REFORM RESPONSAS FROM 1960 TO THE PRESENT

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Stephen S. Pearce, PhD, Taube Scholar and Sr. Rabbi Emeritus Congregation Emanu-El

1960 REFORM RESPONSAS
• Stepfather at a Bar Mitzvah (32)—YES OR NO
• Dying patient informed of his condition (28)—NO—May not destroy hope
• Donation of body to science (30)—YES
• Burial of enemies side by side (32)—NO
• Kaddish for first wife (39)—No unless no children
• Artificial insemination (217)—YES

1963 RECENT REFORM RESPONSAS
• Temple membership for interfaith couple (63)—YES
• Abortion for medical reasons (188)—YES
• Grafting Roses (222)—YES—not changing species
• Dying request: no funeral or mourning (24) YES but mourning by spouse cannot be eliminated
• Kaddish for apostates and gentiles (28) YES

1969 CURRENT REFORM RESPONSAS
• Secular music in a synagogue (33) YES
• Frozen etrogim—citrons for Sukkot (46) YES as long as form is kept
• Gambling in synagogue (56)—YES, but not in spirit of Judaism
• Expulsion of a member of a congregation (84)—YES
• Burial of a pet in a Jewish cemetery (165)—NO—[joke about man who wants a Bar (Bark) Mitzvah for his dog]
• How to greet mourners (32)—say nothing until spoken to
• Mother’s ashes in son’s grave (37) YES if you do not disturb the grave
• Marriage to Karaite (186) YES
• Freezing bodies (238) NO but YES if no cure is available

1971 MODERN REFORM RESPONSAS
• Interfaith services (69) YES
• Mixed marriage on temple premises (108) YES & NO
• Surgery for transsexuals (128) NO renders a person sterile and against the mandate to procreate; permitted for androgynous or individuals of undetermined sex
• Ritual circumcision of children of interfaith marriages (165) Yes if parents plan to raise the child as a Jew.
• Transplanting a pig valve/heart into a human (217) YES [joke: “but I still love you”], make pig grunts
• Dates of mourning in different time zones (243) Time of current location
• Remains of bodies donated to science (278) YES but proper burial for all body parts

1974 CONTEMPORARY REFORM RESPONSAS
• Selling a synagogue to Black Muslims (13) NO but YES
• Homosexual congregations (23) NO should be mainstreamed
• Quarreling family at a Bar Mitzvah (27) decision of rabbi
• Naming of a child of an unwed mother (91) YES
• Wedding w/o a license (98) NO
• Lady’s pant suits (123) YES
• Ashes buried at home (38) YES

1977 REFORM RESPONSAS FOR OUR TIME
• Havdalah Bar Mitzvah (33) YES
• Officiating at a marriage of a transsexual (196) YES if state issues license
• Cosmetic surgery (287) YES [joke: “Irving I didn’t recognize you.”]
• Washing hands after funeral (293) NO not necessary

1981 NEW REFORM RESPONSES
• Sitting or standing for candles and Kiddush MAKE POSTURE IDENTICAL
• Artificial fruit to decorate sukkah YES
• What to do with an etrog and lulav after Sukkot Dispose of in a respectful manner
• Is a sibling ethically or legally bound to donate a kidney to a brother or sister NO
• Jewish attitude toward Hospice You man not destroy a person’s home but if he knows, then hospice is in accord with Jewish tradition
• Placing a parent in a nursing home over his strenuous objections NO
• Person wishes to freeze his body so that he can be buried with his wife when she dies NO because delaying burial hinders decomposition of body and prevents survivors from mourning
• Who is considered rightful mother of a child when an ovum is transplanted into a donor mother? The child is the child of the natural parents
• Deprogramming to get a child back from cults YES
• How does a Jewish astronaut behave ritually since he goes through a new day every 80 minutes? Should not go through the full cycle of daily prayer in 80 minutes but rather in accordance with the events on his part of the planet [joke: Jewish astronaut who goes bonkers]

1983 AMERICAN REFORM RESPONSES
• Ordination of women (8) YES
• Unmarried couple joining synagogue (8) YES single membership for each
• Collecting synagogue pledges through civil court (17) NO contrary to the letter and spirit of Jewish Law
• Carillon music (25) NO
• Bar Mitzvah of an uncircumcised boy (34) YES but duty of rabbi to persuade the family to have the boy circumcised
• Masturbation (153) YES not harmful or sinful but should be discouraged
• Layman officiating at a Jewish wedding (131) NO

1987 CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN REFORM RESPONSAS
• Demand in a grandmother’s will that the grandchildren be raised as Jews (9) NO, but they should be made aware of the wish; nothing beyond that can be done
• Ban on smoking in synagogue (13) YES on grounds of health protection
• Test tube baby (18) YES
• In vitro fertilization with a cousin’s ova (19) YES with reluctance
• May Jews for Jesus become members of a synagogue? (66) YES but may not proselytize
• The Jewish attitude toward epidemics such as AIDS for which there is no known cure (80) minimize suffering of victims and help their families adjust too it’s tragic consequences; follow advice of public health authorities with regards to employees and school-age children
• Seeking a legal divorce from a man suffering from Alzheimer’s disease to prevent exhausting a couples’ resources (86) NO, but seek alternative routes
• Kaddish for a pet (124) NOT in synagogue but should be done privately if so desired “we should not use a prayer which is dear to the heart of every Jew to commemorate a dead animal it would be absolutely wrong and a mockery to include the name of the pet in the weekly Kaddish list;
mourners would be shocked to see their father and mother listed along side a dog or a cat”
• May bride and groom see each other on a wedding day (188) YES

1990 TODAY’S REFORM RESPONSE
• Gentile bride or groom called to the Torah and a congregation that does not permit intermarriage NO
• Will it be in accordance with the spirit of Jewish law to put a religious service on the video for home use YES for shut ins; NO if it keeps people away from the synagogue [joke: In a large Florida city, the Rabbi developed quite a reputation for impressive sermons, so much so, that everyone who was Jewish in the community came every Shabbat. Unfortunately, one weekend a member had to visit Long Island for his nephew’s bar mitzvah, but he didn’t want to miss the Rabbi’s sermon. So he decided to hire a Shabbat goy to sit in the congregation and tape the sermon so he could listen to it when he returned. Other congregants saw what was going on, and they also decided to hire Shabbat goys to tape the sermon so they could play golf instead of going to Shul. Within a few weeks time there were 500 gentiles sitting in Shul taping the Rabbi. The Rabbi got wise to this. The following Shabbat he, too, hired a Shabbat goy who brought a tape recorder to play his prerecorded sermon to the 500 gentiles in the congregation who dutifully recorded his words on their machines...marking the first incidence in history of artificial insermonation.]
• Medical use of a fetus YES particularly if there is an immediate use and not theoretical use
• May a woman use the frozen sperm of her deceased husband to conceive YES
• May adopted brothers and sisters marry YES
1992 NEW AMERICAN REFORM RESPONSAS

- Kippot (head covering) for women (12) YES
- Adult Bat Mitzvah for a woman who is an adulterer (31) NO
- Should an estranged mother be permitted to participate in a daughter's but mitzvah? (32) NO
- A blessing for pets (81) YES
- Are dinosaurs kosher? (83) [A Purim Responsum] NO even though some have cloven hooves and chew their cud, only animals identified in biblical sources are kosher
- May warring parents raise their children into religions? (88) NO
- May a man be buried with his baton? (171) YES
- A plastic coffin (176) YES
- Yews in a Jewish cemetery (a Purim joke?) YES
- Wearing earrings by men (400) YES

1997 TESHUVAH FOR THE NINETIES: REFORM JUDAISM’S ANSWERS FOR TODAY’S DILEMMAS

- Applause during a service NO, any occasion that is likely to elicit applause should be held until after the conclusion of prayers
- Amazing Grace request for a funeral NO, it has Christological references and there are enough Jewish melodies
- Non-Jewish parent as temple member in the event of the death of the Jewish partner YES
- Rabbinic requirement for pre-marital aids test NO, advice should be offered but requirement not necessary
- Naming and adoption of a child of non-Jewish parentage who will not be raised as a Jew as as demanded by the natural parents YES, it would be considered a compassionate act but civil authorities should be consulted
- Co-officiation with Christian clergy at a funeral of a 16-year-old raised by his Catholic mother and Jewish father YES, if the
rabbis is comfortable or he can arrange for someone else to recite appropriate prayers
• Withdrawal of feeding tube for a patient in a persistent vegetative state YES, it’s dying; NO, it’s not dying
• Practicing Judaism and Buddhism and enrolling the child of such a couple in a Jewish religious school NO against admitting a child to be brought up in two religions and no Bar Mitzvah or Confirmation if similar Christian lifecycle events will take place (read question)
• Private ordination undermines the process by which we educate our rabbis and determines their fitness to serve; it is an affront to the honor of those who have taught Torah to rabbis
• May a Jewish Chaplin perform a baptism NO
• Substitute for wine at a marriage YES