

can I be American?” the question now became: “How can I be Jewish?”

It was in this context that in 1999, in Pittsburgh, the CCAR issued its latest statement, the Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism (Pittsburgh II), which may be seen as an attempt to “re-Judaize” and spiritualize the Movement. With “so many individuals... striving for religious meaning, moral purpose, and a sense of community,” the document’s principal author, Rabbi Richard Levy, invited “all Reform Jews to engage in a dialogue with the sources of our tradition [and...] to transform our lives through holiness.” *Mishkan T’filah: A New Reform Siddur* (CCAR Press) similarly pointed toward re-Judaization, reinstating ideas and practices (such as the wearing of *t’fillin*) that had been discarded by Reform rabbis in earlier generations.

How has the congregational rabbi’s role changed over time?

The most significant change in the Reform rabbinate in the last century occurred in 1972, when Sally Priesand became the first woman to be ordained by HUC-JIR, opening up women’s religious leadership in the Movement, which then transformed Reform Judaism intellectually, culturally, and spiritually. The era of the rabbi as great preacher is, by and large, behind us. The rabbi as a critical scholar has also diminished to some extent—the 2,000 or so non-rabbinic scholars with Ph.D.s in Jewish history or literature are often filling that role, especially on college campuses. Instead, congregational rabbis are increasingly called upon to be personal spiritual guides for their congregants and the community-at-large, and to juggle new, increasingly complex responsibilities. Not only are they the religious, spiritual, educational, pastoral, and organizational leaders of their communities; they are also expected to be community organizers, outreach experts, technology mavens, financial and personnel managers, social justice advocates, membership recruiters, Middle East experts, and more.

To help rabbis excel in so many roles, the Central Conference of American Rabbis now offers intensive train-

ing seminars in being the “CEO” (Chief Engagement Officer) as well as continuing education in such areas as contracts, organizational systems, fundraising, and, as always, Torah study. Recently the Conference also inaugurated a study trip for CCAR rabbis who had never led a trip to Israel, focusing on the issues that arise when bringing a group of first-timers to the Jewish State.

Where do you see the CCAR heading in the future?

The CCAR is partnering with the URJ and HUC-JIR in forging a vision of what our Movement might look like in 20, 30, or even 50 years from now. Currently all three institutions are exploring the possibility of creating a shared Center for Reform Judaism, to be housed under one roof. In addition, Reform rabbis, just like their predecessors, will continue to lead the Jewish people into uncharted religious landscapes by adapting and preserving our ancient heritage with love, knowledge, and faith. □

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