

REPORT OF RABBI JOSEPH D. HERZOG OF TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL TO ANNUAL
CONGREGATIONAL MEETING, SUNDAY, April 19, 1964.

A century ago, no Rabbi had ever prepared a "Report" to his congregation. Everyone knew what the Rabbi had done during the year: he had studied continually, davened frequently, and done a little teaching on the side.

In our modern complex society, the congregation has expanded its interests, its activities, its facilities, and its expectations. Despite the fact that study remains as important personally to the Rabbi and to his spiritual life as ever before, each congregation regards its spiritual leader as a veritable "Jack-of-all-trades", intellectually and spiritually. The modern Rabbi is expected to guide and direct the congregation's program of worship, the programs of education both for young people and for adults, to act as administrator of the Temple, as editorial advisor to publicity committees, as ambassador to the general community, as public but circumspect citizen, as cultural community leader, as pastor, counsellor and heaven knows what else.

I think it would be rather "chutzpadich" of your rabbi to list every invocation and benediction offered by him or to mention every book he has read, yet I think you have the right to know the positions of responsibility and occasionally of honor that the rabbi of your Temple occupies, and the major speeches, addresses and sermons he has delivered. With these assumptions, I respectfully submit the following report to you.

During the past year, since our last congregational meeting, April 21st, 1963, I have participated in our community life, outside of

my regular Temple duties, in the following ways: I serve as a member of the Board of Directors of each of the following community organizations: the F.H.Buhl Club, the Family Guidance Clinic of Mercer County (whose nominating committee I also served as chairman), the Mercer County Chapter of the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children, the Shenango Valley Human Relations Council, and the Shenango Valley Jewish Welfare Fund. In addition, I serve as a committee chairman of the Sharon Rotary Club, as a member of the Steering Committee of the Shenango Valley Interfaith Committee on Civil Rights, of which I am also an organizer, a member of the publicity committee of the Mercer County chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and as a founding member of the Shenango Valley Clergy Dialogue Group, which incidentally selected me to deliver the eulogy at our community service of memorial for the late Pope John XXIII on June 10th, 1963. I continue to serve as rabbinic advisor and guide to the Polk visitation program of the Shenango Valley section of the National Council of Jewish Women.

During the past year, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations used a special meditational service written by me as part of the 47th Biennial assembly in Chicago. The Union's Committee on Interfaith Activities has reproduced and distributed my special report on my speaking engagement at St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church in Greenville. The Journal of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, which goes to every liberal rabbi and many others, has accepted two articles by me for publication: one is entitled "Does the Rabbi have the right to Speak for the Congregation" and the other is entitled "Some Reflections on Liberalism and Judaism". The "Jewish Spectator", an excellent national monthly magazine, has also accepted two articles by me for

publication: "A Jewish Concept of God" and "A Jewish Concept of Man: Optimism".

Within the past year I have appeared 14 times on radio station WFAR and seven times on radio station WPIC. One of the radio appearances was as a public representative of the Mercer County chapter of the NAACP in connection with their freedom banquet, last October.

I have spoken, during the past year to the Parent-Teacher Association at the Hadley School in Sharon and at the Columbia East Side School in Greenville. I preached again ~~at~~ the Universalist Church of Girard, Pa., and delivered a major lecture in "The Minor Prophets" in Temple Emanuel of South Hills in Pittsburgh. I spoke to a meeting of the Greenville Conference of Christians and Jews. I spoke, as mentioned before, at St. Michael's church in Greenville and also to the youth fellowship of Zion's United Church of Christ in the same city. Here in our own Temple I addressed the following groups on the function and activity of the Synagogue: Carksville Presbyterian Church, the Greencrest Baptist Church of Camp Reynolds, the Lebanon United Presbyterian Church, and the United Presbyterian Church of Kinsman, Ohio, and

So much for my work in the general community. I think it is proper now to evaluate the program and progress of our Temple.

Last year, in my Report, I made a number of suggestions, all of which were adopted by our Board of Directors and implemented. I am deeply gratified at the spirit of willing cooperation evinced by our Board of Directors and most appreciative of their energy and devotion.

During the High Holy Days of the past year, I delivered all of my sermons on one text, taken from the Talmud: "The World is maintained by three things: by Torah, by worship, and by acts of Kindness." (Avos 1:2.) I would like to evaluate our Temple program and progress to the same text.

No problem is more perplexing to the modern Rabbi than that of prayer. Why is it that our grandfathers managed to pray three times a day and we, their grandchildren, must force ourselves to pray three times a year? Why is it that some want the inspiration of the Temple personally and others want it only because of social pressure? No rabbi knows all the answers and very few of us pretend even to know most of the answers to such questions.

It is customary when one discusses attendance at worship services to regard this as a reflection on the esteem with which the local rabbi is held. I do not believe this is true, either in general or here specifically in Sharon. The service is not the Rabbi's: it is the congregation's. Most of you stayed away from Temple the night President Kennedy was murdered not because of me but because it didn't occur to you that Temple was the place to be that ghastly night above all nights. Those of you who came did not come because of me either, I believe.

Therefore, our thinking this past year has been on the habit of reverence. It is obvious that this habit we have lost. I think it desirable to recapture it. We have instituted a program of lay participation in leading the service so that our Jewish community will again understand that no one can pray for another, that the

service of worship belongs equally to every Jew, that any Jew can pray publicly, and that reverence is not only easy but rewarding. It is much too soon to evaluate the results of such a program, but we hope that within a few years the message will sink home.

Our family service program, on the other hand, is much easier to evaluate. The evening service held on February 28 brought about 175 Jews to Temple, parents and children alike. The young people who conducted the service did admirably and the adults were most impressed by their children's reverence. Apparently we are succeeding in teaching children something their parents may not always practise. The program will continue with two further Family worship services scheduled: one for April 24th and the other for June 10th.

One of the important functions of the late Friday evening service has always been educational. The Torah reading was meant from the beginning to be religiously instructive and the sermon proposes to inform as well as to inspire. Some of you share my regret that not enough of our members avail themselves of the inspiration of our worship nor the instruction and occasional provocation coming from the pulpit. Many congregations have come to recognize, as I think we must, that in this era it will be the printed word which serves as the major avenue of communication educationally between the Rabbi and the congregation.

In order to amplify such opportunities many congregations have established publication funds, administered by a committee of the Temple Board, whose purpose is to place before the membership in some printed form those sermons and addresses delivered in the Temple pulpit

which seem exceptionally worthy of such distribution. Sermons both by the Rabbi and by pulpit guests and addresses at major activities thus serve to benefit even those unable or unwilling to attend the actual event.

My eulogy of President Kennedy is just such a case in point. I felt that my feelings that night were shared by most of you and that most of you would appreciate having them in print. I am deeply grateful for the generous words which so many have shared with me in connection with those remarks. I should greatly have wished that the remarks of Dr. Ellis Rivkin at our magnificent 75th anniversary banquet had been made available to all, for the address was a moment of major importance. I therefore recommend that our Board of Directors give due consideration to the establishment of such a publication fund, to be ^{supported} ~~administered~~ by voluntary gifts rather than by budgetary allocation, and to be administered by a Board appointed committee.

One of the areas which I urged the Board to consider last year was our choir. This year I urge all of you to consider it. Thanks to the dedicated labor of our choir members and to their considerable musical talent, thanks to the genius of our talented director, Mrs. Elaine Tomlinson, and thanks to the hard work of our Music and Choir Committee and its chairman, Mr. Louis Epstein, we have one of the finest musical groups in the Valley. Their singing has contributed so much beauty to our Sabbath worship that I cannot adequately praise them. They sound as a choir is supposed to sound and as very few amateur choir ever manage to sound. To Mrs. Tomlinson and to our choir members we are deeply grateful.

One other matter in regard to worship: for the High Holy Days 5723 - 1952, we were fortunate to have assisting me on the pulpit Samuel Stahl, a product of our Temple, whose mother Pearl is a valued member of our congregational family. Samuel is a student at the Hebrew Union College, preparing for the rabbinate. He was available to us because as a freshman, that year, there were not enough holy day pulpits to provide a training ground for each student.

Last year, at my request our Executive Committee of the Board of Directors studied the matter and decided that the cost of continuing such a program was more than the Temple budget could stand. I feel that the program has intrinsic values both for the congregation and for future rabbis. The Holy Day services bring a great deal of satisfaction to all Jews when two rabbinic leaders officiate, with a corresponding variety and stimulation. Further satisfaction comes from understanding the enormous service we thus render the future of Judaism. I would therefore recommend that the Board of Directors again consider such a program and provide a budgetary allocation to cover it, if not for the coming year then for the year beyond it.

In the field of education, which is Torah, I am happy to report that our religious school is flourishing, and that the attitude of pupils and the ambitions of teachers is as high as can be expected. I will not pretend that our religious school is ideal: we suffer from too little morning time, too little space, and an enormous lack of training in our teachers.

Rabbi Henri E. Front, director of the Pennsylvania Council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, met with our congregation

last Fall and spend a morning visiting our school and conducting a teacher's workshop at lunch. Arrangements have been made to bring Rabbi Front and either Mr. Abe Segal or Mr. Ellis Rosenberg from Philadelphia to conduct such workshops this fall for all our teachers and other interested persons. Both Mr. Rosenberg and Mr. Segal are former associates of mine and are part-time consultants on education to the ~~Philadelphia~~ Pennsylvania Council of the Union.

However, in his letter to the Board Rabbi Front pointed to a number of problems our religious school faces. Most of the problems involve definitions: just what do we want our children to learn in religious school? Not what subjects should they study, but what do we expect religious school will do for them? Make them better Jews? If so, how? Make them scholars? Make them better Americans? Teach them happy attitudes toward Judaism or give them enough Jewish information to live full lives as Jews? I believe that our religious school has gone about as far as it can go without some careful guidance from our entire community. You see, I know what I want from religious education, but I have only one child in school. You have 129 children there, and you are paying the bills. Few of you availed yourselves of the opportunity to meet the teachers and study the program of the school on our two Parents-Partners nights, despite our urging and earnest efforts.

I therefore recommend that our Board of Directors establish a special committee composed of Board members and non-Board members, of parents and teachers, to undertake an intensive study of religious education in the American Synagogue and to make recommendations in consultation with myself relevant to the future direction of our religious school.

One word on adult education; our Spring program was eminently successful, and I am tempted to wonder if this was because it dealt with Christianity rather than with Jewish matters alone. Our course in "Judaism and Christianity in Contrast" will continue next year, but I would appreciate serious consideration by those of you who missed out on the subject ^{about} of the future. To educate our children in habits and outlooks which ^{we} ~~you~~ their parents do not share is nothing but an exercise in group futility. The high rate of intermarriage among Jews in ^{older American} towns as small as this seems to be directly connected to Jewish education. The more Jewish education both parents and children have, the lower the rate of ^{such} ~~intermarriages~~.

It has taken me a while to get to "deeds of kindness", but we are finally here. Last year I made some indirect remarks which I take the liberty of saying ^{again} in another way: our community is like a thousand others: there are disagreements and differences of opinion between individuals. Within the past three years we have, for the most part, kept those disagreements where they have belonged: within the privacy of our homes and personal circles. We have, thus, successfully, prevented our Temple from the becoming the arena for our social and personal conflicts.

However, although the achievement remains one of which we should be proud, there are still ^{rumblings} ~~voices~~ of dissension heard. Some members of our Jewish community forget, at times, the religious nature of the Temple and intrude personal disputes and dislikes into our forums. We must be eternally vigilant to protect the purity of our religious community. We must say firmly: you need not like everyone, but you may not carry on a vendetta within the Temple.

A brief word of thanks and conclusion: as an act of community social fellowship, our 75th anniversary banquet this past Chanuko was an absolute joy. To the anniversary committee and its indefatigable chairman, Mrs. Harry Greenberger, must go a special word of thanks and appreciation for their enormous achievement which reflected nothing but honor upon us all.

Every committee chairman with whom I have been privileged to work has given himself over and beyond any expectation I might have had. This past year was one of harmony and fellowship and it would be unfair to single out two, as I have done, and ignore others. To Bernard Goldstone, our tireless and devoted President, to Irwin Yanowitz, Louis Stein, David Goldberg, Mrs. Bernard Cohen, Dr. Allen Holt, William Goldberg, David Heimann, Morris Miller, Edward Wein, Nathan Routman, Herman Salkin, Harold Rosenblum and the aforementioned Mrs. Harry Greenberger and Louis Epstein, my most heartfelt thanks.

We have worked hard together and achieved some of the good we sought. Our labors have been for the community, our achievements have been the achievements of the community. May it ever be so.