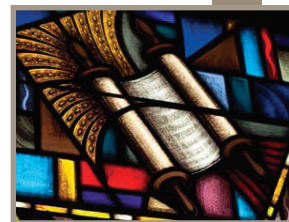


The Reform Advocate

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THE SOCIETY FOR
CLASSICAL
REFORM
JUDAISM

Renewing the Heritage
of American Liberal Judaism
for the 21st Century



SECOND ANNUAL SCRJ INSTITUTE AT HEBREW UNION COLLEGE

As part of the Society's continuously developing programs at our Movement's seminary, the second annual SCRJ Institute at the Cincinnati campus of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion was held on May 7 and 8. The Society built significantly on the scope of the inaugural programs held last year, with an expanded schedule of seminars and, for the first time, two special worship services in the College's Scheuer Chapel. At the opening session, Rabbi Howard A. Berman, our Executive Director, reviewed the remarkable progress we have achieved over the past three years in our ever deepening relationship with the College and its students. Rabbi Kenneth Kanter, Director of the Rabbinic School, welcomed our visiting leaders, and Dean Jonathan Cohen spoke of the great impact that the Society has made on the spiritual and academic life of HUC.



*Stained Glass Window in
HUC Chapel*



*SCRJ board members & students
participating in an Institute seminar*

In the first of the Institute seminars, SCRJ Rabbi Devon Lerner (C'79) and Nadia Siritsky (NY '02) spoke on *Discovering and Embracing the Classical Reform Tradition: Two Women's Perspectives*. They shared their personal spiritual journeys that inspired them to embrace the historic values and observances of the Reform Movement. Common themes in both perspectives included the discovery of the deep spiritual power of the Union Prayer Book's majestic language, as well as the centrality of the Prophetic foundation of religious responses to ethical and social challenges.

Other programs included lectures by Dr. Gary P. Zola, Executive Director, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, on *Chicago Sinai Congregation: An Historical Case Study of a Classical Reform Temple*, based on the new documentary, *Chicago Sinai: 150 Years of Inspiring Reform*; and Professor Richard Sarason on *The Union Prayer Book and Its Antecedents*.

The Worship Services for the Institute were planned and led by Cantor Yvon Shore, Director of Liturgical Arts at the Cincinnati campus, and SCRJ Board Member Cantor Aaron Kaplan, and featured highlights from the great musical repertoire of the Classical Reform heritage. Cantorial and congregational singing were accompanied on the Chapel's new organ, presented by the Society in 2011. Cantor Shore introduced the program with the observation that: "The mid 20th century gave rise to a glorious modern Reform Jewish repertoire. Spurred on by deep aesthetic values and sensibilities, American masters of composition emerged. Their standards and goals sought to envelop each



Cantor Aaron Kaplan & rabbinic student Ari Lorge led worship services in HUC Cincinnati's Scheuer Chapel

going programs. Of particular gratification to our Society Board Members who were present, were the many sincere and reflective comments from students attending these Services, sharing how meaningful and inspiring they found the beauty of Classical Reform worship to be for them personally.

The Institute concluded with the program that has become the centerpiece of this annual event – the presentation of the SCRJ Prize Essays by rabbinic students who researched a broad range of topics on Reform Jewish history,

theology and liturgy. These projects, linked to the curriculum, are supervised by the Faculty, and receive full academic credit.

This year's Prizes were awarded to:

Erin Boxt (Class of 2012), *Israel in Contemporary Reform Liturgy*.

Maura H. Linzer (2012), *Messages of Hope: Spiritual Resources in the Face of the Holocaust in the Union Prayer Book (1922) and the Sermons of Rabbi David Philipson*.

Jason Levine (2013), *Being 'Religious': The Beliefs and Leadership of Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch*.

Ari Lorge (2013), *Rabbi Louis Grossmann: Redefining Our Conceptions of Classical Reform Judaism*.

Michal Loving (2012), *The Concept of Good and Evil Impulses in Humanity in the Liturgy of the Union Prayer Book*.

P. J. Schwartz (2013), *An Analysis and Comparison of the Shofar Service for Rosh Hashanah in Major American Reform Prayer Books*.



Board Members and Staff attending the SCRJ Institute

worshiper in musical brilliance through authenticity, innovation, and artistic integrity. Three pioneers of this Movement: Isadore Freed, Abraham Wolf Binder, and Gershon Ephros, served as great models." These services were led from the *Union Prayer Book, Sinai Edition*, by students Ari Lorge and Jason Levine, both of whom have participated in the Society's on-

The broadening outreach of the Society to Hebrew Union College, both with our programs in Cincinnati and Jerusalem and through the personal mentoring relationships we are building with the students, are truly the “jewel in the crown” of the SCRJ’s mission of “reclaiming and renewing the heritage of Reform Judaism for the 21st century.”

**2012 SOCIETY PRIZE ESSAYS
BY STUDENTS OF
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-
JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION**

The following paper is one of the 2012 winning Society Prize Essays, a key dimension of the SCRJ partnership with our rabbinic students.

**Messages of Hope:
Spiritual Resources in the Face of the Holocaust
in the *Union Prayer Book* (1922) and
the Sermons of Rabbi David Philipson**

by Maura Linzer (Class of 2012)

My rabbinical thesis examined homilies delivered by four Reform rabbis in the United States – David Philipson, Julian Feibelman, Max Nussbaum, and Harold Saperstein – from 1933 through 1942. It documented how their definitions of hope and their calls to action changed in relation to the deteriorating circumstances of European Jewry with the approach of the Holocaust. Additionally, these four rabbis represent different generations, locales, backgrounds, and ideologies that influenced the messages they delivered to their congregants. They struggled to preach sermons that both met the needs of their members and maintained the integrity of their own beliefs.

This excerpt from my research will focus on the writings and preaching of Rabbi David Philipson (1862-1949), of Cincinnati’s historic Rockdale Avenue Temple a member of the first Ordination Class of Hebrew Union College in 1883, and a leading voice in the Classical Reform wing of the Movement. I will concentrate on the years 1933 and 1938 as he struggled to cope with news of the worsening situation in Germany.

Hope and optimism have always been central themes in Classical Reform’s spiritual values. According to its self-definition, the Society for Classical Reform Judaism affirms the “prophetic vision that grounds our personal decision-making and ethical action in the teachings of our faith, as central expressions of our religious commitment as Reform Jews – inspiring each of us in our broader commitments to community service and our hope for peace and justice for all people.” Messages of a hope for peace were found in many of Philipson’s sermons. As my thesis argued that the individual interests and ideologies of the rabbis were one of the most

influential elements in determining the messages delivered in their sermons, one may infer the influence that Classical Reform tenets of hope had upon the optimistic messages that these rabbis delivered.



In addition to sermons, prayer books provide another entry point to a given moment in history. Historian Marc Saperstein writes that contemporary primary sources, such as the sermon and prayer book, are unique windows into history because they “take us back to a unique moment in the past with all its ambiguities and uncertainties, when the future was as opaque to everyone as the future is to us today.” Comparing messages found in a rabbi’s sermons with those contained in the standard prayer book, is a worthwhile endeavor because it allows two different views of the same person. Whereas a sermon was intended to respond to the needs of a specific group of people at a discrete moment in time, a prayer book aims to meet the spiritual needs of a larger group of people over a broader period of time. A consistent thematic message contained in both would be particularly significant as its presence would demonstrate that a value espoused in a few sermons was not an isolated event, elicited by a given moment in history or the needs of a specific congregation, but rather that its presence could be attributed to the broader ideological orientation of the Reform Movement.

David Philipson played a central role in the publication of the Revised Edition of *The Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship* (1922). Evening Services for the Sabbath in this prayer book will be evaluated for their reflections on the theme of “hope”. The presence or absence of messages of hope in this prayer book, revised with Philipson’s participation during World War I, will serve as a worthwhile point of comparison to messages of hope in his sermons during the rise of Nazism (1933), as both were periods of turmoil. It will be argued that similar messages of hope were found in Philipson’s prayer book and his sermons and therefore its presence in both primary sources may have resulted from the optimistic orientation of the Classical Reform tradition.

David Philipson was born in Wabash, Indiana in 1862, but his family later moved to Columbus, Ohio. In 1883, Philipson graduated in the first class of Hebrew Union College, while he simultaneously earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Cincinnati. Upon graduation, Philipson taught briefly at Hebrew Union College before accepting a congregational position at Har Sinai Congregation of Baltimore, where he served for four years. After this brief experience as a congregational rabbi, Philipson returned to the world of academia, serving for two years at Johns Hopkins University, where he did post-graduate work in the field of Assyriology and Semitic languages. In 1888, Philipson became rabbi of Congregation Bene Israel of Cincinnati, now Rockdale Temple, where he served for fifty years until his retirement in 1938. While serving as a rabbi, he also taught at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and served on its Board of Governors.

Outside of congregational life and the classroom, Philipson was a leader, distinguished author, and passionate advocate. In 1885 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Philipson participated in the formulation of *the Principles of Reform Judaism*, known as the “Pittsburgh Platform” that represented the values espoused by Classical Reform. According to noted historian Michael Meyer, this gathering of nineteen rabbis “must be understood as an attempt to lay down a set of defining and definitive principles which would distinguish Reform Judaism from



Rabbi David Philipson, 1862-1949

a wholly nonsectarian universalism on the one hand and from more traditional expressions of Judaism on the other.” The document itself proclaimed the supremacy of Judaism and its continuation as a separate religion, not to be consumed by other liberal religious trends. “At the same time it established Reform Judaism, not on the basis of biblical or rabbinical law, but on a conception of God and morality anchored in,

but also departing from, the text which first reflected it.” Additionally, within the Reform movement, Philipson was instrumental in the founding of the Central Conference of American Reform Rabbis (CCAR) in 1889.

Philipson’s ideological position reflected his commitment to the values of Classical Reform. He was passionate about his identity as an American and was deeply involved in interfaith dialogue and activity - sentiments whose roots lay in Philipson’s strong sense of universalism. Hand in hand with this love of his homeland and its culture came a rejection of

Jewish nationalism; political Zionism was viewed as an obstacle to this universalism.

In 1914 the CCAR decided that there was a need to make revisions to the Union Prayer Book that originally appeared in its completed two volume form in 1895. They believed that “the revision should be more than verbal, but should retain, as far as possible, the structure and framework of the present book.” Philipson served as the chairperson of the Revision Committee. The first revision of Volume One appeared in 1918 and the revision of the Second Volume was completed in 1922.

The Evening Services for the Sabbath in The Union Prayer Book revision demonstrate that hope is achieved and sustained through two different venues: hope and faith in God as the guarantor of the future; and the ultimate source of strength and hope in the message of the weekly observance of the Sabbath. God is viewed as the source of hope in the face of all suffering. One prayer reads, “and when, in Thy wisdom, Thou sendest trials and sorrows, grant me strength to bear them patiently, and courage to trust in Thy help.” God’s back is never

turned on the suffering of people, and human suffering is not without purpose. “When we are tried by sorrow and days of anguish are allotted to us, it is not that Thou hast forsaken us. Thine eye is ever upon us and Thine arm still guides us. God provides the ultimate hope. The prayer continues for all who suffer “...in tribulation, in sickness, in want, in danger of body or soul...let them see Thy help and grant them a blessed release from their trials.”

The inspiration of Sabbath worship provides the other source of hope and comfort for those in need. This can be seen most clearly in the text “Heavenly Father, we rejoice that amid the ceaseless cares and anxieties, the vain desires and wearisome struggles of our earthly life, Thy holy Sabbath has been given to us as a day of rest and refreshment of the soul. It takes the burden from our shoulders, calls us to restfulness of Thy house and the joy of Thy worship, and comforts us by Thy gracious message: Peace, peace be to those that are far and to those that are near.” The figurative light of the Sabbath is described as a means to sustain the Jewish people throughout history in the following poetic way, “the Sabbath light shone into the life of our fathers as a beacon across a storm-tossed sea. It sent rays of comfort into Judah’s tents when the darkness of persecution had enveloped them, and the iron had entered the soul of a martyred people.” Therefore Shabbat is characterized in the prayer book as another source of hope to people in need.

Similarly, faith in God features prominently as a source of hope in Philipson’s sermons in 1933, but Shabbat is not mentioned. In one sermon, “The Song of Hope,” immediately after speaking about optimism and pessimism, Philipson turns to the historical suffering of the Jewish people. Philipson stated: “Possibly no more striking instance of the tremendous influence exercised by the quality of hope, is furnished anywhere than by what is known as the ‘Passover hope’ among the Jews. No people has passed through more gruesome experiences than did the Jews for centuries. Driven from pillar to post, persecuted, mobbed, pogromed and murdered during decades and centuries in all European lands, they were enabled to endure because of the hope instilled by the faith which found constant expression in the words of the Psalmist, ‘the Lord is with me, I shall not fear.’”

God, in this sermon, is depicted as the ultimate sustaining force of hope and life. Another sermon delivered on Passover morning of 1933, “Can We Still Hope?” also prominently featured faith as a source of optimism. Philipson then raised the question that he most likely believed was on everyone’s mind, “Can our German co-religionists sound that note of hope in these darkest days that possibly have ever befallen them?” Philipson responded with a sense of urgency by tracing the chapters of suffering of Jews in Germany and the irony that this suffering had seemed to be a thing of the past for the Jewish community there, who were free and loyal citizens. Philipson argued that Hitler’s systematic cruelty cannot really be compared to any previous suffering of the Jewish people. He said that German Jewry faced ruin and annihilation. He spoke of the harsh reality that Passover 1933 was, for them, a mournful period and that their future depended upon rallying the indignant public for help. Philipson ended his address with a practical suggestion – if the world expressed dissatisfaction with the suffering of the Jews and their treatment at the hands of the Nazis, then “...even Hitler and his minions will have to pay heed. An isolated Germany is a ruined Germany. God grant that these madmen who are controlling the destiny of the Reich may soon be brought to their sense. That is our present Passover hope.” In this way, Philipson’s hope was bound up in a call to action – that the world (he mentions the United States and England, specifically) needs to hold Hitler accountable for his actions. Philipson prayed that the world would intercede. His faith in God was the source of his hope.

Philipson’s emphasis on God as a source of hope in both the sermons and the prayer book are not a coincidence and are symptomatic of the centrality of God within Classical Reform thinking, expressed best in the Principles of the Society. “We believe that Judaism is a religious faith with a universal message for all people. While the search for faith and encounter with God is at the heart of this commitment, we recognize the many different ways in which individuals define and experience their religious belief as Jews.” Therefore, one may argue that the messages of hope in the face of the impending horror of the Holocaust, found in both David Philipson’s sermons and the texts of the 1922 Union Prayer Book, are part and parcel of the broader spiritual tradition of Classical Reform Judaism.

Sources used in this paper can be found on the following page...

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Download a complete copy of the above article, including footnotes, at www.renewreform.org/resources



THE SOCIETY LAUNCHES NEW BLOG www.renewreformblog.org

The Society recently received a generous grant from Leslie Lerner of Shawnee Mission, Kansas, through the Scott Lerner Foundation, for the expressed purpose of creating a social media program. After months of preparation, and with the enthusiastic help of the SCRJ Tech Committee (Rabbi Devon Lerner, Cantor Aaron Kaplan, Dan Lissner, Jordan Friedman, and Kyle Stidham), we launched our new blog site.

With our first few blogs, we increased our Internet presence, attracted new supporters, and inspired conversation. This is exactly what we hoped to accomplish. Our first blogs included a piece written by Rabbi Lerner on the production of the new Society High Holy Day recording. Another was a guest blog post by Kyle Stidham, one of our growing number of college student supporters, who wrote a wonderful and thoughtful piece on his struggle “to wear or not to wear” a kippah. A third blog, a beautiful High Holy Day message, was written by Rabbi Howard Berman. One woman, who found us through our new blog, was so impressed with Rabbi Berman’s message and the Society’s mission, that she posted a note of appreciation and sent a donation to the SCRJ. Here is an excerpt from her comments:

On Kol Nidre, I attended Services [as a visitor] at Sinai Temple in Chicago, and after 20 years, I finally felt I had come home. I am one of those from the “Lost Generation” of Jewish women. The services at Reform temples, where knowing Hebrew is de rigueur, as “Reform” has become increasingly “Conservative”, have left me out in the cold as far as understanding and participating. While there is Hebrew in the Sinai Service, it’s done in transliteration. I found the service comforting.

I’m so glad I found Classical Reform Judaism. It might just return me to my faith.

You can help us reach other like-minded spiritual seekers by “**Liking**” us on our SCRJ Facebook page, at www.facebook.com/classicalreform. If you “Like” us, then you will also be notified whenever we publish a new blog. We encourage you to share our posts with friends, and as you browse the Net, let us know when you find links, topics, issues, and other blogs that are relevant to our mission. Your participation will help us respond to your questions, concerns and interests. And if you have your own blog, please be sure to link it to the Society’s blog.

Your involvement will help keep the conversation going; and together, we can reach more people who are looking for the type of progressive Jewish thought and experience that Classical Reform Judaism offers.




SPECIAL GRANT ENABLES SOCIETY TO DISTRIBUTE PRAYER BOOKS

The Society for Classical Reform Judaism is pleased to announce that a special grant has been received from the

Wallach Family Foundation of Seabrook, Texas, in memory of their beloved husband and father, Rabbi Benno M. Wallach. Rabbi Wallach, who was ordained in 1950 by Hebrew Union College, was a passionate advocate of the Classical Reform tradition, and a generous supporter of the Society from its inception. Following his death last year, his devoted wife, Madeline, approached the SCRJ to explore a memorial tribute

that would continue his legacy of commitment to the broad intellectual and spiritual values of historic Reform. We are very gratified that this gift will be used to sponsor the distribution of the Society's new publication of *The Union Prayer Book – Sinai Edition, Revised*, to every rabbinic and cantorial student at the four campuses of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. This is a unique outreach to our Movement's future spiritual leaders, and will enable us to further our efforts to introduce them to the great heritage of which they are the heirs, and experience the rich diversity of Reform practice and thought today. The Society is deeply grateful to the Wallach family for this particularly fitting memorial tribute.



Announcing
the publication of

THE UNION PRAYER BOOK

A NEW REVISION OF THE UPB - SINAI EDITION

The Union Prayer Book: Sinai Edition, Revised is a contemporary language, gender-neutral liturgy for Reform congregations wishing to maintain the historic worship traditions of our Movement's heritage. Preserving the beloved texts and cadences of the 1940 *Union Prayer Book*, the *Sinai Edition* also embraces the newest developments in Jewish liturgical responses to the realities of our time – a heightened awareness of inclusive language and a recognition of the spiritual challenges of the transforming events of Jewish history in this generation.

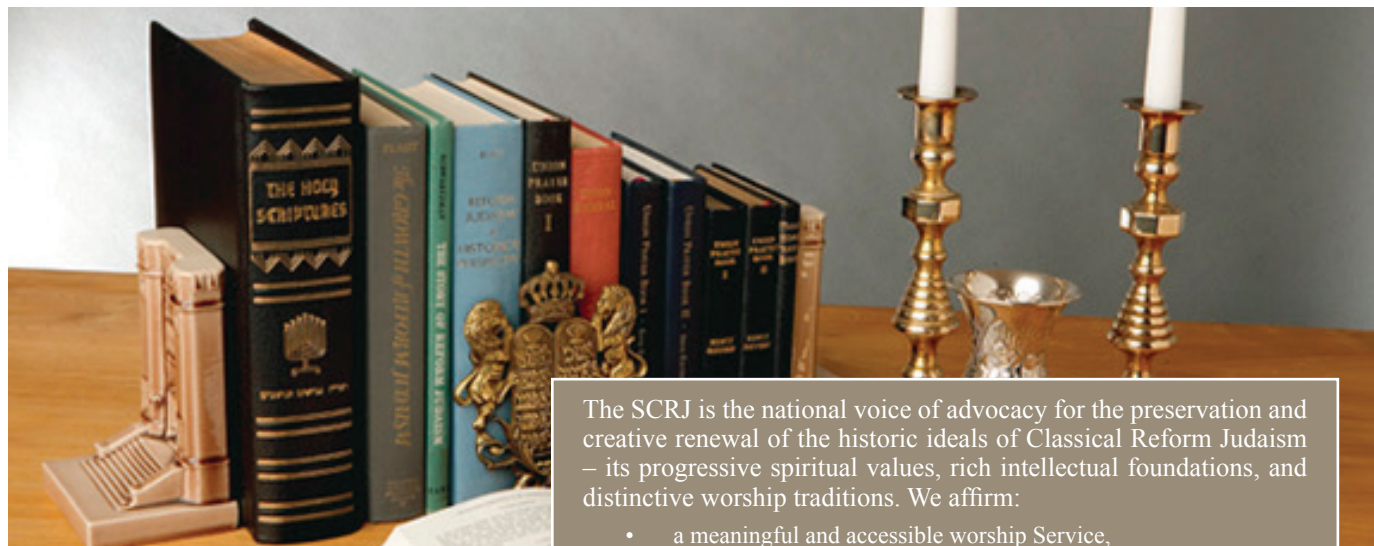
The new *Union Prayer Book* is conceived to be used in a broad variety of ways—as a congregation's major liturgy or as an alternative resource for worship services reflecting the traditions of our distinctive Reform heritage. The "UPB" is now available once again for those who cherish this tradition, as well as for a new generation seeking an accessible, embracing spiritual experience.

For further information and to order, please contact:

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877.326.1400 toll-free
www.renewreform.org

For further information and to order, please contact: **Chicago Sinai Congregation at 312.867.7000 or www.chicagosinai.org or The Society for Classical Reform Judaism at 877.326.1400 or www.renewreform.org. Cost: \$25 per copy, plus postage.**



The SCRJ is the national voice of advocacy for the preservation and creative renewal of the historic ideals of Classical Reform Judaism – its progressive spiritual values, rich intellectual foundations, and distinctive worship traditions. We affirm:

- a meaningful and accessible worship Service, primarily in English
- the ethical values, grounded in the timeless, universal vision of our Hebrew Prophets, that inspire our personal decision making and communal responsibility as primary expressions of our religious commitment as Jews
- the centrality of the American experience in our Jewish identity
- a warm, unconditional welcome and support for interfaith families

The integrity and inspiration of our Classical Reform heritage have continuing vitality and relevance for a new generation of Jews today.

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