

MIZZOU

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Alumni Profile

Two paths of faith

Rabbis Ari Cartun, BA '70, of Congregation Etz Chayim in Palo Alto, Calif., and Eric Silver, BA '63, of Temple Beth David in Cheshire, Conn., are separated by more than 2,500 miles. But they have much in common, including faith, friendship and five doctorates of divinity between them.

Cartun and Silver met at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion (Reform) in Cincinnati in 1971, but they took different routes to get there.

Cartun went from MU to HUC–JIR to an internship in Washington, D.C., then on to Stanford University, where he spent 21 years as executive director of the Hillel Foundation. He also spent a few years as part-time Jewish chaplain and taught some undergraduate courses.

Silver entered the U.S. Navy after graduating from MU, and he was later wounded in the Vietnam War. He received multiple medals, including the Bronze Star, but he also realized his calling. He entered the rabbinical school and later returned to the Navy in 1974 as a chaplain.

“He was [in Vietnam] and I was protesting, but we seemed to have a lot in common anyway,” Cartun says.

One of Cartun’s favorite expressions, “Please bother the rabbi,” is indicative of his profound love of helping others. Because congregants are sometimes reluctant to take his time, he’s made it his motto.

Silver’s commitment to his faith has taken him to Winnepeg, Manitoba, Salt Lake City and






Cutline: Eric Silver, BA '63, left and Rabbis Ari Cartun, BA '70, met at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. They now live on opposite coasts in California and Connecticut.

across the globe. He was the North American Board of Rabbis' Rabbi of the Year in 2006, and he was among a group who thanked Pope John Paul II for his work toward abating anti-Semitism.

Rabbis receive an honorary Doctorate of Hebrew Letters after 25 years of service. Cartun and Silver are both members of the Reform and Conservative Rabbinical organizations, and they received honorary doctorates from the Hebrew Union College, and the Jewish Theological Seminary (Conservative). The rabbis were honored on the same day in 2001. Cartun is also a Reconstructionist rabbi — one of only two rabbis in the world to be members of all three liberal denominations — so he also received a DHL from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.

Though they only reunite occasionally at national conferences, the two Tigers cherish their bond. “We have remained close and fast friends since we met,” Silver says. — *Marcus Wilkins*

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