The Dodgers moved to Los Angeles during my college years, and I still remember hearing about Sandy Koufax’s decision not to pitch Game One of the 1965 World Series when it fell on Yom Kippur. This memory played a role in my reply to the inquiry of a young professor shortly after my arrival at USC Hillel in 1992: Could he install his art in the university’s gallery on Yom Kippur, as the schedule called for? At that point, this fellow’s observance was minimal. I took a deep breath and replied “no.”

Years later when Professor Ken Goldberg, now of UC Berkeley, asked me to officiate at his wedding to Tiffany Shlain, both he and I recalled the incident. Indeed, I have often told this story to make the point that sometimes it’s important to draw a clear line—to say “no.” In recent years, Ken and Tiffany have made a series of films about social issues, including *The Tribe* and *Connected*. Jewish values palpate through their work and lives.

Like many rabbis, I look for opportunities to underscore the centrality of Shabbat in Jewish life. But there’s no denying that the High Holy Days function as a clearer litmus test of Jewish identification than Shabbat. Although “twice a year” Jews get criticized, the pull that brings them back into the fold each year is something to be taken seriously—something to build upon in creating and renewing our liturgy. Thus comes the new Reform *machzor*, as well as this symposium issue of the *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly*.

Within this important issue you will find, somewhat surprisingly, two references to Sandy Koufax, both in poems that were submitted in response to a special Call for Poems. Jenni Person pictures a modern couple experiencing *Kol Nidrei*, not in shul but via their bedside laptop as their young children drift asleep. Tuned in to their television and accessing an iPhone at the same time, this multi-platform couple compares a baseball player who’s “Jew/Half-Jew” to Koufax: “He did what Sandy Koufax/swore he’d never do/But never needed to.” The poem concludes on two legs: baseball’s “lineage is long” and “*Kol Nidrei* is live online.”

The second poem in which Sandy Koufax appears is by Yehoshua November, who has published and been reviewed in these pages.
(unlike Person, whom we welcome a newcomer). In “Yom Kippur, The Essence Does Not Change,” November parallels (1) the way in which “though he knew little Torah,/Sandy Koufax gave up what is unthinkable to give up” to (2) “young Jewish boys—kidnapped from the cheder and raised/in the Russian army—/[who] took off their shirts/at the last hour of Yom Kippur” as they asked for God’s blessing. We can imagine gates of t’shuvah and b’rachah opening for these tender and abused youths, whose margin of freedom was severely limited but whose spiritual imagination was huge.

Searching online, I learn that as a youngster Sandy Koufax was constantly at the Jewish Community Center in Brooklyn shooting baskets or playing with a team; also, that his stepfather took him and his stepsister Edith to Yiddish theatre in New York City. Who’s to say what portion of Koufax’s capacity to swim against the current derived from the Jewish cultural and communal settings to which he was exposed.

The CCAR Journal sees itself as such a setting. This special issue should help rabbis and congregants understand the intellectual and religious underpinnings of the new machzor. Elaine Zecher, chair of the Machzor Advisory Group and of the CCAR’s Liturgy and Practices Committee, has done a splendid job of attracting and inviting authors. Her Introduction presents them to you individually and within the larger context. It has been a particular pleasure for me to work with Elaine since she was the first guest editor I encountered when becoming editor of the Journal. Then, she helped me along with great generosity. As I now move toward the conclusion of my term, it’s meaningful to round back by once again joining hands with Elaine.

I hope that readers enjoy the articles and poems in this issue, as well as the fourth piece to appear within our new Maayanot (Primary Sources) rubric. Philip Posner’s introduction to and translation of Maimonides’ T’shuvah to Ovadyah the Proselyte connects nicely to High Holy Day themes: openness to change, human and divine compassion, and reaching out to God from within the Jewish People.

Susan Laemmle, Editor