after, the Committee

⁴CCAR Yearbook, Volume 14, 1904, pp. 32-33.

⁵CCAR Yearbook, Volume 16, 1906, p. 151.

expressed its opposition against the proposed strict observance of the Sunday Sabbath in the District of Columbia.⁶

Other manifestations of the Committee's involvement with the issue, were their support of the 1910 decision of the Supreme Court of Illinois against Bible readings in public schools,⁷ and their reproach, even against Jews, of the observance of holiday celebrations in public schools.⁸ Any type of holiday celebrations of a religious nature was viewed as a violation of church and state.

A resolution was passed in 1926 which enlarged the committee, so that it now had an Executive Committee as well, reporting four times a year to the Conference. This demonstrates that there was a growing sense of concern among the Reform rabbinate as to the occurrences of violations of church and state separation.⁹

The CCAR summarized their opinions on church and state in 1948, as embodied in resolutions adopted at conferences through the years. Rabbi Joseph L. Fink who was the chairman of the church and state committee at the time, reaffirmed the status quo. He suggested that rabbis are and have always been dedicated to the cause of religion. Religion is important, especially in difficult times. He perceived the undercurrents in American society as such, that it was time for a restatement. The need had arisen for a reaffirmation of the separation of church and state according to American law in order that democracy and religion would be preserved for the coming generations.

⁶CCAR Yearbook, Volume 16, 1906, p. 163, Volume 17, 1907, p. 90.

⁷CCAR Yearbook, Volume 21, 1911, p. 83.

⁸CCAR Yearbook, Volume 22, 1912, p. 108-109.

⁹CCAR Yearbook, Volume 36, 1926, pp. 123-124.

The decision of the New York State Board of Regents in 1951 was not a sudden development. It had been preceded by other situations which created a context in which such a proposal seemed to evolve from the status quo.

The Supreme Court had heard and decided the McCollum Case in 1948. This case questioned the presence of religious education classes in tax-supported school systems in Champaign, Illinois. Religious instructors were brought in during school hours to teach religious classes. But Illinois was not the only state in which the line had been blurred regarding the separation of church and state. Bible readings were a daily occurrence in New Jersey public schools, with the proviso that students could be excused during the reading.

The released time program of religious instruction allowed students to take time from school, to have an early dismissal in order to receive religious instruction. Rabbi Shankman estimated that approximately 2,000,000 children were participating in the released time program in his 1951 report to the conference. A decade earlier, the CCAR had addressed the question of the released time program. The Committee had promoted early dismissal for all students, so that there would be more time, outside of public schools, that could be devoted to religious instruction.¹⁰

Earlier in that same year, when the CCAR met in New London, Connecticut, they went on record as being opposed to any and all efforts to introduce sectarianism into public schools. Reform rabbis saw these attempts as a challenge to the principle of separation of church and state.¹¹

¹⁰CCAR Yearbook, Volume 51, 1941, pp. 124-125.

¹¹Irving Spiegel, "Rabbis See Danger to Public Schools," New York Times, 21 June 1951.

Rabbi Shankman submitted a report as chair of the CCAR Committee on Church and State in 1951, which was unanimously approved by more than 600 rabbis. In this report the rabbis reaffirmed their opposition to the occurrence of certain activities in the public schools. Bible readings, religious holiday observances, and the released time program of religious instruction were the main objections. The CCAR delegates objected to any and all religious observances in the public schools, of Jewish as well as Christian holidays. They opposed any such observances as "improper, illegal, and unconstitutional."

The view they expounded was one that perceived the separation of church and state as being under critical attack in terms of the public school system. As proponents of democracy, the rabbis regarded the public school system as the basis of the American social structure, in that it provides the means by which all children are first exposed to equal opportunities.¹² The rabbis consistently stated that they had faith in the American public school system because it creates no hierarchy along racial or national lines, and affords each student the same rights as his or her neighbor. The emphasis of Judaism has always been upon having this type of amicable relationship with others.

The first Jewish organization to respond to this latest affront to democracy, was the New York Board of Rabbis, representing rabbis from the various movements, via a letter written by Rabbi Harold H. Gordon, on December 13, 1951. The letter stated that the New York Board of Rabbis unanimously disapproved of the recommendation of the Board of Regents to introduce prayer in the public schools.¹³

¹²Report of the Committee on Church and State, 1951, MSS Col. #292, Folder 2, AJA.

¹³MSS Col. #292, Folder 4, AJA.

Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein, President of the CCAR wrote to Rabbi Shankman on December 21, 1951, with the question as to whether the Conference should fight the "proposal for introducing prayers into the schools." Rabbi Bernstein mused that other religious groups and educators seem to be accepting it. He submitted that maybe the Conference should save its "fighting strength for serious things." He did suggest; however, that Shankman look into this issue a bit more closely, by inquiring of other "Jewish agencies, religious and secular," to gauge their reactions. The New York Board of Reform Rabbis had already opposed the Board of Regents proposal, so perhaps the CCAR should act cooperatively so that there would be no infighting.¹⁴

Rabbi Shankman responded to Rabbi Bernstein's letter with the idea that prayer itself is innocuous, but the ramifications of the Regents' proposal ran much deeper. It would produce difficulties and grave consequences. Shankman reported that on December 26, 1951, the New York Board of Rabbis adopted a statement, in which the rabbis "applaud[ed] the motives of the New York Board of Regents," but also stated that they could not support their recommendation because it does "violence to our religious liberties." Jewish prayer consists of certain requirements-distinctive qualities that make it unique from generic prayer. Other religions also have both verbal and physical characteristics essential to their liturgy which would be missing from such a prayer. The recitation of this type of generic, non-denominational prayer, would foster alienation and sectionalism in the classrooms along religious group lines. It would dilute the particularism of their traditions, and also confuse children, by weakening their loyalty to

¹⁴MSS Col. #292, Folder 4, AJA.

the faith of their home and church or synagogue. Religious education, he resolved, must remain the "responsibility of the home, the synagogue, and the church."¹⁵

The 1951 report of the Committee on Church and State referred to the First and Fourteenth Amendments in its summary of current happenings in this sphere. The report reflected the Conference's opposition to Bible readings, the released time program of religious instruction, and emphasized that Federal Aid should support only public schools.

In the statement regarding the error in holding religious holiday observance in the public schools, the report pointed out that it was not just referring to Christmas, but Chanukah as well. This corroborated the staunch belief among the majority of Reform rabbis that there should be no deviation whatsoever from the principle of the separation of church and state even for apparently Jewish ends. This remains an ongoing debate even today. The Committee expressed concern "over present tendencies to lower the wall of separation between Church and State and over the future possibilities of breaching that wall."¹⁶

One of the resolutions of the Committee called for the CCAR to sponsor an institute. This resulted in a jointly sponsored institute that took place May 6-7, 1952, between the CCAR and the Rabbinical Assembly, the association for Conservative rabbis. This seminar occurred over two days--one at Jewish Theological Seminary, and one at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. The institute was focused on the problem of religion in public schools, which was then the hot issue. The speakers

¹⁵MSS Col. #292, Folder 4, AJA.

¹⁶1951 Report of CCAR Committee on Church and State, MSS Col. #292, Folder 2, AJA.

expressed a Jewish point of view and then addressed the question as to how schools could instill proper moral and ethical values without employing prayer.¹⁷

Other groups in New Rochelle, outside the Jewish community, also expressed opposition to the Board of Regents proposal. On December 14, 1951, the PTA of Roosevelt Elementary School unanimously opposed the plan, and was the first organized group to formally oppose the plan. Soon after, on December 19, the Board of Education of New Rochelle opposed it as well, because they found that it was too divisive an issue

Many questioned why there was any controversy over this proposal. The Standard Star, the New Rochelle local paper, printed an editorial in which they recommended that the New Rochelle Board of Education go along with the proposal of the New York State Board of Regents to open every school session with the prayer in question.

Rabbi Shankman responded to this editorial, on December 17th, by restating those thoughts he had expressed in the CCAR report; namely, that children receive equal opportunities, and are afforded equal treatment upon entering public schools. Prayer, however, would divide children and the treatment they receive due to the various formulae of prayer which are employed by different religious traditions. Wouldn't children want to use what they have been taught at home or in their church or synagogue when it is time to pray at school? That would be keeping faith with particular faith traditions. Yet if that occurs, then they'll be divided into separate religious groups. Not only through the words they speak, but also based on the forms that their prayers take—through physicalities like kneeling, bowing, and wearing hats.

¹⁷HUC Bulletin, April 1952, MSS Col. #292, Folder 2, AJA.

Rabbi Shankman reiterated that the public school system is the basis of our democracy:

Our public schools are the foundation-stones of the social structure of our democracy. In the public school system children have that equality of opportunity which is one of the highest expressions of our democratic life; the personality of every child, irrespective of race, creed, national origin, or economic class, is held sacred. Black or white, Christian or Jew, Catholic or Protestant, rich or poor, high or low, every child is given the same opportunity to learn and to be an integral, vital, wholly accepted member of the class-room and school group. A teacher has a peculiar and even a sacred trust and responsibility to see that this equality of opportunity and equal treatment and consideration are accorded to every child. Anything that divides the children, that sets them apart or makes for exclusion is an infringement upon and a violation of our democratic principles.¹⁸

This type of proposed, enforced prayer would promote conformity. In addition, it would be inevitably come to be done automatically, by rote, like the Pledge of Allegiance. It could lead to apathy when children were praying outside of school in their primary worship environments, whether that be home, church, or synagogue (or other house of worship). A good teacher, it was thought, would most likely want children to understand prayer--what it is, its purpose, etc. In this case, it would become a violation of the separation of church and state when teachers began to teach religion. Generally teachers would teach from the basis of their own religious context. Even with the best intentions, a teacher could not help but teach along denominational lines or include his or her own bias.

Rabbi Shankman expressed his apprehension over the "moral crisis of our times," but emphasized that the religious homes (i.e. churches and synagogues) have the religious obligations, and not the public schools. Prayer builds moral character, this is true, but it is

¹⁸Shankman, Jacob K. Letter to the editor, December 17, 1951.

in those environments that the teaching of morality and spiritual values can and should be taught, but not in the public schools.

Philip Jacobson, Secretary of the American Jewish Committee¹⁹, sent a copy of the AJC's Administrative Committee's statement in opposition to the New York Board of Regents recommendation. The AJC's statement of January 14, 1952, reiterates the concept of worship, and asserts that the language and forms accompanying such prayer would clearly lead to divisiveness in the classroom.²⁰ The AJC would later recommend the "Moral and Spiritual Values in the Public Schools" report of the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Alliance, as a basis for study and discussion as to how to inject moral and spiritual values into public school instruction and training.²¹

There are children who come from homes where no formal religion is practiced. What about them? This very question had been asked by the Board of Leaders of the New York Society for Ethical Culture. In a letter which appeared in the New York Times on December 7, 1951, the authors claimed,

The board's recommendation would use the New York State public schools, supported by the taxation of all alike, believers and non-believers, as a proselytizing influence in favor of theistic religion. Millions of Americans do not belong to a church or synagogue, and a great number of them find the theism and supernaturalism of the traditional religious faiths intellectually and morally unacceptable.

¹⁹ The American Jewish Committee was founded in 1906 as a non-congregational organization that would defend the rights of Jews throughout the world. Its mission statement is:
To safeguard the welfare and security of Jews in the United States, in Israel, and throughout the world.
To strengthen the basic principles of pluralism around the world, as the best defense against anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry.
To enhance the quality of American Jewish life by helping to ensure Jewish continuity and deepen ties between American and Israeli Jews.

²⁰ MSS Col. #292, Folder 4, AJA.

²¹ Ibid.

The Ethical Culture Society echoed the CCAR's concern that the classrooms would become divided. Children should be regarded as Americans, and not be separated into groups based on religious (or non-religious) observance. It was interesting to see how the proposal itself soon divided groups according to religious affiliations. Many non-Jewish groups were also quite outspoken in their opposition to the Board of Regents. The American Civil Liberties Union, the New York Ethical Culture Society, Liberal Ministers Club of New York City, United Parents Association, New York Teachers' Guild, High School Teachers' Association, First Methodist Church, and First Unitarian Society of America in Schenectady were all adverse to the idea.

Other organizations and religious bodies endorsed the concept: the New York State Federation of Labor, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York, Manhattan Division of the Protestant Council of New York, Directors of New York State School Boards Association, Methodist Genesee Conference of Rochester District, Business and Professional Women's Club of Albany. Certain Boards of Education, throughout the state (the majority were upstate) were in support of school prayer.

The New Rochelle Board of Education had contemplated the recommendation, but had not yet executed its directions. Other variations were employed throughout the state, ranging from thirty seconds of silence, and protests among certain Christian sects over the fact that there was no mention of Christ in the suggested prayer.

A number of editorials from various groups who were opposed to the idea appeared in the Standard Star of New Rochelle. This led to a citywide controversy in New Rochelle, hundreds of letters in favor and opposed to the prayer issue were

submitted to the Board of Education of New Rochelle. In addition, a number of petitions were submitted, which raised the number of those involved even higher.

Rabbi David I. Golovensky, the rabbi at Beth El Synagogue, the Conservative synagogue of New Rochelle, penned his opposition in the Standard Star. His article claimed that:

parroting, under the guidance of teachers, some of whom are admittedly not in sympathy with the resolution, falls far short of inducing a feeling of reverence for God and appreciation of prayer. I humbly submit that prayer in the public school will do more to secularize religion than to spiritualize the schools.²²

The United Parents' Associations, on January 9, 1952 stated that they opposed prayer in the public schools on the grounds that the duty for religious instruction should remain in the student's home or house of worship.

On January 28, 1952, a resolution from the Board of Directors of the Brotherhood of Temple Israel of New Rochelle was submitted to Mr. Julius Weiss, the President of the Board of Education of the City of New Rochelle. This resolution respectfully petitioned the School Board not to adopt any resolution which would "make it mandatory for the students of our public school system to start each school day with a prayer not of their own choosing."²³

Soon after the debate had been waged in the Standard Star, Rabbi Shankman received support from Reform rabbis throughout the country. These colleagues all expressed a positive attitude towards the report Rabbi Shankman had recently made to the CCAR on this issue. Much of what appeared in his report of 1952, echoes his letters to the editor and other correspondence on the issue.

²²"Rabbi Golovensky Says Prayer in Schools Aids Divisiveness," Standard Star, January 4, 1952.

²³Temple Israel Brotherhood letter to Julius Weiss, January 28, 1952, MSS Col. #292, Folder 4, AJA

All gave a glowing review to his argument, except for Rabbi Philip Bernstein, CCAR President who was still hesitant. He felt that Rabbi Shankman's report might be too negative. It appears as though Bernstein was afraid of rocking the boat. The question of neutrality in public schools towards religion still plagued him. Rabbi Bernstein was not sure whether the schools should be totally neutral. The issues continue today on the question of religion in the public square.

Shankman's 1952 report, just one year after the New York State Board of Regents proposal, claims that the Committee's premonitions had been justified. The Committee states that it still was in support of public education. However, they felt that it was the choice of the individual parent to choose private or parochial education for their children. In public schools, children should have equal treatment, and opportunities, and therefore, in light of previous discussions and debates, prayer had no place in the public school systems.

This was not the Conference's final word on the subject. At their next meeting in Estes Park, Colorado, in 1953, the Committee on Church and State defended public schools as the true equalizer of American society. There were, and would continue to be, those in society who felt that the public schools were to blame for the rise in juvenile violence and corruption of the political order. Those were the people who wanted prayer in the schools, with no regard for the consequences. The ultimate answer that Rabbi Jacob Shankman and the Committee on Church and State gave these dissenters, was that the state, any state, does not share the responsibility of religious instruction with parents.²⁴ The debate was one which would continue to be waged long after Rabbi

²⁴George Dugan "Rabbis in Defense of Public Schools" New York Times, June 25, 1953

Shankman's chairmanship of the Committee, and long after the need for such a committee was seen as obsolete.

Another issue about which Rabbi Shankman felt passionately, was that of Civil Rights. In 1943, a time wrought with demonstrations of unsurpassed cruelty beyond the scope of human imagination, he took substantial steps to preclude such developments within his own community:

In February, Inter-Racial Sunday was marked by the presence in our pulpit of the Rev. Dr. Clarence M. Long, minister of Bethesda Baptist Church, the first time in the history of the Congregation that this courtesy was extended to a Negro divine...²⁵

On April 8, 1943, the Mayor of New Rochelle, Stanley W. Church, sent a letter of recommendation on Rabbi Shankman's behalf, in which he stated:

I know of no Clergyman who has a finer grasp of religion, psychology, and of interpretation than Rabbi Shankman, and who has been more respected and revered in this community. Too great praise cannot be expressed for both his work in the pulpit and in the community, and for his fine character.²⁶

While he was still in Troy, Rabbi Shankman had given a sermon for National Brotherhood Week at a Baptist Church. In it he stated that it was always his goal "to plant more deeply the seeds of tolerance and understanding and to scatter ever more widely the fruit of mutual respect and enduring love."²⁷ He did more than merely preach this; he lived his life by these words.

In 1964, the New Rochelle Community Chest honored him in appreciation of his many years of dedicated service to the community. For many years he had actively devoted his efforts towards this organization, as he felt it affirmed the

²⁵ Annual Report, June 6, 1943, pg. 2

²⁶ Letter of recommendation from Mayor Stanley W. Church, April 8, 1943.

²⁷ Sermon for National Brotherhood Week, September, 1932.

very heart of America's freedom and democracy. As partners in this democracy, Rabbi Shankman felt very strongly that each member was obligated to contribute to its protection. In 1981, the United Way of New Rochelle bestowed a similar honor upon him for his work towards bettering the community. His response expressed his humility, for he did not want the focus to be on him; rather, he wanted to remind people of the underlying cause.

Sister Dorothy Ann Kelly, the President of the College of New Rochelle, a Catholic institution, reminisced about working alongside Rabbi Shankman. She learned from his example the importance of creating a dialogue between the distinctive religious groups.²⁸ He believed wholeheartedly in the uniqueness of America. He strove to transmit that message to his congregants. Community activism is both a Jewish and an American mandate. American Jews are fortunate in having the unique ability to be able not only to speak up and be heard, but they are also encouraged to do so.

Rabbi Shankman's prior experiences and perspective were reaffirmed through his activism in New Rochelle. He alleged that there was no inherent tension between one's Americanism and one's Jewishness. To be a Jew means to be involved in civic welfare and civic issues. This was a redefinition of Jewishness in the face of contemporary society. It was also a redefinition of the traditional role of the rabbi. Through his example, Rabbi Shankman taught the community that to be a rabbi is to participate in and give leadership guidance on these issues.

²⁸ Appendix C, Sister Dorothy Ann Kelly

CHAPTER 4

The Rabbi's Role in World Affairs World Union for Progressive Judaism

Rabbi Shankman's interest in the larger Jewish community was sparked at a very young age. When he was about 8 years old, little Jacob welcomed Theodore Herzl to Chelsea, Massachusetts. From that pivotal moment, his zeal for Israel was kindled. As an ardent Zionist, his colleagues knew they could count on him to be supportive when Palestine was at stake. Whether it was fundraising or letter campaigns, Rabbi Shankman commanded not only his own conscience, but that of his congregation as well. And so it was when he would receive telegrams such as this from Rabbi Samuel Wohl, the Chairman of what was then called the Central Conference Committee for the World Union in Palestine, he would respond with wholehearted support from his lay leadership:

"Responding to the urgent message of Professor Elbogen of Germany and Hon. Lily Montagu of the World Union in England, Mr. Roger W. Straus, Mr. Alfred M. Cohen, Mr. Alfred M. Benesh, Dr. Julian Morgenstern, Dr. David Philipson, Dr. Samuel H. Goldenson and Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, appeal to you for participation in obtaining necessary funds for liberal religious movement in Palestine. Religious needs of thousands is of utmost importance in the present situation and for the future of Judaism. If possible try to obtain subscriptions from a group of friends rather than from congregational treasury. Will appreciate immediate action. Would like to inform London of your participation. Please write."¹

And they would write. There are many references in the file to donations given by Temple Israel (at the hand of then Temple President, Louis Rosett) to funds for various congregations. One example of such a donation was the one sent to the small congregation of St. Thomas, Virgin Islands on April 21, 1938. Louis A. Rosett, the same

¹ Telegram from Samuel Wohl, Chairman, Central Conference Committee For World Union in Palestine.

president who was instrumental in bringing Rabbi Shankman to New Rochelle, wrote to Samuel Wohl on April 21, 1938:

May I also say that I will accept membership on the Palestine Council of the World Union. I have been a member of the Zionist organization of America for a number of years, and have also done my utmost in the East here, to raise money for Palestine, but my attitude among Zionists up to this time, was one of "belonging but criticizing from within", because of my feeling that very little if anything was being done toward the establishment there of religion, as such.²

A grateful response to their support and donation came from Samuel Wohl a week later, dated April 28, 1938:

Temple Israel will have the honor and privilege of being the first Temple to have met its quota and I am very happy in the spirit in which it was done. Your President's letter is worthy of the lay leader that he is, and I hope that you will bring New Rochelle to an outstanding position in the country.

Despite their enthusiastic support, the situation in Palestine grew steadily worse. Urgent telegrams were transmitted back and forth during the next year in an effort to garner support among rabbis and the laity. With the announcement of the White Paper in May of 1939, Jewish leaders in the United States recognized the threat confronting the Zionist dream.³ Their fears were captured in telegrams sent in the weeks following the statement of the British stance on Palestine:

New British policy endangers Jewish homeland in Palestine and American Jewry must mobilize to defend Jewish rights. Action of American Jewry must be registered before British Parliament begins debate Monday. Urge you arrange during this Sabbath service special ceremony for congregation to take Biblical oath. "If I forget thee, Jerusalem, may my right hand wither." As your reply British repudiation Balfour Declaration. Wire immediately your action also giving number of members your synagogue.⁴

² Letter from Louis A. Rosett, April 21, 1938.

³ The White Paper was an official statement announced by the British Parliament on May 17, 1939. It stated the British government's policy concerning Palestine and its intentions to set a quota on Jewish immigration to Palestine. It practically denied the original intentions of the Balfour Declaration, and stated that the original objective of the mandate was not "that Palestine should be converted into a Jewish State against the will of the Arab population of the country."

⁴ Telegram from Dr. Solomon Goldman, Chairman, National Emergency Committee, May 16, 1939.

A week later, Solomon Goldman, the chairman of the National Emergency Committee for Palestine, followed up on his plea of the previous week:

In view of Parliament approval White Paper and universal indignation against British betrayal of pledges to Jews it is of utmost importance to demonstrate to world Jewish determination to continue upbuilding Palestine despite all obstacles. Dedication next Sunday of Palestine Pavilion at World's Fair affords opportunity for overwhelming demonstration Jewish solidarity and determination to go forward with constructive work of building a home for the homeless. Beg you to urge your congregation during holidays and Sabbath services to attend dedication Sunday, May 28, 2pm at Court of Peace where accommodations have been made to seat 50,000.⁵

Perhaps best reflective of his support for Israel, were Rabbi Shankman's words of his Annual Report to the congregation of June 20, 1948, just five weeks after the establishment of the state of Israel.

The bright light of history shows us what we are. As Israel is restored and the flag of Zion is unfurled, Temple Israel of New Rochelle must be above all an arsenal of faith—a Synagogue where the spirit of God must abide, a patch of holy ground illumined by the unfading light of imperishable idealism, a rock on which rests the ladder of dreams which men climb as they become nobler and make the world better.⁶

Rabbi Shankman translated these obligations into material resources when it was required. Temple Israel would stand by its word in order to achieve those dreams which had just become a reality. It was Rabbi David Wice of Philadelphia who first introduced Rabbi Shankman to the cause of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, broadening his colleague's perspective of liberal Judaism. His connection to the state of Israel intensified as he became more deeply involved in the leadership aspects of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. Rabbi Robert Samuels has fond recollections of their initial cooperative efforts on behalf of the Leo Baeck school in Haifa:

⁵ Solomon Goldman Chairman National Emergency Committee for Palestine, May 24, 1939.
⁶ Annual report to the congregation, June 20, 1948.

Your grandfather genuinely cared for the Baeck School. He befriended Dr. Meir Elk, the founder of Leo Baeck, who came to a World Union conference in London in the mid 50's. Jake was there, of course, as one of the World Union leaders. He was taken by Dr Elk's dedication and conception of Judaism and education. Jake decided to work to help Dr Elk. He encouraged Rae Bragman, his education director, to sponsor projects in the Temple Israel religious school on behalf of Baeck. They plastered the whole Temple Israel school building with pictures of the Baeck School, and they raised money in the religious school for Leo Baeck.

After the World Union hired Rabbi Samuels to be Dr. Meir Elk's assistant, Rabbi Shankman and Rabbi Samuels together raised \$75,000 through the generosity of members of their respective congregations. In 1962, this was a great deal of money, and these funds made further development possible at the Leo Baeck School. Subsequently, Rabbi Samuels and his wife would make aliyah in order to promote Reform Judaism in Israel. With the aid of the World Union, Rabbi Samuels was able to found three congregations and really establish Progressive Judaism as a national movement and as an institution in Israel by 1965. He attributed much of this success to the money raised by the congregations in Glencoe, Illinois and New Rochelle, New York.⁷

As American Director of the World Union, and subsequently its International President, Rabbi Shankman enjoyed the opportunity to travel and visit Progressive Jewish communities throughout the world. In 1959, he reported on the various programs served by the World Union. Among these were the International Institute of Hebraic Studies in Paris, the Leo Baeck School in Haifa, the Jewish Religious Union in Bombay, the new liberal congregation in Auckland, New Zealand, as well as the American Reform Services in Paris.⁸

⁷ Appendix C, Rabbi Bob Samuels.

⁸ Report of Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman, American Director, World Union for Progressive Judaism, July 10, 1959, London, pg. 7.

After traveling through Latin and South America and visiting the Jewish communities there, Rabbi Shankman suggested to the Body of the World Union that the region was in need of their assistance. Among the areas he emphasized as necessary to the restore a vibrant Jewish life in that region were "the training of teachers and Rabbis, the translation of Prayer Books into Portuguese and Spanish; and the preparation of educational texts and aids."⁹ The liberal Jewish communities of those countries are still struggling despite the proposal made by Dr. Maurice Eisendrath to provide Rabbinical internships. Under his plan, any rabbinical students who were not eligible or not required to serve as military chaplains would serve World Union congregations. Today there are barely enough rabbinical students (and some years not enough) to serve all the Reform congregations in the United States, let alone elsewhere. However, in the years subsequent to Rabbi Shankman's original statement on the status quo there, progress was made in the region of South America. Congregations were created and Torah scrolls were dedicated with the assistance of the World Union in conjunction with some supportive congregations in the United States.

The Board of the World Union also undertook several projects to strengthen those small, struggling liberal congregations in Israel. Rabbi Shankman expressed the sense that those efforts by the London Center [of the World Union] had been adequate, but that the needs were changing. No longer could the vision for these liberal groups come from outside the land of Israel if the movement was to succeed in the new state.

But we also felt that new ways had to be tried in the new State of Israel and that the former associations would not work, and that whatever groups would be sponsored there must be free to develop a liberal faith which would be

⁹ Ibid; pg. 10.

indigenous to Israel, native and not borrowed, a spontaneous product of the soil of Israel and not an imported commodity from another land.¹⁰

This tension still exists within the Progressive Movement in Israel today; the struggle continues to develop a movement native to Israel soil which will attract the thousands of unaffiliated, secular Jews who are still unaware that there are liberal options available to them. The Reform movement was not the only liberal religious group to battle this issue. Rabbi Shankman, representing the Governing Body of the World Union, initiated a relationship with the newly formed Conservative World Council of Synagogues in 1959 in order to join forces in the effort to alleviate the disparity in religious rights. This alliance was wrought with difficulties, differences in ideology, as well as in opinion as to the appropriate strategy.

Exciting changes were on the horizon for the World Union for Progressive Judaism. Dr. Solomon Freehof, noted orator and rabbi of Congregation Rodeph Shalom of Pittsburgh, would become the first American Chair of the World Union as the Honorary Miss Lily Montague retired from the post. With Dr. Freehof as the Chair, the Center would move from London to the United States. Years later, Rabbi Shankman would visualize the move of the Center to Jerusalem; a goal that was eventually realized during the Executive Directorship of Rabbi Richard Hirsch who would succeed him in that position of the World Union. With Rabbi Hirsch's succession, the position had become a professional one, and was no longer of a volunteer nature.

Temple Israel consistently expressed its commitment as a congregation to the cause of Israel. In the face of crisis, they rallied to her aid. In June of 1967 an emergency board meeting was held in order to "formulate plans to mobilize entire

¹⁰ Ibid; pg. 8.

community to meet grave danger for people of Israel."¹¹ Consequently, the congregation held a special Sabbath worship service to demonstrate that they stood in solidarity with the Israelis.

In his 1968 presidential address to the World Union International Conference, Rabbi Shankman recommended: "that this World Union Conference without accepting any political allegiance to or national responsibility for, or military involvement in Israel, nevertheless accept for itself the pledge of unbroken and ever-continuing kinship with the people of Israel."¹²

Unfortunately, some less constructive circumstances would remain the same until today. In 1968, Rabbi Shankman lamented "*Ad Matai?* How long will the Rabbinic ordination of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion be rejected? How long will Rabbis recognized all over the world be denied their true status and function?"¹³ Reform and Conservative rabbis are still seeking official recognition in the state of Israel. Thirty-three years ago, the following proposals were made to the Prime Minister by the members of the World Union for Progressive Judaism:

1. Progressive Rabbis in Israel shall be allowed to marry those Jews who are registered in the Rabbinate as eligible for marriage.
2. All persons who have been converted to Judaism by Reform or Liberal rabbis throughout the world shall be recognized by the State of Israel as Jews and admitted to Israel as Jews and granted citizenship as Jews, under the Law of Return.
3. The Progressive congregations of Israel shall receive full support and aid from the Ministry for Religious Affairs and the local Religious Councils, in full equality with Orthodox congregations.¹⁴

¹¹ Telegram from Fred Stillman, June 3, 1967.

¹² Presidential Address by Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman to World Union International Conference, Jerusalem, July 3, 1968, pg. 7.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ A Statement to the Prime Minister of Israel, July, 1968, pg. 13.

These proposals have yet to be satisfactorily met. An additional proposal was later added, which demanded "that our Rabbis who are citizens of the State of Israel and subject to military duty should be eligible, without any discrimination, to serve as Chaplains in the armed forces."¹⁵ All of these were brought to the attention of Prime Minister Golda Meir through telegrams and in person when the officers of the CCAR met her in her Jerusalem home earlier in 1970.¹⁶ Regrettably, Rabbi Shankman reported that she was not all that sympathetic to the cause of liberal Judaism. He called for the World Union to employ all possible measures to continue to put pressure on the government of Israel so that the desired rights of equality could be secured for the Progressive movements in Israel.¹⁷

Rights for Soviet Jews was another subject to which the World Union and Rabbi Shankman were devoted. In 1970, Rabbi Shankman recommended that the World Union express to the government of the USSR their "shock and outrage over the continuing suppression and restrictions of Jewish religious life; and I further recommend that we continue to voice these sentiments in the tribunals of nations. The conscience of mankind must be aroused and the moral spirit of the world must be touched."¹⁸

It is amazing to think that Rabbi Shankman was afforded the ability to serve in these leadership capacities at a time when the positions he held were strictly of a volunteer nature. The fact that he was able to fulfill his duties as President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, travel as often and as extensively as he did, yet not be reproached for neglecting his congregation would be implausible today.

¹⁵ Presidential Address by Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman, World Union International Conference, Amsterdam, July 1, 1970, pg. 6.

¹⁶ Appendix B

¹⁷ Ibid; pg. 7.

¹⁸ Ibid; pg. 11.

His involvement in and leadership of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, were among Rabbi Shankman's most cherished privileges. Upon his retirement from the Presidency, he remarked:

In electing me to be your President you have graciously bestowed upon me the greatest honor of my life. No one was more conscious of my own inadequacies than I, and no one was more sensitive than I to the responsibility to follow in this office the uncompromising and incorruptible integrity of Claude Montefiore; the scholarly spirituality and saintliness of Leo Baeck; the inexhaustible energies and high moral fervor of Lily Montagu; and the wise, mature scholarship and balanced tranquility of Solomon Frechhof. I knew better than anyone else that I could not carry the ark; but I prayed and hoped that the ark would carry its humble bearer. I thank you for the privilege and the blessing you have given to me; and to my successor in office, who is my treasured friend and loyal comrade – a truly outstanding Rabbi – to him I pledge my affectionate support and to our World Union I say "L'chayim" – long may it live and grow and prosper!¹⁹

¹⁹ Ibid; pg. 14.

Conclusion

When Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman arrived at Temple Israel in 1937, he found a small congregation whose members were not united, and who did not have a vision for their beloved Temple. The previous decade had been marked by criticism and divisiveness within the congregation. There had been disappointments in terms of the rabbinic leadership, and setbacks in membership—both the numbers as well as the needs of a diverse community of Jews. Rabbi Shankman set forth his personal vision of a spiritual and united community of Jews as the purpose for both the congregation, and his own role as rabbi there. These immediate goals became the hallmark and guiding principles of his rabbinate in New Rochelle over the five decades it spanned.

Rabbi Shankman oversaw both the spiritual as well as the physical growth of the congregation. He inspired his congregants to become more aware and more desirous of the benefits of a strong Jewish education. He initiated ritual practices in the synagogue either before or as they were emerging on the national scene of the Reform movement. Rabbi Shankman introduced programs of Jewish education and culture in the hopes of creating a sense of the synagogue as a center for all aspects of Jewish life. Rabbi Shankman hoped to see the synagogue become a focus not just of Jewish life, but truly a *beit kneset*, a place of assembly for all of the social, educational, and spiritual needs of his flock. His goal was for Temple Israel to become the spiritual home of the Jewish community on all levels.

As the numbers grew, partly due to the demographics of Westchester County and partly due to the exciting developments and the vibrant rabbinic leadership, Temple Israel

became more and more the center for Jewish life of its members. Membership continued to rise as a direct result of the comprehensive and quality programming and activities provided by the congregation. The religious school was already experiencing cramped quarters and insufficient space was available for new programs. This abundance was reflective of the positive view that congregants expressed towards the vision that had become their own.

In 1962, a satellite location was dedicated north of the original building on Webster Avenue. The initial purpose of the building on Pinebrook Boulevard was to house the religious school, but with a chapel and social hall and much larger facilities, it would clearly become the primary (and eventually the only) synagogue. This was not unusual for this particular time period. In big cities around the country, congregations were building secondary sites to meet the needs of the younger families and to provide services closer to the bulk of the membership. What was unusual in New Rochelle was that New Rochelle was not a big city like Cincinnati, Philadelphia, or Washington, D.C., other cities with dual locations built from the necessity of serving a large geographical area. The fact that the congregation was mirroring those developments occurring in the big cities, created a renewed sense of vibrancy among its members. In that dedicatory year, 125 additional families joined Temple Israel. The questions remained as to how to use both buildings. The Board of Trustees in conjunction with the Religious School Committee decided that they would "retain the image of Webster as *the* Sanctuary and home of the traditional religious and familial events, and focus on Pinebrook for ancillary and supplementary activities and for new events."¹

¹ The History of Temple Israel. Pg. 121

For nearly a decade, the Religious School was split between the two buildings, with the younger grades meeting at Pinebrook, and the older grades (including Confirmation) at Webster. The Religious School met on both Saturdays and Sundays. Young people, as well as Post-Confirmation assembled at Pinebrook for their events or classes. Various meetings took place at both buildings. Bar Mitzvahs as well as Confirmation, Graduation, and services were still held at Webster. But in the summer, Shabbat evening services were held in the outdoor Elinor Dubin Memorial Meditation Garden at Pinebrook. On Sunday, June 18, 1972, Rabbi Shankman orchestrated the final and complete move to the Pinebrook facility.

As Temple Israel neared 1800 families, rather than being swamped with pastoral duties, Rabbi Shankman was able to find the time to pursue his own interests. He managed to maintain a high level of service to his congregants, while simultaneously holding an unpaid, volunteer position of international import. From 1964 to 1970 he served as the President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. The congregation felt honored to see their rabbi as the leader of this organization to which so many of them subscribed.

It would be inconceivable today that a rabbi could be devoted to a congregation the size of Temple Israel with only the assistance of one other rabbi, and concurrently fulfill his responsibilities to both the congregation and the movement, while traveling and speaking to the extent his World Union obligations entailed. To be able to be an effective teacher, preacher, and pastor in both venues is even more prodigious. And yet, Rabbi Shankman enjoyed a quality of life for which many modern rabbis yearn. Different

demands and expectations were placed on that earlier generation of rabbis. Upon his retirement, the congregation reflected:

How goodly is thy tent, beloved Jake!
Your Temple rose to these existent heights
Because YOU prompted us to undertake
To set ourselves unprecedented sights.²

² Poem by Nelson Jarschauer, The History of Temple Israel. Pg. 161.

Kiddush

The candles and the cup of wine are the traditional symbols of joy with which our fathers welcomed the Sabbath. They are the tokens of that domestic peace which made of every Jewish home a veritable Temple of love and of every Jewish table an altar of unquestioning devotion.

May they be to us, as they were to our fathers, messengers of the Sabbath, blessing us with light and peace, grace and joy and imbuing us with the love of God and the love of our fellowmen.

Boruch atto adonoy elohenu melech hoolom boray pre hagofen.

Praised art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who created the fruit of the vine.

Amen

(Alternative Kiddush for war time)

The cup of wine is the traditional symbol of joy with which our fathers welcomed the Sabbath. It is a token of that domestic peace which made of every Jewish home a veritable Temple of love and of every Jewish table an altar of unquestioning devotion.

May it be to us as it was to our fathers a cup of salvation which we lift up calling up on the name of the Lord, and in these days of crisis and decision may it imbue us with courage and strength, with hope and faith, and bless us with victory and peace.

The Ten Commandments

These are the Commandments of the Lord: "Onochi Adonoy Elohecho. I am the Lord your God." I have been with you throughout the ages. Pharaoh is gone. Haman is gone. Torquemada is forgotten and Hitler is dead. But the Keeper of Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep.

I am the Lord your God.

Lo yih'yeh l'cho elohim acherim. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make any images and worship them as god. The loyalty of the Jew to God is indivisible. Hannah's children were the victims of Antiochus. Rabbi Akiba was martyred by Rome. But Jews have always said: "The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!"

Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.

Lo sissoh es shaym Adonoy la'shov. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain. Our fathers insisted upon sincerity and holiness. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Above all else God demands the purity of the heart. Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord: he that hath clean hands and a pure heart.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

Zochor es yom ha'shabbos l'kadsho. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. The seventh day was the day of rest. This was Israel's rebellion against human slavery, its protest against unceasing toil. Our fathers took this Sabbath day and made it a day of beauty and joy, of blessing and peace. "Come my friend, the bride to meet—the princess Sabbath let us greet."

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Ka'bayd es oveecho v'es immecho. Honor thy father and thy mother. We are grateful to parents who have given us life and love—who take us by the hand and show us the way. We shall try to love you as you have loved us, and at all times we shall try to live as Jews with dignity and honor.

Honor thy father and thy mother.

Lo Tirtzoch. Thou shalt not murder. Life is God's most precious gift. These words were written in flaming letters against the sky. Man is created in the image of God. Man is holy. Many must live.

Thou shalt not murder.

Lo Tinof. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Fidelity is the cornerstone of the Jewish home. Marriage is sanctified. "Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain who build it." In the home and in the school, at work and in play, the character of man must be incorruptible.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Lo Tignov. Thou shalt not steal. There are no strings, honesty must be absolute. The millionaire must not be a robber baron, the beggar must not be a petty thief. You must not steal people's property and you must not steal people's rights. Governments must not steal by corruption and nations must not steal by aggression. We are our brother's keepers.

Thou shalt not steal.

Lo sa'a'neh v'ray'acho ayd shawkare. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. "The pen of the tongue should be dipped in the ink of the heart." A liar is worse than a thief. Deception corrupts our souls. Truth is one of the three pillars of the world.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Lo Sach'mode. Thou shalt not covet. "Envy a man nothing save his virtues" wrote a medieval sage. Envy disturbs our spirit. "Only once did I complain of my condition" said an old man—"that was when my feet were bare and I had no money to buy shoes. But I met a man without feet, and became contented."

Thou shalt not covet.

These are the laws of our faith;

Today we accept them as the laws of our life.

APPENDIX B

Excerpts of letter to Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman, dated September 26, 1934
From Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman, K.A.M. Temple, Chicago

"I have planned out rather carefully my Sunday lectures for the whole year but will give you the rest of them in my next installment.

Not only, Jake, are our ideology and philosophies still similar but the reactions to sermons likewise are in many respects quite similar.

My sermons have been received remarkably well but there were a number of people who were afraid that I was carrying bombs in my pockets and intended to blow up the institutions from our government through my anarchistic, communistic, socialistic, radical views. As yet, no one has done me the honor, however, of resigning from the Congregation, but I am even more convinced than ever, speaking seriously, that the only way the pulpit has any significance is through a courageous and fearless stand on social and economic problems by its spiritual head..."

"...Now to go to practical matters of a position. I do not think that Hirshberg is looking for an assistant but rather for an associate and when I last spoke with him two weeks ago he told me that the Board had not been planning to take any action until a month had passed and that he would like me to address the Board and tell them what I told him about you and your qualifications. I do not know whether it is true that Jacob Weinstein is coming but Gutstadt told me that Jack has an inside track and that Jack has been here and had an interview with Hirschberg.

I believe that Morgie is pushing you for whatever good position is open and I see no reason for the slightest discouragement. The question that I want you to answer for me is whether you would be interested in an associate position at Temple Shalom. The main disadvantage that I see is in the tremendous load of debt that would be saddled about your neck because, as you know, the Temple is now an adjunct of the Western and Southern Life Insurance Company and that the Rabbi is more or less the Receiver. The possibilities, however, on the north side of Chicago are infinite and nothing could make me happier than to have you and your dear ones within a few minutes of our home. Write me your reactions to my sermon titles and this particular problem of your next pulpit.

APPENDIX B

Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman
2959 Linwood Rd.
Cincinnati, Ohio

July 22, 1936

Dear Dr. Morgenstern,

After much forwarding, your good letter of the 1st reached me here in Cincinnati. It is a source of great joy to me to learn that you have placed my name before the Congregation of Temple Sinai of New Orleans, and I deeply appreciate the glowing recommendation which you gave me.

As yet, I have not heard from them; so I am concluding that they are considering other candidates for their pulpit. Is it fair of me to ask who they might be? At the Conference in Cape May, it was common talk that Rabbi Binstock was strongly favoring the selection of Julian Feibelman as his successor. I have not heard, however, that such an arrangement has been consummated. Can you give me any further information on this matter?

In view of the fact that Rabbi Binstock will be assuming his duties in Chicago by the High Holy Days, it seems to me that the New Orleans Congregation will have to take action in the very near future. I would therefore appreciate an early reply from you.

Again with warm thanks and cordial greetings in which Miriam and Judith join me, I am

Sincerely yours,

APPENDIX B

Rabbi Julian B. Feibelman
Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel
Philadelphia

July 25, 1936

My dear Jake,

I suppose there is a distinct merit in trite and commonplace things. The Platitude is not as bad as it is made out to be. I shall illustrate by indulging one

It is "I TOLD YOU SO." Meaning, I always knew you were a gentleman and a man of parts. You can't know how much I appreciate your letter, and the spirit prompting it. I shall also tell you that no matter what had happened I should not have thought less of you. I did not know that you were recommended, and your voluntary letter to inform me that you would not cut my throat is welcome because it was a letter from yourself. With all the fury of competition, and compromise and the greed going on today, permit me to quote, in reference to your letter: "It restoreth my soul."

As far as New Orleans is concerned, Binstock did give my name. He also gave others, which, between ourselves, always messes up the situation. On top of which Morgey scrambled a few classes of graduates and served them an omelette. I shall be considered when the committee decides to act, so shall all the others. I can't help feeling that Chicago did the thing much more dignifiedly, and a much greater compliment is implied when one man is considered, accepted or rejected, and then another follows in the same manner. Binstock was thus selected, AFTER Lazaron. NO?

So whatever comes, comes, and Gam zu l'tova.
I wish you luck, Jake, and you can wish me luck.

I hope you are spending a pleasant summer, and that all is well with you. Kindest regards to your wife, and with every good thought for yourself, and many many thanks for your unique letter, I am, yours,

Julian

[handwritten at bottom]

No fellow deserves "advancement," as you call it Jake, any more than you. I mean this.

APPENDIX B

THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE
CINCINNATI, OHIO

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

October 23, 1936.
(Dict. Oct. 22)

Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman,
30 Pawling Ave.,
Troy, N.Y.

My dear Jake:

Replying immediately to yours of the 20th inst., there was no need for you to even half-way apologize for writing to me about a change of position. It is a source of great disappointment to me that no opportunity for advancement has turned up for you as yet. That you richly deserve advancement and that you are amply ready to deal with a larger field I am firmly convinced. It would be a source of great satisfaction to me to be able to assist you to get placed in the kind of congregation you deservedly aspire to.

I know all about the situation in New Rochelle; in fact, it was largely through suggestions which emanated from me that the period of Luchs' service to his congregation was extended from January 1 to April 1. Actually, I think that it will be extended until at least July 1 or September 1, although the congregation will no doubt begin to negotiate for a successor on or before April 1. I hardly imagine, however, that any competent and self-respecting person whom they might select would be able and willing to leave his present congregation on short notice less than two months before Shavuot. For this reason, I say, I imagine that Luchs will actually be with the congregation until September 1, 1937, although they may have elected his successor some months before that time.

There is accordingly still ample time to deal with that situation. Of course, if the congregation does communicate with me, as in all likelihood it will, knowing that you are interested I shall of course be only too happy to present your name with a very favorable recommendation. But already I have received a number of requests from other men who, like you, are taking time by the forelock. And to all of them I have had to give much of the same reply. For this reason it would be well if, at the proper time and in a dignified way, you would either have your name presented to the congregation, or would yourself make formal application for consideration by the congregation. You need not hesitate to do this, so long as you do it in a dignified and self-respecting manner. Of course, in so doing, you are at full liberty to use my name for reference. Should the congregation then ask for information about you, it will give me the opportunity to speak a strong word in your behalf."

With warmest regards for yourself and Miriam and a big kiss for little Judith, or is she perhaps now big Judith, I am ever

Faithfully,
Julian Morgenstern, PRESIDENT

APPENDIX B

RABBI JOSHUA LOTH LIEBMAN
K.A.M. TEMPLE
920 EAST FIFTH STREET
CHICAGO

Dictated November 3, 1936

November 4, 1936

Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman
30 Pawling Avenue
Troy, New York

Dear Yankelch:

I received your letter and sat down immediately and wrote a six-page reply to it on Thursday, which I did not send because Morgy was coming to town on Friday to spend the week-end with us, and I felt that I might as well find out what the situation is directly from him.

I did not tell him that I had received any communication from you, but sounded him out on the general situation about this position, and I discovered what I felt to be true, that his letter indicated absolutely no change in his tremendously high regard for you.

You see Morgy had been here the week previous to address Sinai Congregation on its 75th Anniversary, and I was invited to the Mann's for dinner Sunday noon, and in the course of a "schmoosy" conversation in which Mann and I related the peculiar circumstances by which we were "called" to our respective pulpits, and in which we both agreed that applications never mean anything to rabbinical selection committees, Morgy made the surprising statement that he disagreed very much - and that his recent experience had taught him that congregations seeking rabbis pay very close attention to every application that comes in, and that he has now come to the conclusion that the best method and the best chance of obtaining a pulpit is for the man to write a dignified, self-respecting letter, explaining his qualifications and asking to be considered as a candidate.

While we were absolutely out of harmony with what he said, he still maintained this as his own position, and so you see he was not thinking at all, when he was speaking to Mann and myself, about you or anybody else, and his letter therefore is quite understandable.

This was the tenor of the communication Thursday, but I decided to find out from him directly where you stood. This is what he told me:

The present occupant of the pulpit will be there, no doubt, until after confirmation. I told him that I would like very much to see you there, and he said, "Well, I do not know whether this is a sufficiently important position of advancement for

APPENDIX B

Jake, because if he goes there he must be prepared to stay five or six years at least, and in the meanwhile, very big positions must open, and I feel confident that Jake will qualify for one of these. On the other hand" - (Morgy's usual 'Yes' and 'No') - "perhaps a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." - And then, in further discussion I gathered that Morgy is not aware of the real worth and merit of the position.

"Now," I said to him, "What can I do for Jake?" and he said, "You can do this, - since you have relatives there and have more immediate contact," he said, "what you can do is to write a strong letter to your family there urging them to ask the Board to communicate with me at the H.U.C. asking about Rabbi Shankman's qualifications. Then I will be in a position to write a most glowing and powerful letter in return, and he will be the only one considered by myself. That is, if they merely write in to me and say, 'Will you please recommend some names,' I am compelled to give five or six names - but when they write in and ask about a definite individual, I feel myself free to urge the election of that individual. I will certainly do so in Jake's case."

Morgy's whole attitude about you and this position was most flattering and gratifying to me. Now what I shall do is write my cousin as soon as I finish this letter and explain and ask her to do what, perhaps, Charlie Levy has already done - to get busy immediately. I do not believe that it would hurt any of your friends at Troy to keep your name actively in the minds of the Community.

Since I have to bring greetings to a Hadassah meeting in the Temple in a few minutes, I will have to stop now, Yankelch,

I hope you are not too lonesome with Miriam and Judy in Cincinnati. I have so many things to tell you about the Rabbinical situation here in Chicago and my own work, but I cannot do it now, as you understand.

Fan and I send our best love, as always, to you and your darlings, -
As ever, - your unchanging friend,

Josh

APPENDIX B

THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE
CINCINNATI, OHIO

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

December 15, 1936.
(Dict. Dec. 14)

Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman,
30 Pawling Ave.,
Troy, N.Y.

My dear Jake:

Replying immediately to yours of the 11th inst., I am glad to know that you have already heard from Mr. Schooner of Mt. Vernon. Manifestly he has acted quickly, for I had my conference with him only about ten days ago. Since then I have also had a conference with the president of the congregation at New Rochelle. Both congregations have determined to take only an H U C graduate. You are upon the lists of both congregations, and this fact is known to both Mr. Schooner and Mr. Rossett. This fact does not at all create the impression that you are a candidate for two pulpits simultaneously, since you yourself have applied for neither pulpit, but have been recommended by me to both pulpits, and this with the full information of the Chairman of the Committees of both Congregations. If anything, therefore, this ought to add to your desirability in the eyes of both congregations. I have suggested to the President of the New Rochelle congregation that inasmuch, to a considerable extent, both congregations have the same men under consideration, since both congregations are much of one type, it would be mutually advantageous if they could agree upon some cooperative procedure in hearing and engaging the services of Rabbis. The suggestion appealed to the gentleman greatly. He said that he would take the matter up with Mr. Schooner promptly upon his return from Atlantic City, whither he was bound for a few days rest. I believe he was scheduled to be back in New York today. I shall be rather surprised if the two congregations do not work out a satisfactory method of cooperative procedure whereby it would be necessary for them to have a prospective candidate for either or both pulpits come to New York only once to be heard by the committees of both congregations. I can assure you that the New Rochelle congregation as well as the Mount Vernon one has a very high regard for you because of reports about you which have come to them, not only from me, but from other sources. Your chances are excellent, I am sure.

Both congregations are desirable, and would, I believe, constitute a promotion over Troy. New Rochelle is the larger and, I believe, the more desirable, of the two, but the likelihood is that Mount Vernon will act more promptly, since Fineberg's contract with them terminates on January first, whereas Luchs' contract with the New Rochelle congregation runs until April first. For this reason, should the Mount Vernon congregation extend you a call before the New Rochelle congregation is ready to act, I would advise you to accept the call, if, of course, it appeals to you at all. Remember that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush and that one can never tell what a congregation will do.

APPENDIX B

-2- Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman.

With warmest regards for yourself and Miriam and all good wishes, I am ever

Faithfully,

Julian Morgenstern
PRESIDENT.

APPENDIX B

CONGREGATION EMANU-EL
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
FIFTH AVENUE AT SIXTY-FIFTH STREET

SAMUEL H. GOLDENSON, PH.D.
RABBI

December 2, 1936.

Rabbi Jacob Shankman
Temple Berith Sholom,
167 Third Street,
Troy, New York.

Dear Rabbi Shankman:

With reference to the New Rochelle position, I understand that Rabbi Luchs is not to leave it until next spring. However, it is certain that he will make a change at that time.

I wish I could talk to you about conditions around here before you set your heart upon coming to the New York neighborhood. I have found that Temples and Synagogues play much smaller role in the lives of our people in and about New York than elsewhere. The rabbis with whom I have had talks complain bitterly about the lack of interest and loyalty of our folk in these parts. The congregations in the outskirts of New York are made up of shifting memberships. The meaning of that will be clear to you.

I want you to know, however, that you are not the only one that has written to me about Rabbi Luchs' position. A month or so before I heard from you, I had a letter from a rabbi in the middle west who is obliged to leave his pulpit. I am not sure whether he will be happy here, but I feel that I should present his name. My commitment to him is not of such a nature that I cannot talk at the same time about you in this connection. At present, I have a vague idea that I know only one person who has an official place in the congregation. He is a former Albanian, I think. Let me hear from you again.

With cordial personal greetings, I am

Very sincerely yours,

S.H. Goldenson

APPENDIX B

Temple Israel
New Rochelle, N.Y.

Louis A. Rosett, President
John Bloch, Vice-President
Irving M. Kutner, Treasurer
Mef. Emil Samet, Secretary

September 17, 1937.

Rabbi Jacob Shankman,
Temple Israel,
Webster & Glenmore Drive,
New Rochelle, N.Y.

My dear Rabbi:-

As President of Temple Israel of New Rochelle, and pursuant to a resolution adopted at a special meeting of our members recently held, I beg to confirm that subject to the by-laws of the Temple now in effect, you have been retained as Rabbi for a term of two (2) years commencing August 1, 1937, and expiring July 31, 1939, at a salary of Fifty-two Hundred (\$5200.00) Dollars per annum, payable in equally monthly installments of Four Hundred and Thirty-three and 33/100 (\$433.33) Dollars.

In order that our Temple records may be complete, may I ask you to acknowledge receipt of this letter and your acceptance of the above mentioned understanding.

I need hardly tell you that this letter carries with it the personal regards and good wishes of all of the members of our Board of Trustees who have pledged to you their utmost cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Louis A. Rosett, President

APPENDIX B

April 21, 1938

Rabbi Samuel Wohl
The Isaac M. Wise Center
Reading Road & N. Crescent
Cincinnati, Ohio

My dear Rabbi Wohl:-

I am enclosing check for \$100.00. This is in response to your letter for the fund to be raised for the furthering of progressive Judaism in Palestine. This particular movement is very close to my heart because, as a reformed Jew, to me Judaism is a religion, and this work really sweeps away the last barrier in my consciousness, and can now whole heartedly support Palestine appeals without any reservation.

May I also say that I will accept membership on the Palestine Council of the World Union. I have been a member of the Zionist organization of America for a number of years, and have also done my utmost in the East here, to raise money for Palestine, but my attitude among Zionists up to this time, was one of "belonging but criticizing from within," because of my feeling that very little if anything was being done toward the establishment there of religion, as such.

You can well understand, therefore, how I now feel, and how much I appreciate this work which has been started.

Sincerely yours,

Louis A. Rosett, President
TEMPLE ISRAEL OF NEW ROCHELLE

APPENDIX B

December 28, 1942

Dr. Joshua L. Liebman
Temple Israel
Longwood Ave. at Plymouth Street
Boston, Mass:

Dear Josh:

This letter is in confirmation of our recent discussion concerning the possibility of my becoming a Chaplain. As I told you during our interview, I will not shirk my duty, but will stand up and be counted in turn. Nonetheless, I feel that there are certain considerations of fairness which withhold me at present from immediate action.

It seems to me, and also to the members of my Board, with whom I have discussed the matter unofficially, that before I have the right to impose the hardships on my family and cause subsequent inconvenience to my Congregation, that the field of available men be thoroughly canvassed, and when it is exhausted - it will be my turn. There is a wide impression that there is still a number of younger men, or those with fewer dependents than I have whose services ought to be obtained. May I say in this regard that I believe that it would be advisable to give publicity to the names of those men who have been officially rejected as Chaplains, although they volunteered for the Service. Such publicity would help dissipate any feeling of resentment on the part of those men who are appealed to. It also seems to me that there ought not be any extraordinary deferments. If this is a matter of National need, the men should stand up and be taken in turn. That is my position.

I am willing to ask my Board to make the necessary arrangements as soon as I can satisfy them in good faith that it is the responsibility and the moral duty of men of my years and with my number of dependents to volunteer as Chaplains.

Trusting that this statement will meet with your satisfaction, and repeating again my great joy of having seen Fan and you, though having been together for only a little while, I am with love from all,

Cordially yours,

JKS:ERB

APPENDIX B

Box 6

16 October 1943

Chaplain Joshua L. Goldberg
Room 1308, 90 Church Street
New York, N.Y.

My dear Josh:

And Phil and Sam:

My hearty thanks to you three for your cordial New Year's greetings, which I heartily and earnestly reciprocate.

My work here is gradually taking shape and I am beginning to be familiar with the set-up and bringing my ministrations to the men of the outlying stations. Jacksonville Naval Air Station is tops. Our set-up here is superlatively good, I am quartered luxuriously, and work only eighteen hours a day, which reminds me of a pertinent question: What are the three of you doing in New York? Are any changes in the offing? I would like to know, so that I can pull in my sails. I shall be grateful to you for any word concerning such changes.

I hope to have my ark here in the near future, and we are really going to town on our services.

Again thanking you for your kind wishes, and with all cordial greetings, I am

Sincerely yours,

Jacob K. Shankman
Lieut., ChC, USNR.



WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman DLR June 4 1PM
2 Glenwood Ave New Rochelle NY

Essential you attend extraordinary emergency meeting of
New Rochelle leadership at Temple Israel at Pinebrook,
Tuesday, June 6, 9:00 P.M. Must formulate plans to
mobilize entire community to meet grave danger for
people of Israel=
Fred Stillman=

URGENT

Temple Israel of New Rochelle

Mid-East crisis demands we rally to Israel's side. Temple Israel
of New Rochelle is holding a special Sabbath worship service this
Friday evening--456 Webster Avenue--8:30 P.M. Demonstrate your
solidarity with the heroic people of Israel by attending this ser-
vice. Show Israelis you are standing by them through these very
perilous times. This is the time for all our members and friends
to stand up and be counted. "If I am not for myself, who will be
for me?... And if not now, when?"

Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman
Rabbi Peter E. Kasdan
Harold Oshlag, President

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

May 28, 1970

The Honorable Golda Meir
Jerusalem (Israel via RCA)

We are deeply concerned by the unseemly threat by the National Religious Party of your coalition government in regard to the registration as a Jew of a woman converted by our Progressive Rabbis in Israel almost three years ago. It is astounding that the National Religious Party should be so exercised over one conversion that at this critical juncture it would threaten the unity of the Jewish people.

We are especially dismayed at reports that legislation will be proposed to oppose registration as Jews of all such converts in the future.

The State of Israel is interested in increasing immigration including the immigration of non-Orthodox laymen and Rabbis. It is totally incongruous for the State to recognize conversion performed by non-Orthodox Rabbis abroad and then to disqualify the conversions of those same rabbis after they have responded to the call of aliyah.

Progressive Rabbis in Israel have established strict standards for conversions. Converts undertake six months to a year of study, pass an exam before a Rabbinic Bet Din, and undergo t'vilah and b'rit milah. It is therefore clear to us as it should be clear to all that the Orthodox establishment in Israel is not really interested in preserving the halachah but rather in protecting their present monopoly as the exclusive interpreters of halachah.

The majority of Jews in Israel are not Orthodox. We urge the government not to compromise away the right of the majority to a small local minority who have once again demonstrated that petty vested interests take precedence over their sense of responsibility to the Jewish people as a whole.

The time has come for the government of Israel to reject forthrightly political blackmail clothed in the garment of religion and to maintain the solidarity of the Jewish people.

We assure you of our continuing support in the major trials confronting Am Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael.

(Signed) Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, President,
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn, President,
Central Conference of American Rabbis

Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman, President,
World Union for Progressive Judaism

Rabbi Henry Jay Karp, December, 2000

I served as assistant rabbi at Temple Israel of New Rochelle for only 1 year (1976-1977). By that time, your grandfather was already emeritus. His office was down the hall from mine. As a young rabbi, new to pulpit life, one of the benefits that I expected from an assistantship was the opportunity to experience the mentorship of a senior colleague. This is where your grandfather came in. His door was always open to me, and so was the vast volume of his professional experience. Often, I would sit with him and learn at his feet about what it meant to be a more effective rabbi. At first, he had some observations about my "style" which he was reticent to share. After all, such sharing might very well be considered overstepping his bounds as emeritus. I suspect that he also was unsure of how I would take his critique. However, once the ice was broken, he discovered that I was eager to learn from what insights he had to offer, and I discovered that he had so very much to share, and was eager to share it.

But your grandfather did not just teach me about "rabbinic skills." He taught me about the essence of a rabbinic soul. He was truly a humble man. He had accomplished so very, very much, in his building up Temple Israel and in his work in the World Union for Progressive Judaism. He was truly one of the gedolei hador, yet he always carried himself as a simple man with simple tastes; always concerned for the well being of those around him.

I will never forget a story that the "Rabbi's Secretary" told me. It seemed that your grandfather would only wear white shirts (in those days, rabbis only came to work in suits). Well one or some of the congregants wanted to see him vary his wardrobe. So they bought him some ridiculous number of colored shirts. Well, he made it a point to wear each of those shirts, a different one each day. Knowing your grandfather, he did not do that out of fear of offending powerful congregants. He did it out of the love he held for his congregants, and out of a profound sense of gratitude for the act of the giving of the gift, more than for the gift itself.

Throughout my time at Temple Israel, your grandfather was absolutely meticulous in remaining within the boundaries of protocol for a rabbi emeritus. When I served Congregation Shir Hadash, in Los Gatos California (1982-1985), your Aunt Punchy, of blessed memory, was one of my congregants and a close personal friend. When your grandparents came to California to visit your aunt and uncle, Gail and I had the great pleasure of renewing our relationship with them, and this time on a "less professional" and a more personal level. As friends, talking over the dinner table, your grandfather revealed to me for the first time the depths of his feelings concerning the fate of his beloved Temple Israel. The details are not important. What is important is the great extent of his self control to keep these feelings inside of him for all that time within the context of the congregation. He was a man of towering principles!

Let me conclude by sharing two separate stories about your grandfather.

As you know so well, he was a wonderful writer and thinker. Indeed, he was a poet. One of his pieces which I fell in love with was his version of the Ten Commandments, which he included in the Confirmation service he authored.

When I left Temple Israel, to serve as rabbi of Congregation B'nei Jeshurun - the South Street Temple - in Lincoln, Nebraska, one of the things I took with me was a copy of his Confirmation service. In developing my own formula for Confirmation services, I decided to include your grandfather's Ten Commandments. I have done this ever since, and it is still an important part of Temple Emanuel of Davenport's Confirmation. I have always done this with rendering appropriate credit in the text to your grandfather. One year, while I was still in Lincoln, the chaplain from the local Seventh Day Adventist college attended Confirmation. He, too, fell in love with your grandfather's Ten Commandments. He liked them so much that he had them reprinted in a national Seventh Day Adventist magazine, crediting your grandfather as author and me as contributor. However, he did this without my knowledge. One morning, I got a call from your grandfather, who wanted to express his gratitude for the honor I had bestowed upon him through the publication of his work in this national magazine! Needless to say, I did not have the foggiest idea of what he was talking about. Embarrassed at having used his work without his permission, I apologized profusely, but he was both gracious and grateful for the tribute I had bestowed upon him through my actions.

Later he would return that tribute and do so with interest. My installation as rabbi of Temple Emanuel in Davenport took place in February, 1986. I had invited Rabbi Jack Stern to serve as installing rabbi. Your grandfather was dying at the time. I am sure that you know that he planned his own funeral. When Jack Stern stood up to speak at my installation, he told the following story. Your grandfather had invited a few of his colleagues, Jack included, to his home, to discuss his plans for his funeral. In the midst of their discussion, Jack told your grandfather that if the funeral took place over this certain period of time, he would not be able to participate because he would be in Davenport for my installation. Your grandfather simply turned to Jack and said, "That's perfectly all right, for that Henry Karp, he's a real mensch!" I have been fortunate, for as a rabbi for over 25 years, I have received many compliments and much praise, most of which was undeserved. However, as long as I live, your grandfather's statement to Jack will rank in my mind as the highest praise I have ever received. To be called a mensch by your grandfather is truly a wondrous distinction, for in my book they don't make menschen any greater than Jake Shankman!



Rabbi Peter Kasdan January, 2000

"The three years I spent at Temple Israel were my real education in how to be a rabbi. Your grandfather became my teacher – in time, my mentor – and, in many ways, my second father. He taught me how to console others when they were in mourning for a loved one, even as he consoled me when my father died and I became a mourner. He taught me how to teach teenagers – though, in truth, those Confirmands and Post-Confirmands were not much younger than I when I arrived in New Rochelle in the summer of 1966. He taught me how to construct a real sermon – unlike those "make believe" sermons required in Homiletics 101 – and to make those sermons not just educational – but challenging. (As an aside, he never did teach me how to make those sermons short and to the point – it was your grandmother who taught me that – when, on many an occasion, as your grandfather was reaching the 45 minute mark, she would sit up rather straight in her seat which was not too far removed from the "pulpit" and directly in his line of sight and, with her index finger, make a "silent slash" across her neck to remind him that he had "better cut it off there, now!").

He taught me how to become a sensitive listener to those who were hurting, especially those who were in the hospital or shut in at home. He taught me how to share people's moments of rejoicing; though we were never "formally" invited to the *Bar Mitzvah* parties that followed the service (and remember that there were either five or six each *Shabbat*), we went to every single one of them. He kept a handwritten list of the parents and students and the place that the party was held and, when we walked in, we greeted the people wearing the corsages. We stayed for just a while, eating here, drinking there and, when we were done, we traveled back to New Rochelle Hospital to visit the sick. When I left my home that first *Shabbat* Morning in June 1966, I told Sheila (then pregnant with our second and caring for a toddler) that I would be home for lunch by 12:30; little did I know what your grandfather had in store for me that day. When I finally got home at 6:30pm I was physically exhausted, emotionally spent, but wiser for the experience. Luckily, Lenore Oshlag had called Sheila that morning to inform her that I "had not been kidnapped!"

He taught me how to open my home to guests; so often he and your grandmother hosted guest speakers for *Shabbat* Dinner – and always they included Sheila and me. I watched him make the guests feel so at home – and so important. And then, at Temple, he taught me how to properly introduce that guest to the congregation, a skill that I have used so often during my rabbinate and, when I do, I remember who it was who taught me how to do it so well.

He taught me how to care for Jews in foreign lands, especially those Reform/Progressive Jews he served so lovingly and so well. I became a disciple of the WUPJ; today, I proudly serve on the ARZA/World Union North American Board. I have learned to share my substance with Jews in Israel, many of whom have become my friends, who share our home whenever they are in the USA. And I have learned to care about the Jews of the former Soviet Union, even as I worked on behalf of Soviet Jewry for so long. I



APPENDIX C

like to think that he would be proud of my contributions to WUPJ; that he would smile if he could see me with my Israeli colleagues, championing their causes and working to help them build their own synagogues.

He taught me how to deal with local politicians – and how to become a “player” in the community’s affairs – and always to become a leader because I was a Jew who carried within myself the fire of the ancient prophets. And, when as a result of some of those experiences, I became a “t.v. personality”, he taught me how to practice humility (something he was so good at) and never to let the “fame” got to my head. Throughout my rabbinate, each time that I have felt the need to stand up and make my voice of conscience heard, I always heard his gentle voice – that “still small voice” – encouraging me not to be afraid, not to back down, not to go away! I continue to hear his voice even today; still it helps to shape my rabbinate.

As the Chair of the CCAR Ethics Committee he taught me a vital lesson: once you give your word, you must stick to it at all costs.

When your grandfather installed me in Livingston, I felt as if I were the luckiest rabbi in the world; not so much for the new position I occupied, but for the sensitive and loving words he spoke to me in public that night.

APPENDIX C

Rabbi Bill Leffler, January, 2000

What an honor for you to ask me about your grandfather. He was a delightful person and a dear friend of my parents. I do hope you have interviewed your grandmother and Fran Israel also. They should have a wealth of information also.

There are so many things that I recall. Let me start here with just a few.

I remember a Temple Seder which your grandfather was conducting when Aaron Davis was president of the Temple. Aaron came to the head table with the cup for Elijah upside down. No one ever filled it. When someone mentioned that to him later, he was a bit red faced. Ask your grandmother about the two people - one a man, the other a woman - who year after year your grandfather called upon to read Had Gadyah. He did it in falsetto and she in a deep voice.

Then there was the time that my father found a phonograph record, to the tune of Ein Keloheynu, entitled "I Know a Secret." Dorm Israel had a machine at home to make his own phonograph records (78's) and made a copy for Jake. Dorm and my father prevailed upon Jake to come to the Israel's on a Thursday night (his usual night to prepare sermons) and presented it to him with great flourish. The next night the Leffler's and Israel's were down front in Temple when, at the conclusion of services, Jake announced that the closing hymn was Ein Keloheynu. Oops! Too late!

When Jake went into the Navy, my folks hosted Chaplain Joshua Goldberg, the chief chaplain for dinner. I don't recall whether your grandparents were there or not. I can recall a number of years when the Leffler's, Shankman's and Rosett's had Seder at the Rosett's. One of those times your grandmother was pregnant with your father. I recall as a young person being so impressed with Jake's knowledge. He always was able to answer our questions.

Unfortunately, Jake was in service when I was confirmed, so I did not have him as my rabbi at that time.

I also recall that the Temple used to put on a play every year. One year it was a review with a song in it about going to Coney Island for a picnic on Sundays. Your grandmother might recall that one. And I suspect your grandmother can tell you about the times that the Leffler's, Israel's, and Reinach's went to a Mr. Straus' "shack" on the Rappahannock River in Virginia with the Epstein's from Rocky Mount, NC. Jake did not want those not from NR to know he was a rabbi and so he said he was in the fur business. The whole time Mrs. Epstein tried to get him to sell her a coat.

He touched many people's lives in so many ways. He preached at my father's funeral in 1963, which I think was one of the hardest things he ever did. They were very close. My folks, the Israel's and the Reinach's met every Sunday to play gin. Your grandparents were included when your grandfather could make it. Prior to World War II it was a small friendly congregation, with folks who had lived in New Rochelle for a long time as members. It has changed greatly since then.

APPENDIX C

Here's another story:

In 1947, the CCAR met in Montreal. We were there on vacation at the time. Your grandfather took my father to some of the sessions and introduced him as Dr. Leffler. No one ever asked of what.

And then there was the evening there that your grandmother and my mother took us on a trolley ride. The trolley ended up in the barn some how and your grandmother commented about the rather lonely area as a place that one might be either robbed or raped, and she would hate to be robbed.

Recall also, that my connection with Temple Israel really ended in 1947 when I graduated from high school, so my stories are a bit dated.

APPENDIX C

Excerpt from eulogy by Rabbi Alexander Schindler:

"Indeed, though I have been in the rabbinate better than a score years and ten now, I do not remember another occasion such as this which summoned the presence of the leaders of every single arm of our vibrant religious community."

"I speak for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, that family of synagogues of which Temple Israel is a treasured part. Jake Shankman made manifold contributions toward our work's advancement. No aspect of our doing was untouched by his creative genius. He spoke at our conventions, he labored on countless committees and commissions, he served in our highest leadership councils. Whatever he undertook to do, he did with all his might. Ever offering those rich gifts of mind and spirit with which he was endowed. He gave not only of himself but that which by a teacher must be held most dear.

He gave us his disciples.

Some of our movement's finest leaders were nurtured by him and in the matrix of this congregation:

Frieda Rosett and Margery Leffler-Ruckeyser who led NFTS with so much distinction

The brilliant and indestructible Jane Evans

And of course Harry K. Guttman who was elected as the foremost leader of our vast constituency.

Jacob was a master teacher, an enabler who moved others to do.

This is why his life's work was so wide in its scope and effective.

Master teacher, master preacher, a towering intellect

--that was Jake Shankman

and this, above all, a model, an image-ideal,

the "observed of all observers."

Rabbi Robert Samuels, January 2001

I like your project.

Your grandfather genuinely cared for the Baeck School. He befriended Dr. Meir Elk, the founder of Leo Baeck, who came to a World Union conference in London in the mid 50's. Jake was there, of course, as one of the World Union leaders. He was taken by Dr Elk's dedication and conception of Judaism and education. Jake decided to work to help Dr Elk. He encouraged Rae Bragman, his education director, to sponsor projects in the Temple Israel religious school on behalf of Baeck. They plastered the whole Temple Israel school building with pictures of the Baeck School, and they raised money in the religious school for Leo Baeck.

I heard about this while I was an assistant rabbi in North Shore Congregation Israel in Glencoe, Illinois in 1960 - 62. I was very active in NFTY; was the director of OVFTY and was on the staff of and co-dean of several of the National Institutes of NFTY. Rabbi Sam Cook, the great director of NFTY, loved the Leo Baeck School. I had been a student in Israel for two years in the 50's, and my wife and I decided that we wanted to return to Israel to work in promoting Reform Judaism here. So, I went to New York City to meet with Rabbis Sam Cook, Jake Shankman, Hugo Gryn (then Director of the World Union) and Jay Kaufman (Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath's assistant at UAHC). They all agreed to help Baeck if I went as Elk's assistant. Gryn got the World Union to agree to hire me, Kaufman raised the money for my first year salary, Cook convinced Elk to hire me, and Shankman agreed to raise money in his congregation, if I would in mine, to have a nest egg for my work in Haifa.

So, in 1962 Shankman and I raised \$75,000 from members in our congregations. This was a lot of money at the time and was the seed money that I needed in Haifa and that gave me the independence necessary to raise funds to develop Leo Baeck and to start three congregations and the national movement for Progressive Judaism between 1962 and 1965. Without that money my mission would have failed.

Phone interview with Dr. Jane Evans, February, 2001

How was it that so many leaders within the movement came from Temple Israel? How much of that is attributable to my grandfather's influence.

As you know, your Grandfather was a tremendous leader in the Reform Jewish movement and in the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

I think that influenced many members who were tremendous admirers to learn more about the Reform Movement to learn more about the movement than they would have otherwise. They would do this through listening to his sermons, through their conversations with him, through the Temple topics, because he would always write about these subjects which were near and dear to him. And they would follow the general news, which would report on his various activities.

Part of it was the influence of your grandfather, but as different individuals, like Frieda Rosett was involved on the national level—that also helped.

Likewise, other persons, men and women became involved in Brotherhood or on the board of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, or through various committees and commissions.

How did you come to be so involved?

I was involved in the leadership of the Union before I moved to Westchester, because I was already the director of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, for about 15-20 years before I moved from Cincinnati. I was born in Manhattan and was living in St. Louis when I was persuaded after a long period of time to take that position.

What were you doing at that time?

I was an interior designer in business for myself. I was teaching a course on contemporary design for the YM/YWHA in St. Louis. Unbeknownst to me, a member of the class was then the president of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. When there was an opening, she invited me to consider that position. I had a fairly good Jewish background, and I guess she thought that I was a good public speaker. Eventually, water wears away rock. In 1933 I became the Director of NFTS.

When did you move to New Rochelle?

When the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and that National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods all moved from Cincinnati to New York, and I had played a big part in that for the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods raised the money. I didn't foresee that it would be in New York. We thought the building might be next to or on the campus of the College in Cincinnati. I moved back to New York, and was living there before I moved out of the city. I began looking for a place to buy in suburbia and Westchester County appealed to me. The then president of NFTS was Marjorie Leffler (who later became Marge Ruckeyser), and when I told her I was thinking of a house in Rye, she suggested I look in New Rochelle with her as my guide, and reminded me that your grandfather was the rabbi at Temple Israel and would therefore be my rabbi.

I knew of your grandfather through the World Union and other interests and thought it would be wonderful to have him as my rabbi. I decided that New Rochelle was the right place for me and immediately joined Temple Israel.

Your grandfather, as I'm sure you know, was a magnificent orator from the pulpit. He was nationally and internationally known for the depth of his sermons and the beauty and mastery with which they were constructed. As well, the content and the lessons were always significant. I was happily a member of the congregation.

One regret that I do have, is I don't think his sermons were ever published in a book. With the passage of time the message, and the style changes with each generation. That is something that should have been done—I regret that his sermons were never published. Perhaps that is my next project—I have many of his sermons. That could be its own thesis!

It certainly could! That would be wonderful! You would need to do some editing and perhaps some explanation in footnotes as far as what the situations of the day might have been. But that would be such a treasure.

What can you share of your perspective on the growth that Temple Israel experienced during those years?

Temple was growing in those years. Partially because of his standing and partially the demographics of the time. Demographics played a very large role in terms of the growth or decline of the congregation. It is not only the rabbinic leadership that affects this. Today we have many people moving farther North because they think they can get a parcel of land and their taxes would be less too.

One thing that has bothered me both at the time and since; the board at the time of your grandfather's waning years, although in no way waning in his intellectual or physical capacity—the board had a policy of retirement at 68, and I strongly believe although I never discussed it with him or with Miriam, your grandmother, that he didn't want to. He did retire. That policy may still exist. I do think its fair to say irrespective or not of whether this is to be continued, today there is a strong tendency in the rabbinate not to settle on an age at which the individual will retire. Many a person today does not retire. I am an example of one—I have retired more than a few times, and I am still working at the UAHC today.

I considered your grandfather and Miriam close personal friends, and still do. When the time came to go through his papers he had at the temple in his study, your grandmother, Miriam, asked me to help her. I went through them with Miriam, as I knew more about which papers were important in terms of the movement and which should be kept. I was able to sort out what was important and sent it to the Archives. I wanted to be sure that they were not destroyed.

I hope this is all helpful. If you have any more questions or want to know more, please don't hesitate to contact me.



Sisterhood Dorothy Ann Kelly, February, 2001
President of the College of New Rochelle

I became President of the College (of New Rochelle) in 1972, which was just before your grandfather retired. He had been, and continued to be, very active in the community in terms of teaching the Old Testament among the various religious groups. He saw that as a common ground over which the different religions could meet.

I was the Dean of the College from 1967-1972, so I had already had some interaction with Rabbi Shankman by the time I became President.

He was an inspiration for me in his demonstrating the importance of and the ease with which we could talk across the Catholic-Jewish line. He personally extended himself across these lines.

What was so enriching for me personally was being invited to Passover seders in his home. I knew it theoretically, but he was such a good teacher and such a wonderful, friendly, and outgoing person. Rabbi Shankman was a brilliant and very holy rabbi. My introduction to the local Jewish community was initially through your grandfather. That experience stood me in good stead after he was no longer actively conducting his congregation.

I treasure those years of considerable ecumenical work and effort on his part. He really helped get the New Rochelle interfaith community off to such a wonderful start.

Your grandfather was the first leader of all of those efforts.

The Inter-Religious Council of New Rochelle dates from about 1972, right around the time that your grandfather retired. The Thanksgiving service was conducted the second or third year of the Council's existence. In spite of the fact that he had retired, he remained an active member of the religious community, and by virtue of his leadership he was certainly regarded as the emeritus rabbi in the area.

Rabbi Shankman was a great promoter of this kind of acknowledgement of our American roots and the sharing of tradition. He remained involved in the Awards Supper of the Inter-Religious Council to members of the community for their religious and moral leadership. This was mostly a recognition of the lay leadership we were all experiencing.

Temple Israel was always being volunteered or asked for because the hospitality was always terrific there and the space was wonderful.

Those weren't easy activities in the beginning. Rabbi Shankman lent a lot of credibility and a lot of stature to these efforts. These were new things for the community. It was different, and many in our congregations were not that comfortable. But Rabbi Shankman was always comfortable around people and made people feel comfortable, which eased these efforts.

Rabbi Jack Stern February, 2001

I think he was chair of the Ethics Committee of the CCAR, I think he immediately preceded me. I was not on the committee when he led it.

This is descriptive: In those days the rabbinate was different in many ways—rabbis were operative as solo players. He was of a generation that was not of that mode. In the mode of how can I help the most. The solo player would ask himself the question and then proceed. I'm not sure on this but I think that's how the Ethics Committee operated. It was somewhat paternalistic. It employed a different style of using wisdom to dispense directives.

That's what made him in many ways such an influential figure. He had that wisdom and power of insight that worked. I'm not sure today whether it would work or not, I'm not sure if it would be the way to go. Today it is not same *modus operandi*. He was very close with my father in law, Jacob Rudin, who was at Beth El of Great Neck. I am a generation removed. I arrived in Scarsdale in 1962, and was there until after he died.

I'm sure you know the story of how there were a number of speakers at his funeral; the story was your grandmother called me in Scarsdale towards the end, and she said Jake would like to see you. I didn't know at that time that he was that ill. I was President of the CCAR at that time. She told me that he'd like me to say something at his funeral. I responded that I would be honored but I'm not in a hurry, and I hope he's not. She let me know that it would have to be soon.

So when I went to visit with him, he's got this whole thing worked out, he's even got the music picked out. He was a director...

Not too long after, I came over and met with your family—your parents and aunts and uncles were there. I talked with all of you. And your grandmother shared this story with me: The night before he died, Paul Steinberg visited and then as Paul left, he said, I'd like you to say something at my funeral. Paul said, I would be honored. After he left, your grandmother said, Jake, don't you think the service is getting a little long? He replied, Miriam, I've lived for 82 years, they can sit for a little while. I remember as I walked into the funeral, I saw others who were there; Roland Gittelsohn, Alexander Schindler, Fred Gottschalk, Paul Steinberg, Joe Glaser. I went over to your grandmother and asked, Could I tell that story today? It was quintessentially your grandfather. The rabbis of that generation were conductors of the orchestra.

Everyone loved his sense of humor, his baseball stories. He was a rabbi who conducted his rabbinate up and down the age spectrum; kids to old people, he connected with everybody. This always impressed me, rarely would people say they belonged to Temple Israel, they would say I belong to Jake Shankman, and that was indicative. Their connection to the congregation was personal to him. That's changing in the rabbinate. I'm not sure that's a bad thing. He belonged to the generation in which the cult of



APPENDIX C

personality played a more important role. It's much more broad-based now. The associate rabbi can become a part of that too. It used to be a pyramid too, but that's changed.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Papers of Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman

Sermons of Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman

Personal recollections and interviews:

Rabbi Akiba Annes

Cantor Lawrence Avery

Dr. Jane Evans

Rabbi Bruce Freier

Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk

Rabbi Leslie Gutterman (for Rabbi William Braude)

Rabbi Richard Hirsch

Rabbi Henry Karp

Rabbi Peter Kasdan

Sister Dorothy Ann Kelly

Rabbi William Leffler

Rabbi Robert Samuels

Rabbi Alexander Schindler

Rabbi Mel Silner

Rabbi Paul Steinberg

Rabbi Jack Stern

Rabbi Amiel Wohl

Rabbi Andre Zaoui

Rabbi Jacob K. Shankman, Manuscript Collection #292, and Nearprint Box-Biographies, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Secondary Sources:

American Jewish Yearbooks, Volumes 49 (1947-8), 51 (1950), 52 (1951)

CCAR Yearbooks

Volume LXI, New London, Connecticut, 1951; Volume LXII, Buffalo, New York, 1952; Volume LXIII, Estes Park, Colorado, 1953, pp. 52-70.

Additional volumes 14 (1904), 16 (1906), 17 (1907), 21 (1911), 22 (1912), 24 (1914), 35 (1925), 36 (1926), 51 (1941), 56 (1946), 65 (1955).

HUC Monthlies

Volume XIV (October, 1926-June, 1927)

Volume XV (November, 1927-June, 1928)

Volume XVI (October 15, 1928-June 1, 1929)

Volume XVII (October, 1929-June, 1930)

- Antin, Mary. From Plotzk to Boston. Boston: Markus Wiener, 1986.
- Birmingham, Stephen. Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York. New York: Harper, 1967.
- Braunstein, Susan L. and Jenna Weissman Joselit. Getting Comfortable in New York: The American Jewish Home: 1880-1950. New York: Jewish Museum, 1990.
- Cohen, Elliot E., ed. Commentary on the American Scene: Portraits of Jewish Life in America. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953.
- Elazar, Daniel J. Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1976.
- Fein, Leonard, et al. Reform is a Verb: Notes on Reform and Reforming Jews. New York: UAHC, 1972.
- Friedman, Theodore, and Robert Gordis, eds. Jewish Life in America. New York: K'tav, 1955.
- Gelber, S. Michael. The Failure of the American Rabbi: A Program for the Revitalization of the Rabbinate in America. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1961.
- Ginsberg, Yona. Jews in a Changing Neighborhood. New York: The Free Press, 1975.
- Glazer, Nathan and Daniel P. Moynihan. Beyond the Melting Pot. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press and Harvard University Press, 1963.
- Gordon, Albert I. Jews in Suburbia. Boston: Beacon Press, 1959.
- Gottschalk, Rabbi Alfred. To Learn and To Teach: Your Life as a Rabbi. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 1988.
- Green, Arthur A. New York Jews and the Quest for Community. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Jackson, Kenneth T. Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- S. A. Kaplan, Can Persecution Arise in America? Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., 1966.
- Morris N. Kertzer, "A Practical Approach to the Church-State Controversy," CCAR Journal, April 1955, pp. 14-19.

- Korn, Bertram Wallace, ed. Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the Central Conference of American Rabbis 1889-1964. New York: The Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1965.
- Lenn, Theodore, et al. Rabbi and Synagogue in Reform Judaism. New York: CCAR, 1972.
- Lewisohn, Ludwig. The American Jew: Character and Destiny. New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1950.
- Marcus, Jacob Rader, ed. The Jew in the American World: A Source Book. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996.
- Robert T. Miller and Ronald B. Flowers. Toward Benevolent Neutrality: Church, State, and the Supreme Court. Markham Press Fund, Waco, Texas, 1977.
- Menachem Mor, Ed. International Perspectives on Church and State. Creighton University Press. Omaha, Nebraska, 1993.
- Pine, Alan S., Jean C. Hershenov, and Aaron H. Lefkowitz. Peddler to Suburbanite: The History of the Jews of Monmouth County, N.J. Deer Park, New Jersey: Monmouth Jewish Community Council, 1981.
- Polner, Murray. Rabbi: The American Experience. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977.
- Sachar, Howard M. A History of the Jews in America. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992.
- Sarna, Jonathan D. The American Jewish Experience. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1997.
- Shankman, Rabbi Jacob K. The History of Temple Israel of New Rochelle, New York. New Rochelle, New York: Temple Israel, 1977.
- Silberman, Charles E. A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today. New York: Summit Books, 1985.
- Sklare, Marshall, and Joseph Greenblum. Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier: A Study of Group Survival in an Open Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.
- Steinbrink, Richard F., "Shared Time," CCAR Journal, June 1965, pp. 89-90.
- Vorspan, Albert. My Rabbi Doesn't Make House Calls: A Guide to Games Jews Play.

Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969.

Weisbord, Robert G. and Arthur Stein. Bittersweet Encounter: The Afro-American and the American Jew. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970.

Wertheimer, Jack. A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America. Hanover, New Hampshire: Brandeis University Press, 1993.

James E. Wood Jr., E. Bruce Thompson, Robert T. Miller, Church and State, Baylor University Press. Waco, Texas, 1958.



383861

105