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One Step Ahead: The FJMC Influence On The Conservative/Masorti Movement : A Festschrift In Honor Of Rabbi Charles Simon



Synopsis

If you're not in the rarefied world of academia you have probably never heard of a Festschrift. Developed in Germany in the early 20th century, it was brought over to the United States by scholarly refugees and became a custom here without losing its original name. Essentially it is a volume like this one, a collection of essays honoring a scholar upon reaching a milestone such as in the case of Rabbi Charles Simon in his retirement after 35 years as executive director of the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs. What it is not is a "tribute book" where friends wish him luck, send him love, and otherwise focus on the person being honored. Thus if you submitted something along those lines you will have to look in the appendix at the back of this volume, where we preserved some of the outpouring of love and friendship for him. What Rabbi Simon asked for, and what I have put together with the help of the generous written and financial contributions that came in for this volume, is a celebration of the numerous initiatives that the FJMC has undertaken during his tenure. When one considers the relative size of our organization compared to the branches of Conservative Judaism, it's quite amazing how often the FJMC has initiated or changed the conversation in our movement. In the coming pages you will encounter the histories of these various initiatives as well as comments and quotes from the record that illustrate, in various ways, the impact they have had. The motto of the FJMC is that it is about "involving Jewish men in Jewish life." Under Rabbi Simon's leadership ideas have percolated up from individual clubs, been shaped and adapted by the organization, and then offered widely to member clubs who have made them their own, often coming up with additional ways to expand or strengthen the program.

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