

you were a woman fluent in Hebrew who could chant Torah, you often weren't allowed to have an *aliyah* in a Conservative congregation. By then the Reform Movement empowered women to participate fully in worship and in leadership as rabbis, cantors, and presidents.

The Union also responded faster and more effectively to rising intermarriage rates. In 1978, then UAHC President Rabbi Alexander Schindler launched a groundbreaking Outreach initiative to welcome non-Jewish spouses of interfaith families into Reform congregations. In contrast, the Conservative Movement, publicly perceiving intermarriage as essentially a rejection of Judaism, held that interfaith families could not be synagogue members; the born Jew in the relationship could only join as a single parent family. Throughout the '80s and '90s, thousands of Jews in interfaith marriages who had grown up in Conservative congregations joined Reform temples, where they found support in raising Jewish children.

Inclusion became a guiding principle and driving force of the UAHC and its congregations in the '80s and '90s, encompassing interfaith families, GLBT Jews, people of color, and many others.

### **What are the major challenges facing our Movement today?**

The supreme challenge is the changing attitude toward membership. Belonging to a synagogue or a church used to be a sign of success in society, but people today are far less committed to organizations of any kind. Increasingly mobile empty-nesters often resettle in the neighborhood where their grandchildren live, leaving their long-time congregations and rarely reaffiliating. And while many younger couples do follow the pattern of previous generations in joining synagogues after marriage, Jews tend to marry five to 10 years later than their parents did. To encourage innovative temple programming that will both attract new members and engage current congregants, the Union for Reform Judaism has awarded incubator grants—each up to \$5,000—to 20 member synagogues (see [urj.org/cong/membership/grants/winners](http://urj.org/cong/membership/grants/winners)). For more ideas and resources

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## Seminary of Ironies

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### **That is a fascinating irony.**

Here is another irony. HUC President Kaufman Kohler—the individual who, having authored the Pittsburgh Platform, would do more than anyone to create a denominationally distinct Reform Judaism in America—had studied in a German yeshiva under Samson Raphael Hirsch, the architect of modern Orthodox Judaism. At the time, modern Orthodox leaders were vitriolic in criticizing Reform Judaism. But in embracing a modern Orthodoxy, Hirsch had demonstrated to Kohler that reform in Judaism was possible!

### **Wise and Kohler disagreed about biblical criticism. On what ideas did they agree?**

They agreed on Zionism. Like Wise and other 19th century reformers, Kohler believed that a specifically Jewish homeland in Palestine was the very antithesis of “a universal religion allied with progress.” Any emphasis upon Jewish peoplehood was not to be tolerated. So fierce was Kohler's anti-Zionism, he would not allow modern Hebrew literature to be taught at the college, and he forced off the faculty any professors sympathetic to the Zionist cause.

### **Were any Reform leaders of the period pro-Zionist?**

The majority of Reform leaders shared Kohler and I.M. Wise's views, but others, such as Rabbis Abba Hillel Silver and Stephen S. Wise (no relation), became champions of Zionism. In 1922 Stephen S. Wise founded a rival seminary, the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) in New York City, to train a cadre of non-Orthodox rabbis who would be completely committed to Jewish nationalism. Through the very power of his personality, Wise assembled a faculty that reflected his transdenominational vision of Judaism, with some Orthodox scholars serving as professors. Two-thirds of JIR's graduates became Reform rabbis, most of the remaining third became Conservative, and eight actually became Orthodox.

In 1950, however, a year after Ste-

phen S. Wise's death, JIR—unable to sustain itself without an endowment—merged with HUC, by now headed by the great biblical archeologist and lover of Israel, Rabbi Nelson Glueck.

### **How did HUC change by having a president with strong ties to Israel?**

Glueck established a foothold for the College in Israel in 1963 by obtaining prime property on the border between east and west Jerusalem to be used solely for an archeological school. But after Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, the HUC-JIR Board of Governors, at Glueck's urging, re-envisioned the Jerusalem campus as an ideal living laboratory for learning Hebrew and experiencing a Jewish cultural renaissance, and made it a base for all first-year rabbinical students. Today, not just rabbis but all first-year HUC rabbinical, cantorial, and education students spend their first year of study in Israel. I believe their familiarity with the reality of Jewish sovereignty in our ancestral homeland has had a revolutionary impact in instilling in them the understanding that there are many contours of Jewish peoplehood.

If you consider today's Israel-study requirement against the historic backdrop of Kohler's dismissal of every faculty member sympathetic to Zionism at the beginning of the 20th century, you have a stunning example of institutional evolution in keeping with the notion of ongoing change and adaptation that is a hallmark of Reform Judaism.

### **What other shifts happened in the succeeding years?**

In the 1960s, a time of growing ethnic pride, social activity, and spiritual revival in North America, many HUC-JIR students began experimenting with religious ritual, observing Jewish dietary laws, and wearing *kipot* and *tallitot*. While some observers characterized this as a return to traditionalism within the Reform Movement, I think it is overly simplistic to say that the students' aim was a return to tradition for its own sake. Rather, in a society characterized by great demographic mobility and a sense of “homelessness,” many people were searching for Jewish meaning and