

programs, and when we would venture forth into those settings, assuming we could afford the hotel costs, we often found old classmates patronizing us because we had 'ended up' in such marginal settings. (Some congregational colleagues, or course, had the same experiences.) Eventually, most of us, who knew that our rabbinate were both important and satisfying, decided that our egos didn't need the bruising, our pocketbooks didn't need the fleecing, and that conventions of our professional colleagues were more intimate, more challenging and more relevant to our concerns. We learned, in short, how to live without the Conference. Now suddenly the Conference realizes that it made a big mistake over the years . . . 'Come back!' the Conference calls to us, but for many of us it is too late . . . 'But we want to learn from you!' the Conference says, but most of us are too busy with our own work. 'We'll subsidize your travel, we'll find you inexpensive lodgings' . . . but no one wants to seem like a mendicant. Many of us say that you (the CCAR) lost your chance years ago."

The Convention Program

This year's CCAR Miami Beach conference was scheduled to be the most varied, the most stimulating, the most *encompassing* of any rabbinic convocation on this continent. We need, Rabbi Levy declared, "to give the Conference another chance."

Undoubtedly, Levy's assertions are valid and, as Rabbi Elaine Zecher of Boston's Temple Israel elaborated, there were ten "really good reasons" why rabbis should attend the Miami convention. Let us see what they were:

1. Rabbis can study all day and in fact from the morning until dinner time and then again as a late night option. One session each day was geared to spouses and one each day was in the Hebrew language altogether. (It is certainly not in the spirit of an authentic Reform Judaism that English speakers exercise their ability in the area of Israeli non-theological Hebrew. Or is this an attempt to impress either the Israeli non-Reform Jews or, alternatively, the Orthodox rabbinate? Aside from such considerations, it would seem more than questionable that rabbis and their spouses would want to study the Talmud all day and much of the night.)

2. Rabbis could take part in numerous "meaningful" worship experiences and "wonderful models of worship in smaller groups." (With all of these worship experiences, rabbis who are attuned to really meaningful prayer sessions may be the losers. Arrangers of these conferences have consistently refused to provide inspirational organ accompaniments, although banjo-equipped performers are in good supply).

3. A central Conference worship service proceeded on Monday morning at the hotel and was preceded by a study or the weekly Old Testamentary section from Moses' Five Books. A newly inaugurated "Conference Choir" led the singing. (Without organ accompaniment, to be sure, and quite certainly not with the singing of the truly great synagogal composers' music.)

4. There was a track system that replaced workshops, i.e. eleven different areas from which to select, spending either all of the nine hours with one topic or "jumping" tracks. And here they were: The Sabbath (improperly referred to as "Shabbath," as if the proceedings took place in Kiryath Arba rather than in the United States), Leadership, Transforming the Synagogue (into a replica of Ponevezher Yeshiva in Bnai Brak?), Authentic Jewish Decision Making (i.e. on such earth-shaking issues as keeping a glatt-kosher kitchen facility in Reform temples or encouraging women rabbis to don Zarathustrian amulets/tefillin), "Tikkun Olam," that is improving the world, Health/Healing/Medicine, Defining Your Rabbinate, Life Cycle, Jewish Education and —finally— Worship (i.e. replacing organ music by guitars or banjos and cantors by guitar-playing minstrels while retaining the appellation of chazan/cantor for them).

5. An enticement for attendance by institution of what was called a "Kallah," i.e. a sort of Retreat or Assembly (not to be confused with kallah-bride) for those wanting to focus on issues: Dealing with Death and Dying, Improving Our Hebrew Skills, Conference Choir, Congregational Systems Inventory, How to Build Relationships, Congregational Expectations in Worship.

6. Central issues were not to be ignored, wherefore three study sessions of twelve simultaneous panels were to apply to the topics of (a) the Republic of Israel and Zionism, (b) Patrilineality,

(c) Sexual Values, (d) Literacy in Hebrew.

7. Business sessions were "succinct, cogent, focused."

8. There were late night options for which rabbis could select study of the Scriptures and Talmudic commentaries, an Open Mike night, an Improvised Group, Ice cream social and songfest. It may be assumed that the ice cream social proceeded under the supervision of the Chief Mashgiach, recently instituted by the World Union for Progressive Judaism and supported by the HUC-JIR, the UAHC and the CCAR. In order to become ever more acceptable to the Orthodox rabbinate, this Mashgiach (supervisor) was charged with the task of seeing to it that all milk products were in conformity with the regulations (Shulchan Aruch) on assuring *cholov yisroel*, i.e. kosher milk of cows or of sheep or goats, not tainted by the milk of non-kosher animals such as donkeys.

9. Hebrew Union College provided a unique "Shiur" (Orthodox Talmud/Shulchan Aruch study session) program; in accordance with strictly Orthodox laws, this hour of learning was terminated with a "siyyum" and a "kaddish de'rabbanan" — i.e. use of a festive meal and the recitation of an extended Kaddish exhortation.

Finally, (10) an Installation service and Closing Night program was designed creatively, so that all of the registrants would wish that the conference ought to have lasted longer than it did.

Why Reform Rabbis Should Celebrate Reform Judaism — Who's Fooling Whom?

Since being installed as CCAR president, Rabbi Richard Levy captured the heart of the issue, namely that Reform rabbis should be emphasizing their *Reform* Judaism and rabbinical status.

"Let's face it," he called out to his colleagues, "we retain our membership in the CCAR not as a hedge lest we need its placement services one day; we remain members because we are *Reform* Jews and *Reform* rabbis."

Well, more power to Rabbi Levy for finally stressing the particular denominational status, one which those in the fellowship of authentic Reform(ed) Judaism have ceaselessly celebrated, and

(Continued on page 14)