The CCAR Journal features articles as its predominant, central genre—articles that range from scholarly to personal, textually based to professionally oriented, long to short. These articles, which are accepted for publication after blind review by a member of the editorial board, typically offer perspective on a situation, problem, or important phenomenon. So it is with this Summer 2011 issue, where authors from within and beyond the Reform Movement take long views of theology, prayer, intermarriage, Tishah B’Av, rabbinic retirement, and the enduring legacy of Ellis Rivkin.

Poetry and book reviews provide the other two ongoing sections of the Journal. This issue turns out not to include any self-standing poetry, but it more than makes up for this through the presence of a substantial book review essay on the poetic oeuvre of Mary Oliver by our own poetry editor, Adam Fisher. A while ago, Adam asked me what I thought about such a project since Oliver is not Jewish and she does not tackle specifically Jewish topics. I needed no convincing, for I am among the many rabbis who use Oliver’s poetry in services and life-cycle events. Indeed, my sister introduced me to Oliver through reading one of her finest poems, “White Owl Flies Into and Out of the Field,” at my father’s funeral over a decade ago. I’ve brought it into many memorial settings since and have gone on to other of Oliver’s poems that suit my rabbinic purposes through their accomplished melding of beauty and truth. Adam and I hope that “Mary Oliver’s Poems: A Resource for Jewish Spirituality” guides additional rabbis and readers toward Oliver’s work while enabling those already at home with it to emerge with enlarged understanding and appreciation.

As it turns out, the Journal’s editor for book reviews, Laurence Edwards, is also featured in this issue. With initiative, creativity, and resourcefulness, Larry organized what we’re calling a “symposium review” on Michael Fishbane’s important new book, Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology. Larry’s introduction describes the project thus: “believing that this work is worthy of serious attention, and in the hope of generating conversation around its
themes, I have invited several contributors to offer different points of view.” He then invited the author himself to respond to those contributions, and so we have Micheal Fishbane “continuing the conversation.” Readers who make it to the back of this issue—or turn there directly as they begin reading—will find their attention well rewarded.

Reform rabbis and Journal readers generally are a sophisticated bunch, interested in a wide range of topics and approaches in the Jewish, as in the general, world. Like most people these days, though, we have less reading time than we’d like; so we appreciate book reviews that help us know which books could speak to us particularly while also giving us a sense of others that we won’t have time to experience directly. As book review editor, Larry Edwards constantly scans the intellectual horizon to discern which new books, whether by emerging or established authors, should be introduced to Journal readers. Then he finds appropriate reviewers; or sometimes people come to him with ideas and proposals, from which he must diplomatically and effectively choose the best.

Larry Edwards and Adam Fisher are my partners in fulfilling our publication’s subtitle: The Reform Jewish Quarterly. Without their commitment and discernment, it would not be possible to include poetry and book reviews; which means that without them, the Journal would be a much narrower, more parochial publication. Please join me in celebrating them and in learning from the articles, poetry, and book reviews contained in the pages ahead.

Susan Laemmle, Editor