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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

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Series E: General Alphabetical Files. 1960-1992

Box 94, Folder 6, Women, 1977.



**THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**

**date** November 23, 1977  
**to** Marc H. Tanenbaum  
**from** Inge Lederer Gibel

**subject**

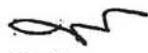
This is my first chance to report to you on a number of items of interest, based on our last conversation before I left. Of course, we didn't know then that the Sadat thing would come off and we still don't know how much everything has changed because of it. You should know that I was part of a New Outlook delegation of ten (which included Nahum Goldman, Pierre Mendes-France and Prof. Saul Friedlander) who met briefly with Sadat before his departure. Institutional identification was not used in the introductions to Sadat. The office here is going to help me get hold of one of the photographs that was taken at the meeting which at the end included Begin.

Bernie is now involved in setting up some meetings for me, including either Shmuel Katz or Moshe Yegar and tomorrow afternoon Bernie and I are having lunch with Jim Wall who was also at the New Outlook Conference. I've also suggested that we try to get Yegar to see Wall as I think it's important for Wall to hear someone from the other side.

Also at the conference I had a chance to talk at some length with Edith Colliver and she is very interested in the possibility of a Women's Dialogue out on the West coast.

So far as I can see now the general mood here is one of cautious euphoria.

See you back at the office on December 7. Best regards to everyone in the department.

  
 IG/jw  
 Encl.

November 23, 1977

Mr. Darryl Fleer  
Centennial Travel, Inc.  
Seven South Tejon Street  
Colorado Springs, CO 80903  
U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Fleer,

Thank you for your letter of November 11 which my secretary has sent on to me here in Israel where I will be until the second week of December. We will be delighted to cooperate with the Young Life program and I will write you about it in greater detail when I return to the States.

Sincerely,

Inge Lederer Gibel  
National Co-ordinator  
Visitors to Israel Program

IG/jw

bcc: Marc Tanenbaum ✓  
Encl. xerox of letter  
from Mr. Fleer



I thought you might want to see this before you return.



# Centennial Travel, inc.

Seven South Tejon Street

• Colorado Springs, CO 80903

• (303) 473-7421

November 11, 1977

Mrs. Inga Gibel  
American Jewish Committee  
165 East 56th  
New York City, New York 10022

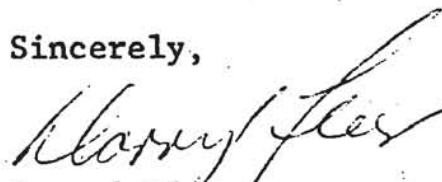
Dear Mrs. Gibel,

I'm writing you on behalf of the Young Life organization who will be taking another tour in 1978 to Israel. I understand that you did correspond with Mr. Bill Russell of the Young Life International office this year regarding their tour in March. Bill has asked me, as the planning agency, to contact you for assistance in our tour next year in late February.

If you could arrange a speaker and tour of the Knesset again next year for the Young Life group we would greatly appreciate it. We plan approximately 160 tour members and our tour extends from February 26th through March 6th, our departure date. We will be in Jerusalem from Thursday, February 28th to Saturday, March 4th for scheduling purposes. We have an itinerary planned each day but we would arrange our other schedule to accommodate your speaker. The best time for the group from our stand point would be during the morning of Friday, March 3, 1978. If your speaker could arrange this special tour in the neighborhood of one hour, it will certainly fulfill our needs.

Thank you very much for your assistance, please let me know if there is anything additional I may provide as information. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Darryl Fleer



## Say Dialogue Participants

# Catholic, Jewish Women Share 'Religious Injustice'

by SHARON A. DARGAY  
Tribune Staff Reporter

Women have not attained full equality within the church and synagogue, according to participants in a Christian-Jewish Dialogue, held Wednesday in Southfield.

About 25 persons, attending a workshop on women in the Jewish and Christian tradition said more women should be included in leadership roles within their faiths.

The workshop was one of several offered during a three-day dialogue sponsored by the Secretariat for Catholic Jewish relations, in cooperation with several religious organizations including the Detroit Round Table, American Jewish Committee, Christian Communications Council, Jewish Community Council and B'nai Brith.

The dialogue on women was attended largely by Roman Catholic and Jewish women.

### 'Sisters'—

Many of them found they had more in common with

their Jewish or Christian "sisters" than male members of their own faith.

"After about 20 years of parish work I've just about had it. I wonder what I'd get for decking a bishop," Mrs. Lee Farkas, a member of St. Lucy's, St. Clair Shores, said.

"Vatican II said we can share the decision making, but the church has a clerical club of which women are not members."

Echoing her frustrations, but from another religious perspective, Judi Banke, associate director of interreligious affairs of the American Jewish Committee, and guest speaker, said that leaders and decision makers in the Jewish faith are found in lay activities and organizations.

### Men Control—

"The chairmen of most of those committees are those who contribute. Since the men control most of the money in the family, they get the positions. But there should be no barrier to women in such organizations because there is no religious objection involved.

Women have always been an important part of religious life. Arlene Swidler, a guest speaker, and author of several books on the Catholic faith, including a collection of feminist liturgies, said that Jewish women had an important role in religious life at home rather than in the temple.

The Rev. John Pawlikowski, president of the Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, said that the gospel of St. Luke clearly "showed a great respect and was tribute to Mary," pointing out the importance of women in Christianity.

"Religious institutions and organizations are probably the least advanced forms of institutions, (in terms of how they relate to women)," Fr. Pawlikowski said.

### House Cleaning—

"How can they address other institutions about issues of justice without doing a little house-cleaning of their own? You cannot teach what you don't do yourself."

"There are lots of jobs to be done, yet women are not permitted to do many of them," added Margie Alpern, Bloomfield Hills, a member of the American Jewish Committee.

"Women will not permit being considered less in the religious world, than they are in the secular world."

### Nun—

Participants in the dialogue said it was frustrating to use only part of their talents in their faiths. One nun said she ministered daily to the sick and aged. When any sacraments were necessary, such as last rites or confession, she was required to "turn them over to a priest" so that he could perform the sacrament legally.

Sister Beverly Lunders, education coordinator at St. Owen, Birmingham, said some men are given positions in the church which could easily be filled by women.

"I've seen many priests try to deal with young people but they are incompetent. They can't handle children as well as a woman might."

The group decided that "awareness" sessions for both men and women would pave the way for equality of both sexes in the Christian and Jewish faiths.

### Risks—

Group members agreed that although they may be unpopular, risks must be taken before the Catholic church will ordain women.

One nun suggested that parishioners write to each bishop until "they find one that will ordain a woman." She said women should support those who want ordination, even if they are not interested in becoming priests themselves.

Fr. Pawlikowski noted that many liturgical reforms now accepted in the Catholic Church were once frowned upon as ordination now is.

"The people who practiced them were on the verge of excommunication and then years later the church accepted the practices as ones they've always taught."

### Liberation—

The women agreed that ordination, and leadership roles will come only if they participate in their "own liberation," pushing for changes in the church and synagogue.

"Jewish and Christian women can work together and realize their own possibilities as women," Mr. Swidler said. "Through feminism we learn to make new lives for ourselves and reject materialism. A Christian-Jewish dialogue leads to complete openness of ourselves and allows us to interact with people whose lifestyles and religion is radically different from our own. Together, feminism and dialogue lead to peace, justice and real humanity."

TO: RABBI MARC TANENBAUM



**THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**

**date** April 26, 1977  
**to** Harold Applebaum  
**from** Sherwood Sandweiss  
**subject** Presentation by Miles Jaffe at Third National Workshop on Christian-Jewish Relations, April 19-21, 1977, Detroit

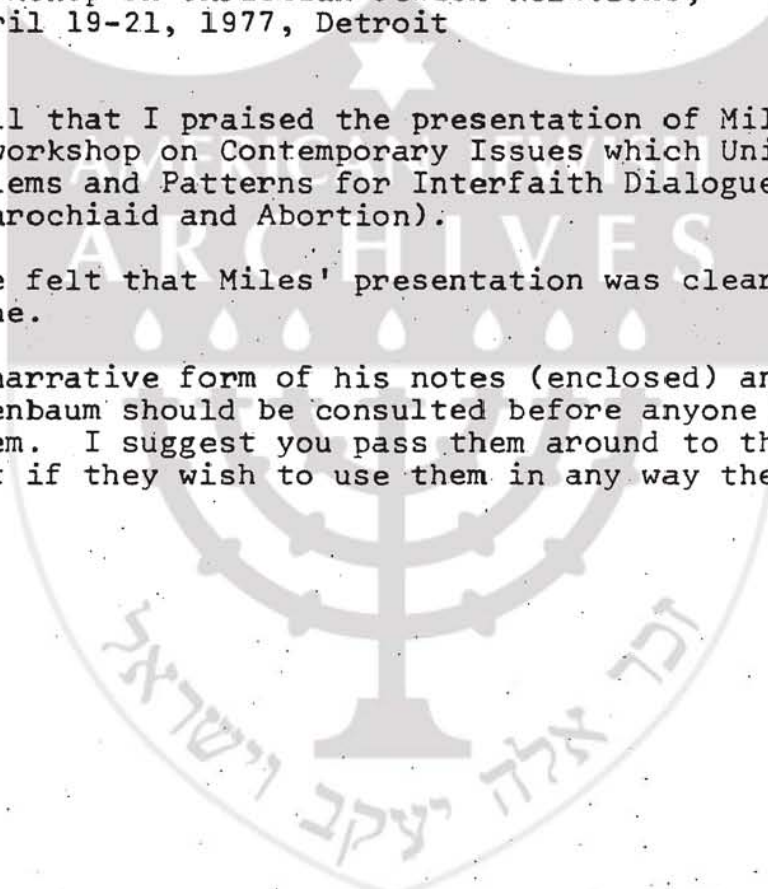
You will recall that I praised the presentation of Miles Jaffe at his workshop on Contemporary Issues which Unite and Divide: Problems and Patterns for Interfaith Dialogue (Church and State: Parochialism and Abortion).

Everyone there felt that Miles' presentation was clearly the outstanding one.

He sent me a narrative form of his notes (enclosed) and counsels that Marc Tanenbaum should be consulted before anyone does anything with them. I suggest you pass them around to the appropriate people so that if they wish to use them in any way they might do so.

Regards.

SS/bm  
 encl.  
 cc: Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum





# THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Institute of Human Relations • 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022 • 212/751-4000 • Cable Wishcom, N.Y.

November 4, 1977

TO: Members of the National Executive Council  
FROM: Morton K. Blaustein, Chairperson  
SUBJECT: Our Meeting in Atlanta

Our meeting in Atlanta, judging by all the favorable comments, was one of the best we have ever had. The attendance was outstanding, the speakers were uniformly excellent and the discussions, as always, were on the very high level we have come to expect from our AJC leaders. And the warm hospitality of our Atlanta Chapter was very much in evidence throughout the weekend.

A summary of the highlights of our deliberations will be along shortly, in the next issue of What's Doing. However, I believe you will want to read the full text of President Maass' address to the Council. That is enclosed, as well as the policy statements that were adopted during the weekend.

I hope you will mark on your calendars now the dates of our 1978 meetings: AJC's 72nd Annual Meeting, May 17-21, at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City; and the fall meeting of our National Executive Council, October 26-29, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Morton K. Blaustein

MKB/pcb  
Encls.

P. S. If you were not with us in Atlanta you have no doubt read of the Rev. Dr. Billy Graham's address to us at which he pledged the support of Evangelical Christians for the State of Israel and voiced concern over the recent direction of American foreign policy vis à vis the Middle East. Two days later the enclosed full-page ad appeared in The New York Times and The Washington Post and efforts are underway to have it appear in other papers across the country.

M. K. B.

RICHARD MAASS, President ■ MAYNARD I. WISHNER, Chairman, Board of Governors ■ MORTON K. BLAUSTEIN, Chairman, National Executive Council ■ HOWARD I. FRIEDMAN, Chairman, Board of Trustees ■ GERARD WEINSTOCK, Treasurer ■ LEONARD C. YASEEN, Secretary ■ ROBERT L. HOROWITZ, Associate Treasurer ■ THEODORE ELLENOFF, Chairman, Executive Committee ■ Honorary Presidents: MORRIS B. ABRAM, LOUIS CAPLAN, IRVING M. ENGEL, ARTHUR J. GOLDBERG, PHILIP E. HOFFMAN, ELMER L. WINTER ■ Honorary Vice-Presidents: NATHAN APPELMAN, MRS. JACOB BLAUSTEIN, JACK A. GOLDFARB, ANDREW GOODMAN, EMERY E. KLINEMAN, JAMES MARSHALL, WILLIAM ROSENWALD ■ MAX M. FISHER, Honorary Chairman, National Executive Council ■ MAURICE GLINERT, Honorary Treasurer ■ JOHN SLAWSON, Executive Vice-President Emeritus ■ Vice-Presidents: JORDAN C. BAND, Cleveland; EDITH S. COLIVER, San Francisco; EMANUEL DANNETT, Westchester; RAYMOND F. KRAVIS, Tulsa; DAVID LLOYD KREEGER, Washington, D.C.; RICHARD H. LEVIN, Chicago; ALFRED H. MOSES, Washington, D.C.; ELAINE PETSCHKE, Westchester; MERVIN H. RISEMAN, New York; RICHARD E. SHERWOOD, Los Angeles; SHERMAN H. STARR, Boston ■



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL DINNER

October 29, 1977

Omni International Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Richard Maass

This is my first opportunity to speak to you since assuming the Presidency in May. Shortly after I was elected, at a press conference arranged by Mort Yarmon to introduce me, a reporter asked me what changes I contemplated in the organization and its program. I replied that there would be few changes, if any, in the organization--and while there might be some shifts in emphasis I did not foresee any radical changes in program. I don't think he was satisfied with my answer because he was thinking in political and perhaps corporate terms of the changing of the guard. Although it is true to a limited extent that an organization reflects the philosophy and personality of its president, it is inconceivable that the American Jewish Committee with its wealth of professional and lay talent would ever embark on programs which would require corrective measures or the replacement of staff as a natural consequence of a new administration. How many organizations can boast such confidence in process and substance?

Almost daily, during the past five months, AJC has dealt with a series of crises in virtually every aspect of our program--all of them affecting you and me. On both the domestic and foreign scenes we have had to make quick decisions, after consultation, determine how these decisions were to be carried out, including how and when they should be made public, while at the same time carrying on our day-to-day programs and doing the necessary planning and research for programs whose impact might not be felt for three, four or five years from now. I think we are doing all of these well.

I have great difficulty defining what AJC is. Certainly we are no longer a defense agency. We have said that we are the oldest human rights organization in the United States, and although this is so it is not a broad enough definition. Bert Gold likes to refer to us as a "Jewish civic organization" but I don't think that quite does it for me. I don't have an answer yet, but if I am allowed two words to describe the essence of what we are, I would use the words "relationships" and "interdependence." Every issue, every program and every crisis involves us in building, maintaining and intensifying a whole network of relationships which are not only essential to the achievement of human rights, but which are in themselves vital to the health of the community and the nation.

Take, for example, the Panama Canal treaties which Ambassador Sol Linowitz negotiated for the U.S. AJC was quick to publicly support ratification of these treaties. There is no question in our minds that the treaties are in the American interest but we do not take positions on every foreign policy matter which is in the American interest. We did on the Canal treaties

over



because there is a direct relationship between the treaties and the security and well-being of the substantial Jewish communities South of the Mexican border. When there is tension or enmity between the United States and a Latin American nation, there seems inevitably to be a deterioration in the condition of the Jewish community in that country. Anti-Yankee feelings have always sparked anti-Semitism for whatever reason, and although we cannot assume that the mere ratification of the treaties by the U.S. Senate will improve the position of the Jewish community in Argentina, for example, I think it fair to say that our failure to ratify might very well add to the pressures of that beleaguered community. Relationships. Interdependence.

Our decision to close our South American office in Buenos Aires after 29 years was a difficult one to reach, but the physical safety of our staff and their families was paramount. There was initial criticism of our action from sources in Argentina--not from the Jewish community I should say-- but from Argentine government officials. However, our subsequent discussion with President Videla, Ambassador Espil and numerous public officials and business leaders have confirmed the wisdom of our action although we have not ruled out the possibility of our reopening the office at some time in the future. The reason for the delicacy with which our public statements had to be framed should be obvious. There are over 400,000 Jews in Argentina who were affected by the incidents which led to our withdrawal. You can understand, therefore, the fine line we had to draw. We felt it essential to express publicly our disapproval over what was happening in Argentina. However, had we publicly condemned the Government of Argentina, which is making efforts to control radicalism from right or left, there would inevitably have been a strong reaction against Argentinian Jews. Relationships. Interdependence.

Reverend Dr. Billy Graham's remarks to us yesterday dealt with Christian-Jewish relationships as well as with Israel. It is not happenstance that Mr. Graham made those remarks to us. They came about as a result of a 10-year relationship initiated and cultivated by Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum as one aspect of the interreligious work in his department. When Rabbi Tanenbaum suggested long ago that in areas of joint concern there was a greater community of interest between the Evangelical Church movements and the Jewish community than every other Jewish organization recognized, we embarked on a variety of joint programs which have brought unexpected and, we hope, mutually beneficial rewards. Relationships. Interdependence.

And speaking of relationships, AJC's Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity has become known throughout the country as one of the major advocates of multi-ethnic concerns. Through the work of this Institute, these relationships are beginning to flower in meaningful new ways. There was no stronger statement attacking the obscene United Nations resolution equating Zionism with racism than the one issued by 20 ethnic organizations in Chicago. Similarly, during the recent Nazi agitation in Skokie, Illinois, we were joined in dialogue and counteraction by an array of ethnic groups who recall their own suffering under the Nazis and wish to make common cause with Jews. The words, "relationships" and "interdependence" will be dramatically evident at luncheon tomorrow when the AJC will announce a new long-term commitment to the field of group identity and mental health made possible by the Maurice Falk Medical Fund.



An issue which has strained the close relationship which we have established over the past 20 years with the Black community in this country is the Bakke case. I think that the press have overplayed the supposed division that has developed in our relationships over this issue. It is true that in our briefs we have taken different sides in the case. It is also true that there has been considerable emotionalism on both sides. But I think that the leaders of the Black community recognize that we at AJC not only stand solidly behind affirmative action--despite our opposition to quotas--but we have a responsibility to match words with deeds. No matter what the Supreme Court decides with respect to the Bakke case, affirmative action programs must be intensified and expanded throughout the land. As you heard yesterday morning from Bert Gold, we in AJC regard this as a priority concern for us in the coming months. At the reception we tendered Ben Hooks, the new Executive Director of the NAACP, last week, we reaffirmed this commitment and this intention--as we have done in the frequent conversations that Bert and the AJC staff have had with Vernon Jordan and other Black leaders, some of whom are in this room. We will continue to work together with the Black community on a variety of mutual problems.

Now to Washington. The lay leaders of AJC have spent a great deal of time in Washington with government officials over the past several months. Many of these meetings were due to critical developments--both domestic and foreign--which arose during this time. However, the nature of our reception by these Washington officials, the consultations held at their request and their acceptance of our analyses are all indicative of the recognition that is accorded the American Jewish Committee as a responsible, objective and effective leadership organization in behalf of both the Jewish and the general community.

This recognition is the result, again, of the relationships established by both laymen and staff over a period of years with people irrespective of philosophy or factions, who have come to know us. It would be self-serving for me to name those with whom we have met during the past few months, but merely to indicate the breadth of our programs, interest, and influence, I will mention by departments, the offices of the Chief Executive and the Vice President, HUD, HEW, State, Commerce and, of course, the leadership of both the House and the Senate. Relationships.

I have not dwelt on the Middle East and our role in this continuing melodrama. Tomorrow's session will be devoted solely to that. But I would like to offer a personal note about where we stand now. I believe our Administration erred in its handling of the joint US-USSR memorandum of understanding. Spokesmen for the Administration with whom we have discussed this have admitted--and taken steps to rectify--the mistakes that have been made, including their reaffirmation of U.S. support of UN Resolutions 242 and 338. There is no doubt in my mind that there is an emotional commitment to Israel on the part of the President, but I cannot help but fear that in his intense desire to have the Geneva Conference convened as quickly as possible with the presence of Syria he will be asking for further unilateral concessions from the Israel Government, concessions which the Israelis are convinced represent a threat to their security.



In addition, I think the Administration is moving toward a U. S. guarantee of Israel's security--a guarantee which Israel does not want as a substitute for secure and defensible borders.

Tomorrow we will be adopting a resolution which expresses concern for the future--i.e., the increasing strains between the United States and Israel, our own realization of the difficult position in which our country finds itself as it must function both as Israel's friend and mediator, our recognition of the grave situation in which Israel finds itself and our concern for her future. It will be a period which will make great and often disturbing demands upon the American Jewish community. It will be a period requiring the utmost statesmanship from our community. But statesmanship has been a hallmark of the American Jewish Committee down through the decades. Never have we had a greater opportunity--and responsibility--to exercise that talent and capacity.

77-100-170

rpr



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

UPDATING STATEMENT ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT  
ON EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

AJC endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment on May 6, 1972 in a statement passed at its 66th Annual Meeting. At that time the Constitutional Amendment providing that "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex" had been approved by 17 state legislatures. In endorsing the Amendment AJC stated:

"We believe that the consequences of passing such an Amendment would be overwhelmingly positive, releasing the untapped talents and energies of a portion of American society to the betterment of all."

Now, more than five years later, the Amendment has still not been passed. Thirty-five legislatures have approved the Amendment, three short of the required 38 necessary for enactment.

The Amendment Referendum expires in March 1979. AJC believes it a matter of great urgency that the Amendment be passed and we call on our chapters in the fifteen states\* where the Amendment is yet to be voted on to work actively for the passage of this important Amendment to our Constitution. We repeat our conviction that equal rights for women is a major social issue in our country, and that we cannot ignore an issue affecting 53 per cent of the population. AJC urges a national commitment to ensure equal rights for women in all areas of American life.

\*States that have not ratified:

Alabama	Mississippi
Arizona	Missouri
Arkansas	Nevada
Florida	North Carolina
Georgia	Oklahoma
Illinois	South Carolina
Louisiana	Utah

Virginia

Passed in principle by the Domestic Affairs Commission  
September 8, 1977

Adopted by the National Executive Council  
October 29, 1977

## THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

### CHANGE IN BYLAWS

At the September 1977 meeting of the Board of Governors, it was recommended unanimously that Section 1 of the AJC Bylaws be changed to permit resident aliens to become members of the American Jewish Committee.

AJC Bylaws presently stipulate that "Jews, their spouses and children, who are citizens of the United States...shall be eligible for membership in the Committee." The Board of Governors has recommended changing that section of the Bylaws to read, "Jews, their spouses and children, who are citizens or resident aliens of the United States...shall be eligible to become members of the Committee."

In support of this change it was pointed out that there are a number of individuals presently affiliated with the Committee--and a number who would like to be--who are not citizens, such as the Latin American Associates group, loosely related to our Washington, D.C. Chapter, and a number of individuals who are Canadian citizens who have been residing in this country for some time and who have been associated with various chapters of the Committee.

Upon checking with other American Jewish organizations we find that none of them restrict membership to American citizens. The B'nai B'rith requirements for eligibility are "anyone of the Jewish faith." The Bylaws of the American Jewish Congress state that "any Jew over 18 who agrees with the principles of the organization" is eligible to join. The Zionist Organization of America states, "every Jew 18 or over residing in the United States or its territorial possessions," is eligible for membership. The National Council of Jewish Women states that "any person who is interested in the purposes of the organization may become a member upon payment of dues."

At the request of the Board of Governors, the National Executive Council considered and approved such a change in our Bylaws.

Approved by the  
National Executive Council  
October 28, 1977

77-100-168



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Nominating Committee for 1978

Robert D. Gries, Chairman	Cleveland, Ohio
Emily H. Alschuler	Glencoe, Illinois
Matthew Brown	Boston, Massachusetts
Robert H. Haines	New York, New York
Philip E. Hoffman	South Orange, New Jersey
Charlotte G. Holstein	Syracuse, New York
Miles Jaffe	Detroit, Michigan
Samuel A. Ladar	San Francisco, California
Nancy Lang	Washington, D.C.
Leon Rabin	Dallas, Texas
Robert I. Shapiro	Miami, Florida
Clara Louise Sonneborn	Westchester, New York
Shirley M. Szabad	Westchester, New York
Jane Wallerstein	South Orange, New Jersey

Approved by the  
National Executive Council  
October 30, 1977

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Statement on the Middle East

Adopted by  
The National Executive Council  
Atlanta, Georgia  
October 30, 1977

A crisis of confidence in the Administration's Middle Eastern policy has arisen among American friends of Israel. Despite repeated assurances that the United States remains steadfast in its support of Israel's security and well-being—assurances that have frequently been matched by positive actions—a series of recent developments have cast doubt on the credibility of these assurances.

It is not too late for the Administration to correct its course, and to reestablish trust in its basic purpose of achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It is in this spirit that the American Jewish Committee presents its assessment of the current situation.

We note with satisfaction the reaffirmation in the Working Paper recently agreed upon by the United States and Israel that Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 remain the agreed basis for the Geneva Conference. We also welcome President Carter's statement to Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan that all U.S.-Israeli agreements and understandings remain in force. We therefore expect that the United States will adhere to its pledge to veto any move in the United Nations Security Council to modify or add to Resolution 242.

We recognize, as does the President, that there is occasional tension between the United States as a "totally faithful friend of Israel" and its role as mediator and peacemaker. Yet we strongly believe that this tension should and can be reduced to a minimum and the prospects for a settlement enhanced to the extent that the Administration emphasizes its role as faithful friend and thereby strengthens the credibility of its support for Israel. The United States should be the catalyst for negotiations rather than seek to shape and appear to impose a solution. Negotiating and forging a settlement should be the task of the parties, who must live with it and live together as neighbors.

Simply getting to Geneva should not be the overriding objective of American policy. To view going to Geneva as a goal in itself can lead to procedural arrangements with a potentially far-reaching impact on substantive issues and outcomes. It is therefore important that the United States not allow itself to be maneuvered into a position where the Soviet Union and the Arab participants would join forces against Israel, and the United States would be faced with the dilemma of placing additional pressure on Israel or seeing the conference collapse. A Geneva Conference should not be seen as the climax of peacemaking in the Middle East, but as a step on what is likely to be a long and difficult road.



In the course of preparatory work for Geneva so far, Israel has demonstrated, in response to American urging, considerable flexibility and readiness to compromise, by far-reaching concessions with regard to a unified Arab delegation and a substantial role for Palestinians. Israel deserves to be commended for this flexibility and should not be pressed for further concessions that would jeopardize her national security.

Our government does not appear to have exerted the same kind of pressure on the Arab states. It should now do so and insist that these governments reciprocate Israel's flexibility and spirit of compromise. Specifically, the United States should firmly resist demands by the Arab states that the PLO be a participant in Geneva. Our government should thereby adhere to its commitment not to deal with that group as long as it holds to its basic thesis that Israel has no right to exist and to its stated objective to work and fight for Israel's destruction.

This objective is what the PLO means when it speaks of the "legitimate rights of the Palestinian people." It seeks to accomplish it by first gaining control over a separate state on the West Bank of the Jordan and, later, using that state as a staging area for subverting and waging guerilla war on the state of Israel. This is why it is imperative that the United States remain firm in its opposition to a separate state and continue to pursue a solution to the Palestinian problem within the framework of peace negotiations between Israel and Jordan, whose population already contains a Palestinian majority.

As a further demonstration of serious concern for peace in the Middle East, the Arab states should be asked to cease their unremitting vilification of Israel in the United Nations and other international bodies, and their persistent efforts to isolate and boycott Israel in the international community. Arab spokesmen, including some of the highest officials of Arab nations often described as moderate, have been threatening the people of oil consuming countries, including the American public, with the use of the power of oil to gain Arab political objectives in the dispute with Israel. The energy problem has causes and consequences of its own unrelated to the Arab-Israeli dispute. To use it as a pressure tactic, as these Arab leaders do, runs directly counter to President Carter's repeatedly stated objective of bringing about the normalization of relations between the Arab nations and Israel.

We are concerned about the return of the Soviet Union to a prominent role in the Middle East, as reflected in the recent United States-Soviet statement of guidelines for the Geneva Conference. Our concern is compounded by continuing Soviet support for the PLO, as well as the stepped up supply of sophisticated weapons to the most radical and "rejectionist" governments in the Middle East, notably Iraq and Libya.

Finally, it should be said again that the fundamental obstacle to peace in the Middle East over the past 30 years has been and remains the intransigent refusal of the Arab states to accept Israel as a legitimate member of the Middle Eastern community of nations. This Arab intransigence has been the single constant factor in an otherwise volatile region. It overrides the refugee question, territorial issues, or any other facet of the Arab-Israeli dispute. This Arab intransigence was there before there were refugees, before the PLO was created, and before Arab oil power



had made itself felt. It is still with us and is at the root of all other issues.

The constancy of United States support for Israel is the most important factor that can bring the Arab states closer to the realization that Israel is here to stay. It is also in the interest of the United States, because acceptance of Israel by the Arab nations is a vital requirement for stability in the Middle East which is America's objective. It is essential, therefore, that the credibility of this support remain undiminished. Everything must be done, in both word and action to reassure Israel, strengthen the sense of realism among the Arab nations, and thereby enhance the chances of a lasting settlement and of peace in the Middle East.

77-550-86



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Statement on Soviet Jewry

In recent months, the rate of Jewish emigration from the USSR has increased. The American Jewish Committee hopes that this increase marks the beginning of a more positive period for Jews in the USSR.

The Committee, however, remains deeply concerned about the continued imprisonment, under harsh conditions, of many Jewish Prisoners of Conscience in the Soviet Union, the increased harassment of Jewish activists, the persistent refusal to permit many Jews who have been waiting for years to leave the country, and the ongoing suppression of Jewish religious and cultural life.

We are deeply disturbed at the recent increase in anti-Semitic literature and other manifestations of anti-Semitism in the Soviet media. The publication and dissemination of these poisonous doctrines can only be interpreted as a cynical attempt by the Government to reawaken anti-Semitism among the Soviet population and to exploit Jews politically in order to further USSR relations with the Arabs and combat dissident movements in the Soviet Union.

We call upon the Government of the USSR, during their commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, to release the Prisoners of Conscience and to implement the spirit and substance of the Helsinki principles to which they are a signatory.

We call upon our own Government to continue to uphold human rights as a major priority on this country's international agenda, and call upon Christian friends who have stood beside us for so many years in the fight to ease the plight of Soviet Jewry to join us in a recommitment to that struggle for religious, cultural and basic human rights in the Soviet Union.

Adopted by the National Executive Council  
Atlanta, Georgia  
October 30, 1977  
77-550-84

## THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

### Statement on Argentina

The American Jewish Committee is more than an interested observer of events in Argentina, for our organization has experienced the effects of anti-Semitism, extremism and anti-Americanism conducted by anti-democratic forces in that troubled country which have been gaining in strength over the past decade.

After 29 years of operation, the AJC was forced to close its office in Buenos Aires as a result of direct threats of physical violence to its staff by extreme right-wing elements. In meetings with the highest level officials of the Argentine Government, we have been assured that groups engaging in such criminal behavior are alien to Argentine tradition, and that their actions were contrary to the policies of the Government. We acknowledge these assurances, as well as modest steps that have recently been taken to curtail distribution of some anti-Semitic literature. But we will remain vigilant so long as the human rights of Jews and other Argentinians are violated, so long as Argentina remains the source of anti-Semitic literature in the Spanish language, and so long as anti-Semitic groups in Argentina continue to operate with apparent impunity.

We reaffirm our solidarity with the Jewish community of Argentina and with other responsible forces seeking to steer that country toward a democratic society.

We call upon the Administration in Washington to emphasize to the Argentine Government that America's commitment to human rights remains an important element in our foreign policy, and to make clear that progress by Argentina in controlling anti-democratic forces in that country, and restoring basic freedoms, are not just matters of domestic Argentinian concern but will have a direct impact on Argentine-American relations and are essential for peace in the hemisphere.

Adopted by the National Executive Council  
Atlanta, Georgia  
October 30, 1977  
77-550-85



## THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

### Statement on Human Rights

The American Jewish Committee supports President Carter's human rights policy as a significant contribution to freedom and justice everywhere and to international peace and world order. We commend his determination to assign to human rights a high priority in his overall foreign policy.

Though we recognize the need to weigh national security and other important foreign policy considerations in particular cases, we trust the President will not allow our country's basic commitment to human rights to wane, and we hope he will continue to emphasize human rights criteria in our relationships with all governments, whether of the right or the left.

We commend our country's expressed determination to promote both civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights, all of which are interrelated and interdependent.

We commend the President for signing the two Covenants dealing with these two categories of rights, and call on the Senate to initiate steps looking toward their ratification. We likewise urge the Senate to ratify the Genocide Convention as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

We urge the President to continue to exercise leadership in pursuit of these goals.

We commend the policy of the President and the Congress to emphasize the human rights and humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki Accords, to gain acceptance of the concept that the signers of the Helsinki Accords are accountable to one another for their human rights practices, and that therefore monitoring and calls for compliance do not constitute interference in their internal affairs.

We urge the U.S. delegation to the Belgrade Conference to place particular stress on ensuring freedom of emigration, the right of families to be reunited with relatives abroad, guarantees of freedom of religion, respect for minority cultural rights, and the right of individuals to act upon their rights. We further urge the U.S. delegation to make certain that cases involving serious issues of human rights violations receive adequate attention in those deliberations.

We reaffirm our abhorrence of South Africa's apartheid policy. We deplore especially the repressive measures recently taken by the South African Government, including the banning of numerous independent black and other civic organizations, the closing down of liberal newspapers and the arrest of many opposition leaders. These measures are a disservice to the forces of moderation, both black and white, which are striving for a peaceful resolution to the complex racial problems of South Africa. We urge the South African Government to take concrete steps toward reducing, and ultimately eliminating, the legal and de facto discrimination against its non-white population, inherent in its apartheid policy.

We commend those Non-Governmental Organizations which have rendered invaluable service by calling worldwide attention to human rights violations in various countries, and by cooperating with UN efforts to formulate human rights standards and develop machinery for implementing them. We deplore current attacks, by some UN members with deficient human rights records, on NGOs that have exercised their rights—indeed their responsibility—to criticize objectionable governmental human rights policies as well as undesirable UN resolutions or practices, and we call on the U.S. delegation to take the lead in protecting those NGOs.

We deplore the double standard on human rights within the bodies and agencies of the United Nations system which persistently condemns selected countries, notably Israel, for alleged human rights violations, while failing to address itself to serious violations, past and present, in such countries as Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Cuba, Guinea, Iraq (Kurds), the Soviet Union and Uganda. Such a double standard cannot fail to prejudice the credibility of the United Nations, including the integrity of its human rights efforts. We urge the United States government to work toward a single standard in all international organizations and agencies.

Adopted by the National Executive Council  
Atlanta, Georgia  
October 30, 1977  
77-550-88





# THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

## POLICY STATEMENT

ON

## JEWISH EDUCATION and JEWISH IDENTITY

The transmission of Jewish knowledge and Jewish values has always been central to the Jewish way of life and Jewish continuity. Indeed, being educated Jewishly is an important attribute of being Jewish. Efforts to achieve this objective in the American Jewish community have resulted in an extraordinary network of voluntary Jewish educational institutions under a variety of auspices, primarily religious. Yet, despite the fact that since World War II, Jewish education has been better financed and more firmly established than ever before, the AJC Task Force on the Future of the Jewish Community in America in near unanimity agreed that Jewish education was in need of fundamental reform.

The American Jewish Committee has long been sensitive to the serious implications of Jewish education for Jewish identity and Jewish continuity. In 1970 the National Executive Council adopted a policy statement which urged that "The AJC should, in concert with other agencies, seek to identify changing needs and required innovations in order to make Jewish education a more successful instrument for Jewish continuity."

In response to that NEC mandate and the recommendations of the Task Force on the Future of the American Jewish Community, the AJC Colloquium on Jewish Education and Jewish Identity was created in 1972. Its members, as a study group in policy research on Jewish education and Jewish identity, acted on the assumption that the time was ripe for a clarification of priorities and the introduction of new initiatives in Jewish education.

Based on the research and deliberations of the Colloquium and other recent studies of Jewish education, the American Jewish Committee regards working towards the implementation of the following recommendations as essential to strengthening Jewish identity.

### Recommendations

1) We recommend an intensification of efforts to help the Jewish family to learn about, and live, a Jewish life.

Our research indicates that the home and the family continue to be the primary framework in which Jewish values are acquired and Jewish experiences internalized in the process of Jewish identity formation. Statistical studies prepared for the Colloquium show that home background is 2½ times more important than Jewish schooling in developing a personal Jewish

identity. It is clearly of vital importance to strengthen the family's capacity to perform satisfactorily in this area. Toward this end we recommend that the Jewish community, through its appropriate organizations and agencies, provide families with opportunities for formal Jewish studies and informal Jewish experiences.

Communal support should be given to parent education programs ranging from institutional adult Jewish education courses in classes and independent or group study as provided by the Academy for Jewish Studies Without Walls to the efforts by Jewish schools to involve parents actively in Jewish education parallel to that of their children. The parents should, as a minimum, master the study material covered by their children.

Special attention should be given to the support and further development of informal family Jewish experiences such as family observances, celebrations and study in the home as well as weekend retreats, family tours to Israel, and the like.

2) We recommend that a broad effort be made to increase considerably the hours of Jewish schooling.

An impressive body of research indicates that a minimum of 3,000 hours of Jewish schooling is essential if it is to have an impact on forming a positive Jewish identity.

To accomplish the foregoing, we urge the following courses of action:

- a) Extension of Jewish education through the high school years should become an educational norm in the Jewish community.
- b) Since Jewish day school education provides students with the requisite minimum hours of Jewish study and a total learning environment in which Jewish education is effectively integrated with secular education, it should be given the special consideration of Jewish parents and the support of the Jewish community as a logical and effective educational alternative.
- c) In recognition of the frequent pressures to include an overwhelming variety of subjects and activities into the relatively few hours allotted to Jewish schooling, particularly at the elementary level, schools should limit and frequently review their goals, so as to make them more realistic and achievable and to facilitate the design of curricular materials and programs geared to achieving those goals.
- d) At the elementary level, formal schooling should be buttressed by introducing pleasurable Jewish experi-



ences in a variety of settings such as camping and weekend experiences.

3) We recommend that efforts should be made to include teaching of Jewish studies, such as Hebrew language and Jewish history in the curriculum of language and social studies courses of public and non-sectarian private schools as a means of enriching the content of public and non-sectarian private education.

4) We recommend that the Jewish community support the establishment and expansion of both formal Jewish studies and informal programs at colleges and universities.

Courses and departments of Jewish studies on the college level provide significant opportunities for more intensive, sophisticated Jewish study. Since almost all Jewish young people attend college and the campus is regarded as synonymous with intellectual respectability, the availability of fully accredited college courses in Jewish studies will serve to elevate the status of Jewish learning in the eyes of young Jews. In addition we regard Jewish studies as a significant academic discipline which should be part of every liberal arts program regardless of the Jewish constituency on campus.

Although it is recognized that the intended goal of Jewish studies at the college level is primarily cognitive, we recommend that greater emphasis be placed upon informal programs which make use of Jewish volunteerism and of student involvement in programs related to the Jewish community in the United States and Israel.

5) We recommend that investment in Jewish education broadly conceived must become a top priority in the allocation of communal resources for domestic needs.

It is incumbent on Federations and other major organizations to assume more responsibility and leadership roles in implementing long-range educational planning as a service to those institutions which deal directly with the field of Jewish schooling and Jewish educational programs. Jewish communal leadership, beyond its support for current programs, must encourage and support innovative programs on every level of Jewish education with a view to effective long-range planning and future needs. Without interfering in the specific curricular content of schools sponsored by the various ideological groupings in the Jewish community, Federations and agencies can serve a major role in working toward improved coordination of Jewish educational programs sponsored by a broad spectrum of concerned institutions

- ...by exploring and encouraging school mergers and joint use of personnel where appropriate;
- ...by advocating and funding innovative efforts to create suitable curricular material;
- ...by the development of a corps of trained personnel through recruitment and the upgrading of the training and status of teachers;
- ...by founding and funding model schools that will set standards of excellence in Jewish education;
- ...by giving practical encouragement to creative informal programs for Jewish fellowship and learning such as Havurot, family cluster groups, weekend and holiday retreat programs.

\* \* \* \*

We call upon American Jewish Committee chapters to play a leadership role in the local communities by publicizing and helping to implement the above recommendations.

Adopted by the National Executive Council

Atlanta, Georgia

October 28, 1977



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Resolution on Jewish-Christian Relations

The American Jewish Committee acknowledges with gratitude the recent public expressions on the part of major Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Evangelical Christian leaders of their sympathetic understanding, moral support, and solidarity with the Jewish people and with the State of Israel, particularly during this critical period in the Middle East. We believe these heartening expressions are manifestations of the constructive spirit which animates our continuing dialogue with our Christian fellow-citizens.

The significant public addresses of the Rev. Dr. Billy Graham, internationally noted evangelical leader, and of his Excellency Archbishop Thomas Donnellan, at this National Executive Council, are important indications of the widespread moral support that exists among the vast majority of the American people for the right of Israel to exist in safety and security. We welcome the repudiation by these and many other Christian leaders and the overwhelming majority of the American people of those groups central to whose policies are violence, terrorism, hijacking, and threats to human life.

We pledge our efforts and resources to the continued promotion of interreligious dialogue in this country and abroad. That dialogue will deal with all problems that may potentially cause discords among its participants. It will therefore make a fundamental contribution to the establishment of mutual respect, religious pluralism, social justice, and peaceful collaboration in the United States, in the Middle East, and elsewhere in the world.

Adopted by the National Executive Council  
Friday, October 28, 1977  
Atlanta, Georgia

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

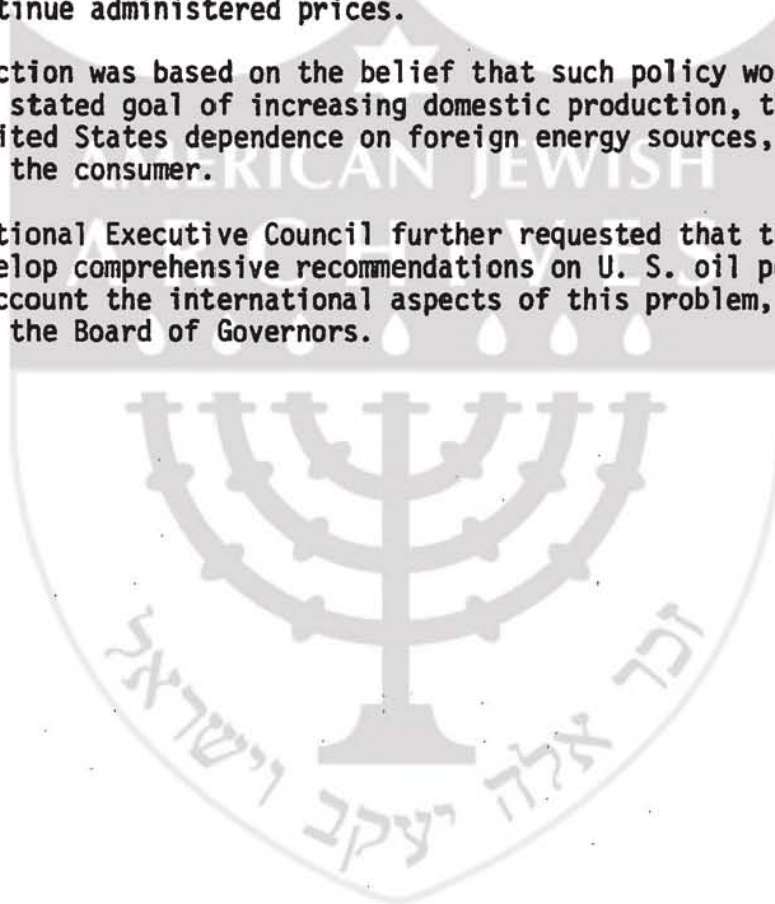
Action Taken by the National Executive Council on Energy

Friday, October 28, 1977  
Atlanta, Georgia

Acting on the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee on Energy, the National Executive Council voted its preference for deregulation of newly found natural gas. This means that AJC would prefer any plan which would allow market forces to work, and therefore would support gradual deregulation of newly found gas rather than the proposal by President Carter to continue administered prices.

This action was based on the belief that such policy would help to meet AJC's stated goal of increasing domestic production, thereby decreasing United States dependence on foreign energy sources, and at lower cost to the consumer.

The National Executive Council further requested that the Ad Hoc Committee develop comprehensive recommendations on U. S. oil policy, taking into account the international aspects of this problem, for consideration by the Board of Governors.





Rm.221, 1307 S. Wabash  
Chicago, Ill. 60605  
312/922-1983

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The film Nasty Habits makes nuns and sisters in general the butt of ridicule in this Americanized version of Muriel Spark's satire, The Abbess of Crewe. Designed as a parody of the Watergate scandal, where the original characters were males, Nasty Habits targets religious women for its attack, which is abusive, not amusing, in its cumulative effect. As such, it calls for protest from all concerned groups and persons.

Both the title of the film and the ads which have flooded N.Y. newspapers and streets cater to the pornographic tastes in the manner of current theatre "attractions: which are offensive to the general theatre audience..

In particular, Rex Reed's review of the film, a syndicated feature carried by newspapers across the country (N.Y. Daily News, March 18) indicates the double effect which is already inflicting damage to the public image of religious women across the country. He writes:

The Catholic Church has gone up in smoke over Nasty Habits, bringing pressure against the New York Times to remove all ads showing nuns with concealed tape recorders under their habits. But in the light of the daily headlines, we all know nuns are doing all sorts of unsavory things in real life, so the protest seems a bit unjustified.

(underlining added for emphasis)

Rex Reed continues:

Condemning this movie doesn't solve a thing. Every effort is made to demonstrate that it is not the Catholic Church that is being ridiculed. The unorthodox convent in Nasty Habits is identified as a quasi-Benedictine order unsanctioned by mother church in Rome. Sister Felicity represents the Democratic Party with its liberal reform movement, and Sister Alexandra and her saintly crooks are meant to illustrate the hypocrisy of imperial conservatism.

(more)

Nasty Habits cont.

Reed concludes: "The whole point of the movie is that laughter is a great healer, and it's time to treat Watergate with humor." So, the nation is to be "healed" by this sickly humorous attack on religious women, whom he has indicted in print in his syndicated column as "doing all sorts of unsavory things in real life" as evidenced by "daily headlines." This sweeping accusation compounded by the negative effect of the title, the advertising and the film itself, will inflict incalculable damage to the image of credibility of religious women, a value which is the result of centuries of sacrifice and service.

I am convinced that the religious women in the U.S.A. should unite to file suit against Faberge's Brut Productions (producers of the film), Rex Reed himself for his accusation, advertising agencies which carried the ads, and the newspapers which published Reed's column.

How to determine "incalculable" damage? I suggest that the groups of religious women settle for \$100,000.00 or more per congregation, the total sum to be used to finance charitable works for women across the nation. Some examples might be homes for homeless women, "battered wives" centers, projects to bring relief to women in prison. After all, are not all women abused by the attacks on any one of them?

Such a law suit against Faberge would be apt, compelling this company to produce something closer to the famed "fragrance of sanctity"- if even indirectly - rather than this malodorous film. Rex Reed should be compelled to make a public retraction for his reckless statement as well as an apology. Finally, the ads for the film should be withdrawn from circulation along with the film itself.

None of this will happen unless good persons unite to make it happen. Otherwise, silence can once again too readily be interpreted as giving assent. What say you? I, for one, cry "Foul".

*Sister Ann Gilten*

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Executive Board Member  
National Coalition of American Nuns



**"Who Has Not  
Made Me a Man"**

**THE MOVEMENT  
FOR EQUAL RIGHTS  
FOR WOMEN  
IN AMERICAN JEWRY**

by Anne Lapidus Lerner

IN GENERATIONS PAST, a Jewish girl's life was relatively free of options. She moved from girlhood to womanhood, apprenticed to her mother as part of an extended family in which she learned enough to enable her to replay her mother's role. Some Jewish women did, it is true, go into business; many worked outside the home; some received a secular education. But their lives, while not entirely monochromatic, did not offer the wide range of choices open to today's women. The Jewish woman aspired to be worthy of her husband's praises; extolling her as an *eshet hayil*, "a woman of valor" (Proverbs 31: 10), before the Friday evening *qiddush*. If, in her dreams, she wished to play a redeeming role, it was much more likely to be that of Queen Esther, carrying out Mordecai's orders, than that of Deborah the Judge, leading her people in war as in peace.

Many of today's Jewish women are less likely to be satisfied with the role of "woman of valor," combining business acumen and home-making skills with practical wisdom and a concern for the poor. The modern Jewish woman is more likely to regard as inequitable that division of labor, according to which the wife attends to all the physical needs of the household, while the husband "sits among the elders of the land."<sup>1</sup> Queen Esther no longer reigns supreme in the hearts of young Jewish women. More and more of them are admiring Vashti's spunk instead.<sup>2</sup>

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*Note:* I wish to express my gratitude to my husband, Rabbi Stephen C. Lerner, editor of *Conservative Judaism*, for giving so generously of his time and energy. I also had the advantage of using the excellent files at the Blaustein Library of the American Jewish Committee.

<sup>1</sup>Proverbs 31:23.

<sup>2</sup>Mary Gendler, "The Vindication of Vashti," *Response*, Summer 1973, pp. 154-60.



Questioning the traditional picture of ideal Jewish womanhood is not entirely new. One might cite the power struggle between Abraham and Sarah over Hagar,<sup>3</sup> or the complaint of the daughters of Zelophehad regarding discriminatory inheritance laws,<sup>4</sup> as the first faint rumblings of Jewish feminism. But these and other isolated instances do not really constitute a major strand in Jewish tradition. In the past, protest has been either so isolated as to be ineffectual, or so rechanneled as to become part of the normative approach. Thus, in mishnaic times Beruriah's sarcastic use of the rabbinic injunction against excessive conversation with women did not become a force for change;<sup>5</sup> and in this century Sarah Schnirer channeled her dissatisfaction with the situation of Jewish girls into the very Orthodox Beth Jacob movement.<sup>6</sup> Organized dissent is a recent phenomenon.

Jewish feminism in its present form is essentially an outgrowth of the American women's movement. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and other works urging women's liberation, the bra-burnings and similar "violent" protests of the late 1960s and early 1970s—all these had their impact on Jewish women's views of their role in Jewish life. Such women, both here and abroad, had their satisfaction with their assumed roles as housewives and mothers shaken. Indeed, as a group, Jewish women were in the forefront of the new feminism, though Jewish women have traditionally been taught that they must be good nurturers, ever ready to sacrifice themselves for husband and children.<sup>7</sup>

Such questioning was not lightly undertaken, nor was its outcome predictable. One might have expected a weakening of commitment among Jewish women to a Judaism which, as Betty Friedan and other Jewish leaders of the feminist movement pointed out, had men daily bless God for not having created them women. One could scarcely have hoped for a sincere grappling with Judaism and, through this, a heightened sense of commitment.

For traditionalists, unsympathetic to feminist demands, it is hard to view challengers of established and sanctified Jewish mores as anything other than threats to the very fabric of Jewish existence. Yet concern with feminism did give rise to a specifically Jewish brand which, while questioning

<sup>3</sup>Genesis 21.

<sup>4</sup>Numbers 27.

<sup>5</sup>Avot 1:5; Eruvin 53b.

<sup>6</sup>Nisson Wolpin, "Jewish Women in a Torah Society: for frustration? or fulfillment?" *Jewish Observer*, November-December 1974, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup>Aviva Cantor Zuckoff, "The Oppression of the Jewish Woman," *Response*, Summer 1973, pp. 52-53.

many traditional Jewish assumptions, was frequently accompanied by growing respect for Judaism and Jewish values. The "growing assertiveness by women [on college campuses] to resist the ancient Jewish practice of male dominance in religious practices" reflects, in the words of Rabbi Norman Frimer, national Hillel director, "a unique combination of radicalism and traditionalism."<sup>8</sup> Rabbi Frimer's words are, in a sense, a good definition of a movement which includes both extremely Orthodox women who ask only that their parents allow them to go to college and women who want the right to have abortions. It is a complex movement, one that is not very cohesive, yet does move.

### JEWISH FEMINISM

The movement, now loosely defined under the rubric of Jewish feminism, is relatively new. Its conscious beginning was as a series of isolated questionings in the shadow of the women's movement. Some Jewish women found each other in the anti-Vietnamese war movement, others in a consciousness-raising group or in the group involved in the *Brooklyn Bridge*, a self-styled "revolutionary Jewish newspaper." The first issue of *Brooklyn Bridge*, February 1971, contained the following statement:

Jewish daughters are thus caught in a double bind: we are expected to grow up assimilating the American image of "femininity"—soft, dependent, self-effacing, blonde, straight-haired, slim, long-legged—and at the same time be the "womanly" bulwark of our people against the destruction of our culture. Now we suffer the oppression of Women of both cultures and are torn by the contradictions between the two. These contradictions take some curious forms. Jewish men demand that their Women be intellectual sex-objects. So Jewish families push their daughters to get a good education. The real purpose is not to be forgotten however. While PhD's do make Jewish parents proud of their daughters, the universities are recognized as hunting-grounds for making a "good" marriage. Grandchildren assure the race.

We've been called "Jewish princess" and "castrating bitch," by the rest of the world and by our own men loud and clear. We've been defined as a "Jewess" and been the object of rape. As Jewish Women we are strong, but always the force *behind* our men. We were strong in order to survive, and kept things together for our families and our culture, and for this we are now attacked as being "Jewish mother," ridiculous and disgusting as that has come to be.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time that some women were protesting cultural and social oppression, others set about investigating the position of women in Jewish

<sup>8</sup>Irving Spiegel, "Equality Sought by Jewish Coeds," *New York Times*, April 20, 1975.

<sup>9</sup>"Jewish Women: Life Force of a Culture?," p. 14.



religious life. Ezrat Nashim, founded in September 1971, is "perhaps the first group publicly committed to equality for women within Judaism."<sup>10</sup> It was, and has remained, a small group of women devoted both to the study of Jewish and secular materials relating to women and to active attempts to effect change in Jewish life. They have served as a major resource for speakers, educational materials, and advice of all sorts. Although they are of diverse backgrounds, many are Conservative and have been to Ramah camps, the educational and religious camps sponsored by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTSA). As a group, they are well-educated in Jewish and general culture, and committed to Judaism. As internal critics, or "loyal opposition,"<sup>11</sup> they are less vulnerable to accusations of self-hatred of the kind often leveled at such Jewish women as Betty Friedan and Shulamith Firestone, and others like them. Their appearance at the Rabbinical Assembly convention in March 1972, their first public act, brought the Jewish feminist movement to wide public attention.

The growing public awareness of Jewish feminism gave rise to the National Jewish Women's Conference in New York in February 1973. As Judith Plaskow Goldenberg, who was then finishing her doctorate in theology at Yale University, stated at that conference:

We are not here due to some unfolding of the Jewish tradition, to the fact that it is a Jewishly appropriate moment for us to have come together. We are here because a secular movement for the liberation of women, of which many of us are members, has made it imperative that we raise certain Jewish issues now. We are here because we will not let ourselves be defined as Jewish women in ways in which we cannot allow ourselves to be defined as women. This creates a conflict not just and not primarily because the women's movement is a secular movement whose principles we are attempting to apply to an ancient religious tradition, but because the women's movement is a different community around which we might center our lives. The conflict between communities is the first level on which I experience the conflict between being a woman and being a Jew.<sup>12</sup>

The more than 500 women who participated in that conference discussed various Jewish and feminist concerns. Most were elated that they were not alone in questioning the attitudes and values of traditional Judaism and Jewish social norms but that there were others like them as well. Yet it was also clear that elation was not enough. Much had to be done.

The second conference, in April 1974, was different in scope and result. Discussing "Changing Sex Roles: Implications for the Future of Jewish Life," the conference was open to men and women, although they frequently met in separate sessions. This paradoxical arrangement, in which

<sup>10</sup>Martha Ackelsberg, "Introduction," *Response*, Summer 1973, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup>Susan Dworkin, "A Song for Women in Five Questions," *Moment*, May-June 1975, p. 44.

<sup>12</sup>"The Jewish Feminist: Conflict in Identities," *Response*, Summer 1973, pp. 11-12.

sexist role-typing was decried in groups which often were open only to one sex, gave rise to the establishment of the Jewish Feminist Organization (JFO). The preamble of its interim constitution reads, in part:

We, Jewish feminists, have joined together here in strength and joy to struggle for the liberation of the Jewish woman. Jewish women of all ages, political, cultural and religious outlooks and sexual preferences, are all sisters. We are committed to the development of our full human potential and to the survival and enhancement of Jewish life. We seek nothing else than the full, direct and equal participation of women at all levels of Jewish life—communal, religious, educational and political. We shall be a force for such creative change in the Jewish community.<sup>13</sup>

JFO is becoming the umbrella organization of Jewish feminism, functioning through committees designed to include every interest and ability: a committee to "examine Jewish law to determine views on issues of concern to Jewish women," another to "publicly answer offensive ads, publications, media stuff with letters, calls, demonstrations, etc." JFO is divided into Eastern, Midwestern, Western, and Canadian regions, with sub-regions becoming increasingly active in some areas, and has recently hired its first part-time functionary.

Ferment among young Jewish women, whether or not they are directly connected to JFO, has become fairly widespread. Some are planning to publish *Lilith*, a journal devoted to Jewish feminism. The so-called Jewish counter-culture, young people involved in *Response*, *The Jewish Catalog*, and the *havurot*—small Jewish fellowships devoted to prayer, study, and community—almost always stress egalitarian religious services allowing women a full measure of participation. Some of these men and women refuse on principle to participate in services which do not grant women's rights. Robert Lapidus, among the founders of one small Sabbath "davening group" in Boston, said that the wives, dissatisfied with their passive roles in Orthodox or right-wing Conservative congregations, were the driving force in the establishment of the group. The husbands had been largely satisfied with their active, participatory roles in established congregations.

Hillel Foundations are another place where changes are often made. Rabbi Allan Lettovsky reports that at the Orthodox service of his foundation at the University of Wisconsin, informed Orthodox graduate students ruled that women may have 'aliyot, being called to the Torah, but only when women read the Torah. Thus, each Sabbath morning, at a certain point in the Torah reading, the male *gabba'im* and Torah readers are replaced by women, and women are called up for 'aliyot.

At some campuses women's *minyanim*, quorums necessary for public

<sup>13</sup> *Lilith's Rib*, June 1974, p. 1.



worship, have been established.<sup>14</sup> At Brown University the women's *minyan* meets every Sabbath and addresses the Deity using feminine, rather than masculine, pronouns, although they do not consider God either male or female. Maggie Wenig, one of the participants, has explained other liturgical innovations: "There are blessings in Judaism for almost everything, including going to the bathroom, but there isn't one for menstruation or for a healthy pregnancy. These are the types of things we're developing."<sup>15</sup> The women involved in this group do not want to join a Conservative or Reform congregation where they may be allowed an active role, both because they want to do these things first in a female setting and because this type of group encourages relationships among the women. On balance, though, the women's *minyan* does not seem to be the "wave of the future."

Another interesting innovation is found in a somewhat less likely place, the Armed Forces. The Jewish Welfare Board's *JWB Circle* (October 1975) reports that Capt. Ellen S. Philpott is the Jewish lay leader in Crete, and Capt. Karen McKay Philips in Athens. These women, stationed in locations which do not have a full-time chaplain, organize religious services as well as educational and religious programs.

#### JEWISH RITUAL

A discussion of Jewish women today must perforce include the question of the woman's role in Judaism and Jewish ritual. Obviously, this is an area of many sharp disagreements within Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative Judaism. Before attempting to discuss current trends, one must sketch some of the background.

The position of women in the traditional Jewish *Weltanschauung* is about as elusive a matter as defining that *Weltanschauung* itself. A recent volume by Reuben Alcalay, *A Basic Encyclopedia of Jewish Proverbs, Quotations and Folk Wisdom* (New York and Bridgeport, 1973), divides its statements on women into categories: praises, strictures, and miscellaneous, with 14, 55, and 41 entries, respectively. When one considers that among the praises are to be found such statements as "woman is for children; woman is for beauty" and "women are docile," one can easily get the impression that the pedestal which traditional Judaism has purportedly maintained for women rests on a narrow base. The equilibrium is somewhat restored by the mate-

<sup>14</sup>Irving Spiegel, "Equality Sought by Jewish Coeds," *New York Times*, April 20, 1975.

<sup>15</sup>K.S., "Judaism is not for men only," *Brown Alumni Monthly*, February 1975, p. 19.

rial under the heading "wife." There the three subdivisions are "good," "bad," and "general," with 18, 10, and 45 entries, respectively. On balance, then, the traditional Jewish view of women is less than wholly favorable. Yet, this or any other method based on nonlegal material that tries to ascertain the traditional Jewish view of women is bound to degenerate into a quotation-matching game of "Can You Top This?" and proves little.

Although *aggadah*, nonlegal material, may be said to be the soul of Judaism, it is *halakhah*, Jewish law, which provides us with an accurate guide to the actual position and treatment of women in Judaism. Careful examination of the woman's position in the halakhic system, which was developed almost entirely by men, may lead one either to marvel at the consideration given women, or to recoil from the lack of it.

It is possible to divide Jewish laws affecting women that apply today into four categories: family status, testimony, private ritual, and public ritual.

Laws of family status were always among the most stringent in Judaism because an error here could cause problems affecting generations of unborn children. The traditional marriage ceremony, the foundation on which the family rests, would customarily have the bride circle the groom as a symbol of her submissiveness, but, beyond that custom, would have the bride say nothing and do very little. The *ketubbah*, marriage contract, was instituted in talmudic times to obligate the husband to support his wife and, in the event the marriage terminated in divorce or in his death, to arrange for her to receive a stipulated sum. Divorce could be initiated only by the man, so that the woman in an unsatisfactory marriage had little recourse. A man who abandoned his wife but refused her a divorce made her an *'agunah*, "anchored" to him and unable to marry another. This was also the situation of a woman whose husband was believed to have died, but to whose death there were no witnesses, because he may have been lost at sea or missing in military action. Other laws which bore upon women and were particularly difficult for them were the laws of levirate marriage which, in biblical times, obligated a childless widow to marry her deceased husband's brother. If the brother-in-law refused, he and the widow had to go through a *halizah*, release ceremony, in which she was freed to marry someone else by removing a special shoe from his foot and spitting before him. If the surviving brother was a minor, the widow had to wait, unable to remarry, until he attained his majority. In all these categories the woman was clearly hurt by her inability to initiate a legal action.

Another issue in family relations was family purity, the term commonly used to refer to laws dealing with menstruation. In brief, a menstruating woman was forbidden all contact with her husband for the period of her



menstruation and for the following seven "clean" days. At the end of this time, if there had been no bleeding, she had to immerse herself in a *miqweh*, a ritual bath, before resuming normal relations with her husband.

A woman's testimony, like that of minors, the mentally impaired, and deaf-mutes, was generally not acceptable. This provision did not evince very high regard for women, a situation which was scarcely ameliorated by the fact that a woman's testimony regarding the *kashrut* of her home or her having been to the *miqweh* was acceptable.

In private ritual a woman had both more obligations and more options. There are three "women's *mitzvot*": lighting Sabbath and holiday candles, separating the *hallah* portion from bread dough and throwing it into the fire after reciting the appropriate blessing, and the laws of family purity. Of these, only the last was to be observed exclusively by women; for a man could light candles and in fact was obligated to do so if there was no woman in the household, and whoever, male or female, made the bread dough had to remove the *hallah* portion. There also are *mitzvot* which women shared with men.

In general a woman was exempt from performing most commandments enjoining one to do something at a particular time. Thus, although woman was exempt from the obligation to pray at the proper time, she was, according to many authorities, nevertheless obliged to pray. At any rate she was required to hear the *megillah* on Purim, might make *qiddush* on Sabbath and holidays, and might wear *tefillin*. For various reasons, women did not usually avail themselves of all the options open to them.

It was in the synagogue, the arena of public worship, that women were treated most differently from men. The seating arrangement, with a balcony, rear section, or separate room reserved for women, made it difficult for them to feel part of the service. Woman's exclusion from all prominent functions, such as *rabbi* or *hazzan*; her inability to be counted for a *minyan*, and her exclusion from an *'aliyah*, reinforced the differences in the roles of women and men.

To 20th-century sensibilities many of these laws may seem prejudicial to women. It is important, however, to consider them in the context of the periods in which they were promulgated. Thus, in the talmudic period, the *ketubbah* was devised to protect women from capricious divorce by tying divorce to a financial settlement. Also, in their attempt to ameliorate the condition of women, the rabbis sometimes circumvented biblical law, as they did in accepting the testimony of one witness, instead of the requisite two, to the death of a husband in order to free a woman from the crushing *'agunah* burden. In an assessment of the talmudic period as a whole, Judith

Hauptman, instructor in Talmud at the Jewish Theological Seminary, examined a number of issues, including divorce and inheritance, and came to the following conclusion:

With these examples in mind, we renounce the view held by many, both men and women, that the Jewish tradition, having been shaped by men, is totally biased in their favor. It was the Rabbis, members of the very class of people who were more equal than others, who voluntarily extended some of their privileges to those who were not so fortunate.<sup>16</sup>

### *Orthodoxy*

Within Orthodox Judaism, little has changed. Many Orthodox Jews would probably concur with Rabbi Wolpin's dictum that "the women's role is not the object of discrimination—just one of definition."<sup>17</sup> Although social attitudes now allow women to work outside the home, as they did, for example, in Eastern Europe, religious attitudes are not changing significantly.

The innovations have been outside the realm of religion. Some Orthodox Jewish women have organized a JFO chapter in Boro Park, Brooklyn's center of Orthodoxy. One of their aims is to strengthen the resolve of young Jewish women to pursue educational and career goals, often in opposition to family and community. One Manhattan Orthodox synagogue is struggling with the question of permitting women to be elected to its board. The rabbi is not opposed; some of the members are. The fact that discussions of the woman's place continue unabated in Orthodox journals and meetings is an indication of the strength of Jewish feminism and its impact upon elements within Orthodoxy.

Some change is inevitable. Rabbi Haskel Lookstein of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in New York, while maintaining that women should not be "public personalities," expects that they will become more active in the corporate aspect of Orthodox Jewish life in the next decade.<sup>18</sup> Possibly in response to the Jewish Women's Conference, there was, in early 1974, a conference at the National Young Israel in New York to consider the status of Jewish women.

Most Orthodox spokesmen discuss the issues only to arrive at the traditional conclusions and to skirt such knotty and virtually insoluble problems

<sup>16</sup>Judith Hauptman, "Women's Liberation in the Talmudic Period: an Assessment," *Conservative Judaism*, Summer 1972, p. 28.

<sup>17</sup>Wolpin, *loc. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup>Enid Nemy, "Young Women Challenging Their 'Second-Class Status' in Judaism," *New York Times*, June 12, 1972.



as that of the *'agunah*. Thus, in an article in *Ms.*,<sup>19</sup> "Why I Choose Orthodoxy," Bracha Sacks raised some of the issues confronting Jewish women, but not that most painful one. And Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik, speaking to the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations in 1969 on the "Attitude of Judaism toward the Woman,"<sup>20</sup> emphasized the superior spirituality of women, but concluded with a strong plea for the sex-segregated prayer and family purity.

Still, according to Rabbi Sholom Klass, in "Women's Rights Fully Protected by the Torah,"<sup>21</sup> rabbis have attempted to help the *'agunah*. They have, he noted, consistently tried, where possible, to free *'agunot* whose husbands had disappeared and to aid women whose husbands refused them a divorce. Cases in which no solution is possible were not at issue here. Thus, Rabbi Klass cited a case in which Rabbi Moshe Feinstein annulled the marriage of a woman whose husband refused her a divorce "on the strength that the witnesses were not Sabbath observers and the wedding feast was held in a non-kosher hall and inasmuch as they didn't follow the tenets of our Torah at the wedding, therefore the latter requirement of a divorce according to our Torah also did not apply." But he did not discuss what would have happened had both the wedding feast and the witnesses been kosher. Contrary to its title, the article inadvertently supports the contention that women's rights are not "fully protected by Torah." Its opening sentence best shows the tenor of the argument: "The current Women's Liberation movement has generated many side issues which some people have used to malign our Torah." Surely, the *'agunah* issue cannot possibly be a "side issue" to the *'agunah* for whom there is no solution. If, as the Talmud states, the altar sheds tears when a man divorces his first wife,<sup>22</sup> what must happen in the case of an *'agunah*?

There are Orthodox leaders who respect the arguments of Jewish feminists. Professor Ze'ev Falk of the Hebrew University Law School, indicating that much *halakhah* relating to women was based on a society and a sociology which have since changed, hinted that new times call for new solutions.<sup>23</sup>

A most perceptive discussion of women's rights in Orthodox Judaism, by Rabbi Saul J. Berman of Stern College for Women, Yeshiva University,

<sup>19</sup>July 1974, pp. 82-83, 108-10.

<sup>20</sup>*Major Addresses Delivered at Midcontinent Conclave and National Leadership Conference, November 27-30, 1969*, pp. 21-32.

<sup>21</sup>*Jewish Press*, New York, April 21, 1972.

<sup>22</sup>Gittin 90b.

<sup>23</sup>"On the Status of Women in Jewish Law" (Hebrew), *De'ot*, Fall 5732, pp. 29-35.

touches three sources of discontent among Jewish women: "the sense of being deprived of opportunities for positive religious identification"; "the disadvantaged position of women in Jewish Civil Law, particularly areas of marriage and divorce," and "the Rabbinic perception of the nature of women and the impact that it has had on the role to which women are assigned."<sup>24</sup> Assailing past discussions of this issue, Rabbi Berman states:

It is time to admit that we have attempted through our apologetics to make a virtue of social necessity. We have striven to elicit voluntary compliance by women to a status which men need never accept. . . . It is becoming increasingly difficult for Jewish women to accept the idea that their own religious potential is exhausted in enabling their husbands and children to fulfill *mitzvot* (p. 9).

The careful analysis to which Rabbi Berman subjected each of these areas is exemplary in that he never dismissed any of them as trivial.

When discussing possible solutions, however, Rabbi Berman was less than comforting. Recognizing "the reality of the religious quest of Jewish women," he suggested that his colleagues in the Orthodox rabbinate do likewise. He urged them, in particular, to design synagogues in such a way as to enable women to feel more a part of the service, and to expect of them the same decorum as of men. Emphasizing the importance of Jewish study, Rabbi Berman also suggested that Jewish women try to discover "customs expressive of their religious feelings in contemporary society." The traditional role of Jewish women must be examined, along with alternatives, to see what is more appropriate today.

Courageously unwilling to accept the *status quo* with regard to 'agunot, Berman felt that the Jewish religious leadership must rectify this situation. Remedies proposed within Jewish law have not, however, proved acceptable to the Orthodox rabbinate as a whole. Rabbi Berman, therefore, suggested that the Jewish community press for legislation which would enable civil courts to enforce civil antenuptial agreements mandating religious divorce for those who obtain a civil divorce or annulment. All rabbis could then require couples to sign such agreements.

The proposal does nothing to help those already married. (Even among the Orthodox the rate of divorce is rising. Rabbi Samuel J. Fox of Boston has said that the Jewish Divorce and Family Relations Court of the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis handled twice as many Jewish divorce cases in 1975 as in 1974.)<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Rabbi Berman's plan constitutes a critique of the efficacy of *halakhah* and of the ability of Orthodox religious leader-

<sup>24</sup>"The Status of Women in Halachic Judaism," *Tradition*, Fall 1973, pp. 5-28.

<sup>25</sup>*Jewish Advocate*, Boston, January 8, 1976.



ship to repair this glaring inequity to women. Is there no other recourse than to request civil authority to rescue Jewish women from Jewish law?

Dr. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, editor of the *Jewish Spectator* and one steeped in Orthodox traditions, has long discussed the issue of Jewish divorce. Although in 1950 she defended separate seating and differences in education, she did urge that there "be some reinterpretation of Jewish divorce law making it possible for a woman to divorce her husband, instead of being divorced by him."<sup>26</sup> She then went on to claim that the inequities "do not prove that a wronged wife has no recourse to justice." Her recent position has been unequivocal. She has recommended transferring the power of issuing divorces to the rabbinic courts. "So as to liberate Jewish women from being chained as *agunot*, the Rabbinic Courts must be appointed as *bona fide* agents, acting on behalf of the husband, so as to grant divorces to deserted wives."<sup>27</sup> Dr. Weiss-Rosmarin has also urged that women be allowed to enter the rabbinate.<sup>28</sup>

A few noted examples of halakhically acceptable innovations have occurred. There have been Orthodox women's *minyanim*, groups consisting of ten or more women who could participate fully in a somewhat modified service. On Simḥat Torah, 1974, Rabbi Steven Riskin allowed a women's Torah service to take place in the building of the Lincoln Square Synagogue during the time of the Torah service in the main sanctuary. The 1975 women's service was held in mid-afternoon, when its impact was much less. Riskin has also allowed a woman to wear a *tallit* in his synagogue. According to Susan Dworkin, Rabbi Riskin, "who has never been known to permit any infraction of *Halachah*, gets himself a reputation as a raging liberal by allowing women to behave in ways they are nowhere forbidden to behave."<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, the position of some elements in Orthodoxy with regard to women has hardened. Where once separate seating without a *meḥizah*, a physical barrier, was deemed adequate, the current generation has established *meḥizot* in congregations, new and old, or raised the height of existing *meḥizot*. One interesting technological innovation in this area was the purchase by a hasidic congregation in Brookline, Mass., of a 550-pound thermopane mirror-coated one-way panel, intended for the new Hancock Tower in Boston, for use as a *meḥizah*. It will enable the women to see what is going on, but will not allow the men to see them.<sup>30</sup> Married women whose

<sup>26</sup>"Jewish Woman in a Man's World," *Jewish Spectator*, May 1950, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup>"The Rabbi as Politician," *Jewish Spectator*, January 1973, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup>"Women's Liberation," *Jewish Spectator*, March 1973, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup>Dworkin, *loc. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>30</sup>*Jewish Week*, New York, November 9-15, 1975.

Orthodox mothers walked around with uncovered heads are now expected, and often coerced by community pressure, to don a *tikhel*, kerchief, or *shaytl*, wig, on all occasions. An example of a new denigration of women is reflected in an editorial in Rabbi Bernard Levy's *Jewish Homemaker*:

We have found in many of our . . . homemakers a sad lack of information regarding kashrus. And we ask the question: Does the fact that the master of the house is a Torah Jew automatically make his kitchen kosher? How many Torah Jews have taken an interest in the cupboard? They rely implicitly on their *balboste* [housewife]: she knows what she may buy and what she may serve him. . . . His function is to see that the proper *brocho* [blessing] is made.<sup>31</sup>

Traditionally one accepted a woman's word that her home was kosher, but the *Jewish Homemaker* said that the housewife is not competent in this scientific age to know what ingredients among new chemicals and derivatives are kosher. It concluded with a plea that "Torah Jews" investigate their kitchens.

Another area traditionally the enclave of Orthodox Jewish women is the *miqweh* and the laws of family purity. *Miqweh* is a private matter, not for public discussion. Since a woman should not be questioned whether she goes to the *miqweh*, statistical data are hard to obtain. However, there is a fairly prevalent impression that the *miqweh* is more widely used today outside of strictest Orthodox circles. Many young modern Orthodox women whose mothers did not go to the *miqweh* go now. This is also true of some traditionalist Conservative women. A number of Jewish feminists, who have been urging the extension of women's public religious rights, were inspired by Rachel Adler's exposition at the first Women's Conference of the mystical value of the *miqweh* to begin to observe the rules of family purity. A look around the waiting room of the Jewish Women's Club, commonly known as the Mid-Manhattan *miqweh*, reveals styles from wigs and long sleeves to uncovered long hair and jeans. Some women seem to feel that if they ask to be included in rituals previously reserved for men, they should also accept those reserved for women.

Thus, while small but growing numbers of Orthodox women are reevaluating their traditional role in Judaism and asking for changes, others, perhaps a majority, are accepting more fully all the traditional demands made on them. Some even refuse to enter certain Orthodox synagogues where women's voices are heard in the congregational singing, because "the voice of a woman is impurity."<sup>32</sup> These women pose little threat to Or-

<sup>31</sup>"In Our Home We Keep Kosher," *Jewish Homemaker*, September-October 1974, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup>Berakhot 24a.



thodoxy. Orthodox Jewish feminists, however, are a disturbing element, for they will not indefinitely be satisfied to remain in a passive role in segregated sections of synagogues.

### *Reform*

At the opposite end of the Jewish religious spectrum, Reform Judaism has long been concerned with enhancing the participation of women in public ritual. As Rabbi Sally Priesand, the first ordained woman rabbi, indicated, this was the gist of a statement by the *Rabbinerversammlung* (rabbinical conference) meeting in Frankfurt am Main in 1845.

One of the marked achievements of the Reform movement has been the change in the status of women. . . . This conference declares that woman has the same obligations as man to participate from youth up in the instruction of Judaism and in the public services and that the custom not to include women in the number of individuals necessary for the conducting of a public service (a *minyan*) is only a custom and has no religious basis.<sup>33</sup>

A year later the Breslau Conference proposed that women observe all *miz-wot*, be responsible for their vows, and participate in public worship, and that the man's benediction to God, "Who hast not made me a woman," be eliminated. Despite the revolutionary nature of these proposals, one must note, according to Rabbi Priesand, that the conference neither mentioned the abolition of separate seating nor stressed encouraging women "to seek leadership roles within the synagogue structure."

American Reform Judaism further enhanced the position of women by introducing family pews, which did not obtain in Europe. Nevertheless, despite statements, including some by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, urging the participation of women in the governance of Reform congregations, the gap between theory and practice, here as in Europe, has remained large.

While most congregations have granted women the privileges of membership and voting, only about 5 percent of all Reform congregations have women serving as presidents and vice-presidents. And only about 4 percent of the members of the Board of Trustees of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations are women.<sup>34</sup>

The preamble to a resolution adopted in April 1973 by the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues underscores the problem:

Historically, the Reform Movement was the first in Judaism to assert the religious equality of women. We are proud, too, that there are no logical impediments barring women from any post or office in Reform Judaism, and that women have

<sup>33</sup>Sally Priesand, *Judaism and the New Woman* (New York, 1975), pp. 30-31.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 35.

made effective contributions in various offices, including the office of president in some congregations and the rabbinate itself. Despite this, inequities persist. Very small numbers of women are elected to our governing bodies. Very few are enabled to contribute in full measure of their skills, energies and creativity to a movement in which, by right, they should be full partners.

Further resolutions in 1974 and 1975 indicate a continuing need for action to achieve equality in the synagogue, the liturgy, and religious education.

Social attitudes are hard to change. Dr. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin reported that Rabbi Gerald Raiskin (Reform) "let it be known that women will not be called to the Torah at Temple Sholom [Burlingame, Cal.]. The reason, he explained, is that the Torah service is the last frontier of male religious functions. If it were shared with the women, the men would stay away from services."<sup>35</sup> Sex-segregation is also prevalent in the nonreligious sphere. Women do not serve as ushers during services, nor do men pour tea or coffee at the Oneg Shabbat.<sup>36</sup>

In a letter to the editor of *Ms.* (January 1975), Annette Daum, coordinator for religious action programs of the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, praised Reform Judaism's achievements for women. She did point out, however, that Sally Priesand, the first woman rabbi, was not ordained until 1972, and that Barbara Herman, the first woman cantor, was yet to be graduated in June 1975. In closing, she remarked, "I speak as one who still bears the scars of her struggle (successful) to become president of her synagogue." Even in this, change has not been easily accepted.

Rabbi Priesand was not the first woman to study in a Reform rabbinical seminary, merely the first to do so and be ordained. In 1922 the Central Conference of American Rabbis issued the following statement: "In view of these Jewish teachings and in keeping with the spirit of our age and the traditions of our Conference, we declare that woman cannot justly be denied the privilege of ordination."<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, when Martha Neumark was a student in the rabbinical department at Hebrew Union College in the 1920s, the board of governors voted six to two against the ordination of women. The only two rabbis present cast the two favorable votes. Martha Neumark left in the middle of her junior year, after almost eight years of study. Rabbi Earl S. Stone reported that in 1939 "the ordination class at the Jewish Institute of Religion was graduated with Helen Leventhal Lyons who

<sup>35</sup>Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, "Female Consciousness-Raising," *Jewish Spectator*, September 1973, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup>Myron Schoen, "Even Reform Is Slow On Women's Lib," *Jewish Post of New York*, January 10, 1975.

<sup>37</sup>Priesand, *op. cit.*, p. 62.



completed all of the requirements for ordination but, at that time, was refused this honor. She participated in our ordination exercises and was graduated with the degree of Master of Hebrew Letters."<sup>38</sup> Even the fact that these two women were the daughters of distinguished Jewish scholars and rabbis was not enough to carry theory into practice and provide for their ordination.

American Reform Judaism's first *de facto* woman "rabbi" was Paula Ackerman, widow of Rabbi William Ackerman, who after her husband's death was asked to replace him as spiritual leader of Temple Beth Israel of Meridian, Miss. At that time Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath said that there was no reason not to ordain women rabbis. Mrs. Ackerman, who after her retirement was asked to take another pulpit, said she hoped that her work would advance the cause of the ordination of women.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Temple Avodah, a Reform congregation in Massapequa, Long Island, not long thereafter appointed a lay woman cantor, Mrs. Sheldon Robbins.<sup>40</sup> Twenty years elapsed before a duly trained woman was ordained as a rabbi or invested as a cantor.

Now that women are being ordained, though in small numbers, within the Reform movement, the question of their acceptance by congregations must be faced. Unfortunately, the move to open the rabbinate to women comes at a time when the Reform seminaries are producing more rabbis than can be placed in Reform congregations. At a workshop conference sponsored by the Task Force on Equality of Women in Judaism of the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues on March 2, 1975, Rabbi Priesand expressed the hope that seminaries attempting to adjust supply to demand would not eliminate women students first. Jane Evans, executive director of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and secretary of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, feels that women rabbis will eventually gain acceptance, although, like the women pioneers in medicine and other analogous professions, the first women rabbis may find placements somewhat limited. Progress in this area depends not on religious law alone, but on social change as well.<sup>41</sup>

Clearly, if the Reform movement, which in many cases has abrogated such basic areas of Jewish observance as kashrut or the use of *tallit* and *tefillin*, has changed dates of holidays, has held Sabbath services on Sunday,

<sup>38</sup>Letter to the Editor, *Jewish Post of New York*, August 22, 1975.

<sup>39</sup>*Time*, January 22, 1951.

<sup>40</sup>*New York Times*, August 3, 1955.

<sup>41</sup>In a conversation with this author.

and has been equivocal about intermarriage, has taken so long to ordain a woman, the impediment was not religious in nature.

### *Conservatism*

The situation of women in Conservative Judaism is decidedly more complex than in either Orthodoxy or Reform. Unlike Orthodoxy, Conservatism affirms change in Jewish law. Unlike Reform, it emphasizes fealty to tradition. Given its dual commitment, to tradition and to change, the movement comprehends a great diversity of opinion about the place of women in its religious life. Many congregations, as well as the national institutions of Conservative Judaism, are debating and arguing the issue.

It is fair to say that Conservative Judaism from its earliest years has granted new and substantial rights to women. The movement grew as it introduced mixed pews and the bat-mitzvah ceremony on Friday evenings, and as it emphasized equal education for girls in congregational schools. The Women's League for Conservative Judaism is probably the strongest lay arm of the movement, and the Teachers Institute of the movement's central institution, the Jewish Theological Seminary, has always had a sizable number of young women among its students.

With few exceptions, no further rights were effectively accorded women until the ferment of the past few years had set in, although the changes previously introduced led to an atmosphere responsive, in many cases, to calls for change. The initial impetus for the reconsideration of Conservative Judaism's position on women was probably the appearance of members of *Ezrat Nashim* at the convention of the Rabbinical Assembly, the organization of Conservative rabbis, in March 1972. These uninvited guests, "well mannered, earnest and honest, reared in our Conservative congregations,"<sup>42</sup> were allowed to hold an open meeting for the rabbis' wives, while their husbands were voting on resolutions. They also distributed handbills asking, among other things, that women be counted in the *minyan*, be granted full participation in religious observances, be recognized as witnesses in Jewish law, and be allowed to initiate a Jewish divorce.

In the wake of this action, the Women's League for Conservative Judaism; the United Synagogue of America, the association of Conservative congregations; the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) of the Rabbinical Assembly, and the Jewish Theological Seminary all moved in varying degrees toward a recognition of the merits of the feminist demand

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<sup>42</sup>Selma Rapaport, "Two Worlds?", *Outlook*, Summer 1972, p. 24.



for increased women's rights. In effect, Ezrat Nashim had served to bring forth opinions and feelings which had been germinating beneath the surface.

Most significant in this regard was the CJLS's September 1973 decision, by a 9-to-4 vote, that women may be counted equally with men in the *minyan*. The nine men who supported the decision reasoned that "the contemporary position of women in society, the fact that we educate women and that they play a greater role in synagogue life, and that we encourage them to attend services require of us to count them." The minority position was that "there is no halakhic support. The *minyan* should consist of heads of household who support the community. There is no need for a *takkanah* [the form of rabbinic decision used by the majority], only a small pressure group wants it and it is a passing fad."<sup>43</sup>

The CJLS decision was deemed of sufficient weight to merit a front-page story in the *New York Times*, September 1, 1973. It raised a storm of comment, both positive and negative, and led to the rediscovery of favorable CJLS decisions in 1955 with regard to *'aliyot* for women. Many congregations began to discuss the issues. Others, in which discussions had started earlier, decided in favor of the feminists. Most congregations granted women both *minyan* and *'aliyot*, but some only one of the two—usually *'aliyot*.

The 1955 decision on *'aliyot* for women of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, like all its decisions, was not binding on rabbi or congregation, who may follow either the majority or a minority opinion. The majority decision then, supported by ten rabbis, allowed *'aliyot* for women only on special occasions, after the mandatory seven Sabbath *'aliyot*. The minority of five rabbis wished to allow women *'aliyot* on an equal basis with men. What is remarkable about those decisions is that only one member of CJLS felt he could support neither. In other words, all but one member of the committee supported granting women *'aliyot* on either a limited or a full basis. Nevertheless, during those relatively unruffled years the decision had had almost no impact.

In 1962 Rabbi Aaron Blumenthal, a former president of the Rabbinical Assembly and author of the responsum which had become the minority decision, conducted a survey on *'aliyot* for women for the Rabbinical Assembly.<sup>44</sup> Of the congregations which responded, 196 did not grant women

<sup>43</sup>Mayer Rabinowitz and Nessa Rappoport, "The Role of Women in Jewish Ritual: A Summary of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards" (Rabbinical Assembly, January 2, 1975), pp. 2-3 (mimeo.).

<sup>44</sup>"A Questionnaire on Aliyot for Women and Bat Mitzvah: Results and Observations," 1962 mailing to RA members (mimeo.).

*'aliyot* under any circumstances, eight granted *'aliyot* with no restrictions, and 50 with restrictions. Some of the restrictions are particularly interesting. The late Rabbi Louis Levitsky thought it should be granted to "only those to whom it has deep religious significance and who can recite the *berakhot* by heart easily—never more than one on any Shabbat." These are restrictions which are never applied to men. According to Rabbi Blumenthal, "a number restrict it to girls at their Bat Mitzvah." This is a rather odd approach to religious training, but one which recurs. The bar-mitzvah ceremony marks a young man's entrance into adult Jewish responsibility and privilege—the first, it is hoped, of many such occasions. But a bat-mitzvah would mark a young woman's *exit* from participation. It would be the only time she was permitted to go up to read the *haftarah*.

A conflict over the Rabbinical Assembly's decisions regarding women was launched by Rabbi I. Usher Kirshblum of the Jewish Center of Kew Garden Hills, New York, in May 1975. In a letter sent to many members, he accused the CJLS of announcing its decision on the *minyán* "through the orchestration of a front-page article of the New York Times," thus undercutting the position of the congregational rabbi as *mara de'atra*, halakhic authority for his congregation. Excerpts from letters received by Rabbi Kirshblum in support of his position, which he circulated, reflected similar concerns, rabbis objecting to being challenged by their congregants and fearing that the Conservative movement was approaching Reform.

Rabbi Kirshblum also sharply criticized both Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, executive vice-president of the Rabbinical Assembly, and Rabbi Seymour Siegel, chairman of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, in the Yiddish press. The tone of the attack by Rabbi Kirshblum and his associates in the Committee for the Preservation of Tradition and Diversity Within the Rabbinical Assembly, of which Rabbi Kirshblum is chairman, is that of a group suddenly finding itself embattled. Rabbi Kelman carefully answered Rabbi Kirshblum's charges.

In the summer of 1975 a questionnaire was sent by this author and her husband, Rabbi Stephen C. Lerner, to all Rabbinical Assembly members regarding the status of women's rights in their synagogues. Of 229 respondents, 114 (almost 50 per cent) indicated that their synagogues granted women *'aliyot*, at least on some occasions, and 85 (37 per cent), including some congregations not granting women *'aliyot*, counted them in the *minyán*. An additional 40 congregations grant *'aliyot* only to girls, mainly at their junior services where the age level occasionally extends through high school.

The answers also revealed something about the pace of change. In 64 of



the 94 (68 per cent) congregations which indicated when *'aliyot* were first granted to women, this right had been instituted since 1973. Sixty-nine of the 85 (81 per cent) congregations counting women in the *minyan* had decided to do so since 1973. In other synagogues, discussion was either in progress or scheduled. Clearly, the "*minyan* decision" had triggered a movement, which seemed to be lagging only in Queens, N.Y., and in Canada.

One of the first issues concerning women discussed by the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards was their inability to initiate divorce proceedings, leaving them *'agunot*. As early as 1930 Rabbi Louis M. Epstein, chairman of the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and an expert on the status of women, proposed that the *bet din* be empowered by the husband at the time of the marriage to arrange for a Jewish divorce in the event he was granted a civil divorce or disappeared. Although there was considerable initial support, and CJLS approved the proposal in 1935, it was not implemented. Only in 1968 was the antenuptial agreement instituted, providing for the retroactive nullification of the marriage if the husband refuses to grant a divorce. Despite the psychological objections to discussing divorce just before marriage,<sup>45</sup> this agreement should go a long way toward alleviating problems in recent and future marriages. Unfortunately, it does little to help the women who married in the intervening 33 years. In cases where no agreement exists and the husband refuses to grant a *get*, a Conservative *bet din* will annul the marriage. Since such a procedure is not recognized by Orthodox Jews, it may not solve the problem of a woman who wishes to marry one.<sup>46</sup>

Regarding the ordination of women, Rabbi Mordecai Waxman asserted in the presidential address opening the 1975 Rabbinical Assembly Convention that "the question of entry of women into the Conservative rabbinate is not a question of whether, but when." In an interview at that time he predicted that "properly ordained and educated" women would be admitted "to membership in the Rabbinical Assembly."<sup>47</sup> No action has been taken on this matter except for a little known CJLS decision, on June 10, 1974, in which a majority of nine held that women should serve neither as rabbis nor as cantors, and a minority of three,

<sup>45</sup>Simon Greenberg, "And He Writes Her a Bill of Divorcement," *Conservative Judaism*, Spring 1970, pp. 92, 135; cf. Aaron Landes, "The Ante-Nuptial Agreement," *ibid.*, Spring 1972, pp. 61-63.

<sup>46</sup>See the soul-searching article by Simon Greenberg, *loc. cit.*, pp. 75-141.

<sup>47</sup>Irving Spiegel, "Conservative Rabbi Sees Woman in Pulpit Soon," *New York Times*, April 21, 1975.

that they should.<sup>48</sup> A growing number of women, some of whom would have preferred studying at the Jewish Theological Seminary, have been preparing for rabbinic ordination at Hebrew Union College and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, the latter sponsored by a movement which issued from Conservatism and has vigorously emphasized women's rights.

Waxman's prediction has yet to be fulfilled. No woman has been accepted for study in the rabbinical department of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the only institution specifically designed to ordain Conservative rabbis. Women studying in other schools at the Seminary, however, are allowed equal access to classes in the rabbinical department. They may study at the Seminary's College of Sacred Music, but not at the Cantors' Institute which confers the title of *hazzan*. There are some women on the faculty, although none on the prestigious Graduate Rabbinical School faculty. Women also hold high administrative posts, among them Sylvia C. Ettenberg, dean of educational development.

The issue of women at the Jewish Theological Seminary surfaced in 1903, when Henrietta Szold asked permission to attend classes at the institution, newly reorganized by Solomon Schechter. Permission was granted "only after she had assured its administration that she would not use the knowledge thus gained to seek ordination."<sup>49</sup> The question of the ordination of women was raised again in the 1970s. In 1972 Professor Gerson D. Cohen stated:

I, for one, would urge serious consideration if a woman applied [to the Rabbinical Department] who was qualified academically, characterologically and religiously, and I would urge the faculty and my colleagues in the Rabbinical Assembly to consider it.<sup>50</sup>

Some time later, as chancellor, Professor Cohen further expressed himself on this subject in the publication of the National Women's League of the United Synagogue:

. . . anyone who has considered the matter dispassionately will concede that admitting her [an applicant] to candidacy for ordination *at this time* would hardly reflect the consensus of the Conservative Movement, whether of its laity or its professional leadership. . . .  
 . . . the quest for full equality with men on the levels we have been discussing [the rabbinate] has not been echoed by those young women who have been studying at the Seminary. . . .<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup>Mayer Rabinowitz and Nessa Rappoport, *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 3.

<sup>49</sup>Susan Dworkin, "Henrietta Szold," *Response*, Summer 1973, p. 43.

<sup>50</sup>Nemy, *loc. cit.*

<sup>51</sup>Gerson D. Cohen, "Women in the Conservative Movement: 1973," *Women's League Outlook*, Winter 1973, pp. 5, 32.



Some women and rabbinic colleagues disagreed with Cohen's later statement. The members of Ezrat Nashim, two of whom were then teaching at the Seminary, declared:

For a woman to aspire vocally and actively to a role which is barred to her takes a great deal of courage, for she risks mockery, frustration and doubts, by her society, of her femininity. Despite this, several women have requested admission to the rabbinical program and have been turned away. Many more women might have applied were it possible to be admitted, several signatories to this letter included. How many gifted spiritual leaders has the Jewish people done without because one-half of the Jewish population is biologically ineligible?<sup>52</sup>

Another respondent, Tziporah Heckelman of Waterbury, Conn., vice-chairman of adult education of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism, praised the chancellor's statement:

Your *Outlook* article on women in the Conservative Movement was an important statement on an inflamed issue. In all likelihood, it will be viewed as "reactionary" by men and women who are caught up in the groundswell of erasing all role distinctions in Synagogue life. I, for one, applaud its statesmanship and its reintroduction of perspective on an issue too much considered from the narrow vantage point of what's good for the modern American Jewish woman, to the exclusion of concern for what's good for the family, the fabric of Jewish law and the Jewish people as a whole.<sup>53</sup>

Rabbi Aaron Blumenthal, while praising Cohen, concluded that "his faculty is opposed overwhelmingly and that there is nothing he can do about it. That is both sad and unfortunate."<sup>54</sup> Chancellor Cohen and the JTS faculty continue to grapple with the problem of a suitable role for women in rabbinic and other religious leadership.

In one area, the Seminary's network of Ramah summer camps, the status of women has changed. In 1974, without any fanfare, JTS, which is responsible for the educational and religious supervision of Ramah, issued a directive mandating *'aliyot* for women. By and large, this change has been successfully incorporated into services at the camps. However, camps do offer a choice of nonegalitarian services where needed.

Essentially, the Seminary synagogue has been the congregation of the senior faculty. As such, its bent is decidedly right-wing in religious orientation. It is one of the few United Synagogue congregations in which separation of the sexes is maintained, although without a *meḥizah*.<sup>55</sup> Of late an

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, Summer 1974, p. 29

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>54</sup>"Is Seminary Opposed to Women Rabbis?", *Jewish Post of New York*, January 3, 1975.

<sup>55</sup>Shaare Zion of Montreal, one of the last Conservative synagogues to maintain separate seating, is considering change. In January 1976 its board of trustees voted to establish mixed seating, subject to a vote of the congregation in the spring. A poll indicated that 78 per cent of the membership approved the contemplated change.

occasional woman student has donned *tallit* and *tefillin* at week-day services, although no participatory rights are extended to women. But even here, small changes have occurred. On *Simhat Torah* 1975 women at the Seminary were allowed a separate Torah service, at which they recited blessings, albeit modified, when called to the Torah.

At the present time the Seminary is proceeding slowly. Requests for more religious rights at its synagogue and for admission to its rabbinical department are not likely to abate.

At the 1973 biennial convention of the United Synagogue of America, the congregational arm of Conservative Judaism, three resolutions concerning women were adopted. These were the strongest statement for the equal participation of women in public ritual ever to be issued by any body in the Conservative movement:

#### THE ROLE OF WOMEN

##### A. The Place of Jewish Women in Synagogue Life Today

Whereas, it is demonstrably evident that women have the same concerns and commitment to their synagogue as do men; and

Whereas, it is also demonstrably evident that women have not, generally, been accorded equal opportunity commensurate with their ability to serve as officers and trustees and members of congregational committees; and

Whereas, we recognize the justice of extending equality of opportunity to Jewish women in synagogue life; therefore

Be it resolved that the United Synagogue calls upon its member congregations to take such action as will insure equal opportunity for its women congregants to assume positions of leadership, authority and responsibility in all phases of congregational activity.

##### B. The Role of Women in Ritual

Whereas, the United Synagogue of America desires to encourage and foster the availability of creative Jewish identity and experience to all members of the Jewish community; and

Whereas, women are, and have been, an integral part of synagogue life, generously contributing their energies and resources to its growth and development; and

Whereas, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly has determined it is halachically permissible for women to participate in synagogue ritual; and

Whereas, the United Synagogue of America believes that the concept of full and equal opportunity and participation by women in religious as well as secular roles is an idea whose time has come; therefore

Be it resolved that the United Synagogue of America looks with favor upon the inclusion of women in ritual participation, including but not limited to participation in the *minyan* and *'aliyot*, and looks with favor upon its member congregations adopting such programs as will meaningfully implement this resolution.

##### C. Admission of Women in the Rabbinical School of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America



Recognizing the growing role of women in the life of our congregations, the United Synagogue of America, in convention assembled, wishes to note that it looks with favor on the admission of qualified women to the Rabbinical School of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.<sup>56</sup>

Despite the adoption by the United Synagogue of these proposals for greater women's religious participation, they were not implemented in the United Synagogue Youth (USY) movement, the most active arm of the organization. Neither at its national conclaves nor in its nationally sponsored programs, did USY accord women *'aliyot* or count them in the *minyán*, although some regional gatherings did so. A meeting of the National Youth Commission, the body charged with supervision of USY, voted in fall 1975 not to change its policy. A list of Youth Commission publications offers one article about Judaism's attitude toward women. Written by Nina Freedman, the wife of the USY director, the article is a paean to the traditional role of Jewish women.<sup>57</sup> This created the unlikely situation of the parent organization having endorsed more "radical" positions than those practiced by the children. As an ever-growing number of young women and men become accustomed to egalitarian services in their congregations, the official USY stand will experience further pressure for accommodation.

In the sisterhoods of the Conservative movement and among the leadership of their parent organization, the Women's League for Conservative Judaism, there has been a great deal of ambivalence about Jewish feminism. Sisterhood leaders have traditionally been dynamic volunteers who have been content to be the "power behind the throne," generally reflecting the acceptance of the traditional women's roles. Thus in the *Women's League Outlook*, national leaders, despite their important and coveted posts, are listed by their husbands' names, not their own.

In 1970 Evelyn Henkind, then League president, discussed the impact of women's organizations on Judaism, saying that there was

... no danger of feminizing religious life because women are not asking to take on traditional religious roles of the male—nor are they trying to become rabbis. Most of our work has to do with educating the Jewish woman to continue the Jewish traditions in the home—as a mother and wife, in addition to being responsive to issues in the community and in the world.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *Proceedings of the 1973 Biennial Convention of the United Synagogue of America, November 11–15, 1973*, pp. 108–109.

<sup>57</sup> *The Jewish Woman: A Liberator, Already Liberated* (United Synagogue: Atid, College Age Organization), 4 p. (mimeo.).

<sup>58</sup> Quoted by Doris B. Gold, "Jewish Women's Groups: Separate—But Equal?" *Congress Bi-Weekly*, February 6, 1970, p. 11.

Ezrat Nashim's appearance led to reconsideration of these historically sanctified attitudes. Selma N. Rapaport, Mrs. Henkind's successor, viewed the group of young women sympathetically. After first placing them in the context of the women's liberation movement, she characterized them as members of the family, "reared in our Conservative congregations, graduates of our religious schools, products of our Ramah Camps, our LTF [Leaders Training Fellowship], our USY, some of them enrolled for studies at our Jewish Theological Seminary." She then inserted much of their flyer, "Jewish Women Call for Change," into her column.<sup>59</sup>

The result of an opinion poll conducted at the 1972 Women's League Convention, which preceded the Rabbinical Assembly "minyan decision," indicated 99 per cent of the participants in favor of allowing women to serve on congregational boards of directors; 98 per cent, of enabling them to initiate divorce proceedings; 70 per cent, of permitting them to read from the Torah; 66.5 per cent, of calling them for 'aliyot, and 61 per cent, of counting them in a minyan. Averages of response to all five questions, correlated by age group, showed, not unexpectedly, that the desire for change decreased from 92 per cent among those 21 to 30 years old to 71 per cent among those over 60.

The 1974 Women's League convention participants voted by secret ballot on the following resolution:

Women's League for Conservative Judaism endorses the recent decisions of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly which allow women to assume a more equal role in ritual and Synagogue life, and understanding that the Rabbi is the final religious authority in his Congregation, to explore and discuss the implications of these decisions, and to implement them as individual circumstances permit.<sup>60</sup>

This resolution was obviously weaker than those passed by the United Synagogue the previous year, but it was clear. Though it passed by six to one, it made no headlines in *Outlook*.

Featured in a subsequent issue were the results of a questionnaire sent to the presidents of the 800 affiliated sisterhoods, eliciting information about current practice with regard to women in administration, ritual, and education. In this survey 26.4 per cent belonged to congregations giving women 'aliyot, in addition to the bat-mitzvah, and 23.8 per cent to congregations counting women in the minyan. The conclusion Zelda Dick drew from the survey was that

<sup>59</sup>Rapaport, *loc. cit.*, pp. 4, 24-25.

<sup>60</sup>Celia Goldstein, "Business Unusual," *Women's League Outlook*, Winter 1974, p. 24.



. . . these figures strongly suggest an overwhelming "Silent Majority" which appears to be somewhat unmoved by the Resolution of the Committee on Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly . . . , or by the hue and cry which seems to be emanating from what is evidently a small percentage of our Conservative women. . . . To say that, as a result of this survey . . . , a mandate has been called for a more liberalized women's role would be to interpret these figures in a manner that could be in violation of the trust of a majority of our membership.<sup>61</sup>

There is plainly a large gap between the Women's League convention vote and replies to the *Outlook* questionnaire. Whether it justifies Zelda Dick's conclusion is another question. She failed to record that many synagogues have significantly enlarged the religious rights of women over the past few years. Also, a questionnaire on synagogue practice indicates nothing about a "silent majority." In congregations, men too vote on ritual matters. Besides, the rabbi, as *mara de'atra*, has a veto power over religious innovations, although he cannot alone compel any new, non-traditional practices. Finally, it has been estimated, about 20 per cent of the rabbis in Conservative congregations are Orthodox rabbis, having little sympathy for Rabbinical Assembly legal decisions; and a minority of Conservative rabbis are in accord with them, at least on women's rights. Thus in perhaps 30 to 40 per cent of the congregations, the rabbis are opposed to religious rights for women.

Zelda Dick's striking conclusions and recent *Outlook* articles by Rabbis Morton Leifman and Henry Sosland seem to represent an attempt to slow the extension of rights to women in Conservative Judaism. It may be that Sisterhood leaders are beginning to sense that the full integration of women into the administrative and religious life of the congregations poses a threat to the continued viability of women's organizations.

## JEWISH EDUCATION

Intertwined with the question of the religious role of Jewish women is the issue of their religious education. The famous dictum, "He who teaches his daughter Torah, teaches her lechery,"<sup>62</sup> generally excluded Jewish women from observing the highest commandment—Jewish learning. As Paula Hyman, now assistant professor of history at Columbia University, pointed out, "the *dominant* theme in Talmudic and rabbinic literature is not to educate women to the same level as men. Men and women, after all, were

<sup>61</sup>"Light from Our Poll on Women's Role," *ibid.*, Summer 1975, p. 15.

<sup>62</sup>Sotah III, 4.

educated for different purposes and different roles. So the *yeshiva* and *bet-midrash* were male monopolies."<sup>63</sup> Rachel Adler added that "there is no continuous tradition of learned women in Jewish history."<sup>64</sup> Traditional Jewish education for a girl, according to Susan Dworkin, "succeeded when it helped her 'enable' everyone else to reach God."<sup>65</sup> Great changes have taken place in this century, however.

Conservative and Reform Judaism teach their boys and girls the same things, although women, as indicated above, are not accepted into the Conservative rabbinical school.<sup>66</sup> Among the Orthodox, even the liberals usually maintain real differences in education. The principal of a leading modern Orthodox day school in New York City recently told this writer that boys are given extensive training in Torah reading, whereas girls are taught only the "theory" and use the rest of the time for cooking and crafts. It would not be sensible, as he logically argued, to give girls the same training as boys, since the girls could not use it in their Orthodox synagogues.

"Right-wing" Orthodoxy often provides entirely separate schools for boys and girls. Rabbi David B. Hollander, vice-president of the Rabbinical Alliance of America, reported that boys in Orthodox day schools engaged in "deeper academic study," while girls focused on such subjects as typing, stenography, and kashrut in the home.<sup>67</sup> Rabbi Nisson Wolpin, writing about the ultra-Orthodox Beth Jacob schools for girls, granted that they had "succeeded in salvaging" the post-World War I generation of Jewish girls, but questioned how realistically these schools educate women. "Schooling educates for education," and women will have no time for that. Therefore, schools for Jewish girls should stress the intellectual less, and teach them how as women to help other Jews.<sup>68</sup> His article evoked both disagreement and praise. In a letter to the editor, Eve Roth of Lakewood, N.J., wrote that "once more, perhaps the finger should be pointed at the Torah society for failing its responsibility to its women, rather than at the women for seeking

<sup>63</sup>Paula Hyman, "The Other Half: Women in the Jewish Tradition," *Conservative Judaism*, Summer 1972, p. 16.

<sup>64</sup>Rachel Adler, "The Jew Who Wasn't There: Halacha and the Jewish Woman," *Response*, Summer 1973, p. 79 (reprinted).

<sup>65</sup>"A Song for Women . . .," *loc. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>66</sup>The report by the Women's League for Conservative Judaism of its "Survey of Women's Activities in the Synagogue, 1974" (unpublished) indicated that 98.8 per cent of synagogue schools have the same curriculum for girls and boys.

<sup>67</sup>Eleanor Blau, "Rabbis See Women's Rights Measure as Threatening Orthodox Practices," *New York Times*, April 4, 1972.

<sup>68</sup>*Loc. cit.*, pp. 15, 16.



that elusive fulfillment wherever it might be found."<sup>69</sup> Rabbi Benyamin Field of Phoenix, Ariz., elaborated on Rabbi Wolpin's suggestions for a practical education: "Aside from giving practical suggestions regarding how to set up and maintain a kosher kitchen (leaving technical halachic questions to the rabbi), there is a need for direction on how and where to shop, what to look for, and so on."<sup>70</sup>

The view of women in Jewish textbooks casts them in markedly stereotyped and old-fashioned roles. Naturally, if all girls were being educated for a home role only, this would be reasonable. However, since many Jewish women now work outside the home, receive an extensive education, both Jewish and secular, and participate actively in public worship, the gap between children's literature and reality is quite noticeable.

Melvin and Miriam Alexenberg's *Alef-Bet Picture Dictionary* (New York, 1963), in which the level of Hebrew does not indicate that it is directed at a day-school readership, is a good example. "Man" is shown standing, dressed in a business suit, hat, and tie, holding an attaché case; "woman" is shown bent over, her dress covered by an apron, sweeping the floor. Rayzel Berman's easy reader, *Hafta'ah likhvod shabbat* ("A Surprise for Shabbat")<sup>71</sup> shows Sabbath preparations being made by a woman, with the help of her son and daughter, while the father comes in at the last minute. *World Over*, a popular children's magazine published by the New York Board of Jewish Education, heavily emphasizes the role of men. One story, "Last Shabbat,"<sup>72</sup> views the new controversy in an interesting light. Its author, Barbara M. White, discusses a boy's reaction to his parents' exchanging roles for candle-lighting and *qiddush* on the Sabbath, i.e., that he is perfectly willing to have changes made in the synagogue, as long as they do not upset the home situation, in which he is comfortable. As the liberal-minded young man puts it: "So I said that I'd agree that it was okay for Mom to do anything if she didn't actually go and do it." Finally they agree to recite the appropriate blessings together, and alternate lighting the candles and holding the *qiddush* cup.<sup>73</sup>

In "Sexism and Jewish Education,"<sup>74</sup> Susan Rosenblum Shevitz, then

<sup>69</sup>*Jewish Observer*, January 1975, p. 4.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>71</sup>New York: Board of Jewish Education, 1968 (Hebrew).

<sup>72</sup>December 6, 1974, p. 11.

<sup>73</sup>Rabbi Wolpin (*loc. cit.*) used a picture from that story (p. 13) to illustrate his words about the dire effects of women's liberation. This emphasizes the importance of sociological patterns, even among the ultra-Orthodox, for, according to *halakhah*, it is legal for a woman to make *qiddush* and for a man to light candles.

<sup>74</sup>*Response*, Summer 1973, pp. 107-13.

educational director of New City Jewish Center, New City, N.Y., remarked that there were few role-models with which a young woman interested in developing a religious sensitivity could identify: "The textbooks unanimously choose to depict a rigidly defined family structure . . . and strenuous sex-role differentiation. . . . Women are depicted almost exclusively in domestic scenes and men in spiritual and ritual ones." Girls who might want to be rabbis or cantors, she continued, are never shown a woman in that role:

Women are barred from Conservative rabbinical and cantorial schools. Furthermore those women who choose Jewish education as a profession are encouraged to be teachers, while the overwhelming majority of supervising personnel is male. This seems especially strange when one recalls that education is the only professional Jewish field which is truly open to women. . . .

The girl's *rite de passage* is presented as marriage and motherhood—in stark contrast to the boy's bar mitzvah. Whereas bar mitzvah is ideally a measure of independent religious status, marriage marks the change of the female's status *vis à vis* her primary male relationship.

Deborah Grand Golomb, speaking about the Reform educational system, came to a similar conclusion.<sup>75</sup> While secular children's literature and textbooks show increasing awareness of these problems, Jewish publishers and writers do not. At the present time, Jewish textbooks and children's literature will not provide the Jewish school girl with a sense of the variety of life options increasingly available to her.

## ORGANIZATIONS

Jewish communal and philanthropic work has not been free of sex-typing either. Professor Daniel Elazar recognizes the contributions and importance of Jewish women's organizations, particularly Hadassah. He notes, however, that "with some exceptions, women function in environments segregated from male decision-makers within the Jewish community." The exceptions are "very wealthy women who have a record of activity in their own right," who are occasionally "admitted to the governing councils of major Jewish institutions and organizations. So, too, are the top leaders of the women's groups in an *ex officio* capacity which is sometimes translated into meaningful participation but frequently remains *ex officio*."<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup>Workshop Conference of the Task Force on Equality for Women in Judaism, New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, March 2, 1975.

<sup>76</sup>"Women in American Jewish Life," *Congress Bi-Weekly*, November 23, 1973, p. 10.



Women, volunteer and professional, often do the actual job of running Jewish communal activities, leaving the higher, decision-making posts to men. With the exception of Naomi Levine, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, and Charlotte Jacobson, chairman of the World Zionist Organization—American Section, women do not head major “co-educational” organizations. There was a recent breakthrough, which, however, was reported in the old, prejudiced fashion: “The Conference on Jewish Social Studies is the first of the Jewish scholarly organizations to have a woman president, Jeanette M. Baron, wife of the eminent historian Dr. Salo Baron.”<sup>77</sup> Women usually are the secretaries, men the presidents.

The *General Assembly Papers*, summarizing the sessions of the National Committee on Women’s Communal Service of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds (CJFWF), are revealing. In a 1970 address, Mrs. Howard Levine, chairman of the committee, alluded to women’s liberation in her address, but in rather perfunctory fashion. The question of “integration” referred to integrating the “Young Matrons” into the Women’s Division. Young Matrons (aged 21 to 35) were “girls,” and the participants were called by their husbands’ names. In 1971, though names remained unchanged, the participants seemed to be much more aware of the importance of involvement in policy-making. Mrs. Leonard Bernheim, the session’s keynote speaker, declared:

Yet, while I am sure that a few women in this room have had top jobs, there are thousands of women around the country who are not invited to play a *major* role in Federations, Welfare Funds and other community organizations. I am not a member of Women’s Lib, but there are many things this movement is saying which we, as Jewish women leaders, must listen to and do something about. . . . There may be times when we ought to have a sit-in in the Federation president’s office or in the office of the Distribution Committee, or in any other functional office where we can make our views known and our opinions felt.

In 1972 Mrs. Levine, then national president of the Women’s Division of the American Jewish Congress, addressed a plenary session of CJFWF. Her talk, on “The Changing Role of Women in the Jewish Community,” raised many of the issues which had been of growing concern in the Jewish community. She reported on the results of a survey conducted that year of women’s participation in federation boards of directors and committees in 1965 and 1972. The percentages had risen, but the highest, 28.4, was for officers and members of Federation committees in small cities, with the corresponding figure for large cities only 16.2 per cent. Speaking as a “token woman,” Mrs. Levine urged expanding the decision-making role of women

<sup>77</sup>*Jewish Week*, June 21, 1975.

in federations. In answer to the argument that men were more valuable on boards, she pointed out that if that was the only consideration, boards were not representative:

Yes, there must always be members who are large contributors. There must also be board members who are involved, who are activists, who are committed community leaders able to inspire others. Women may be any or all of these.

In closing, she urged that an affirmative-action program be undertaken to include women.

By 1974 the participants in the CJFWF Women's Communal Service sessions had all taken to using their given names, but the UJA and federations were nonetheless under attack from the Jewish Feminist Organization. JFO of Baltimore-Washington stated that its members "will submit their pledges this year, but that they will not be paid until women are equal to men, regardless of their choice of career, and 'the existing situation of separate women's and men's divisions has been changed.'"<sup>78</sup> In some places challenges were unnecessary. Frances Green and Mrs. Laurence Weinberg (as she prefers to be known) were chosen to head the federations in San Francisco and Los Angeles, respectively.<sup>79</sup>

In 1973 the American Jewish Committee established a National Committee on the Role of Women. In a June 1974 memorandum to the members of that group about women's activities in the agency's various chapters, Ann G. Wolfe, adviser to the new committee, reported on a series of interreligious workshops called "Institute for Women Today," in which the Committee is participating, along with Church Women United and the National Coalition of American Nuns. She also reported that groups of chapter members across the country had conducted surveys of the role of women in Jewish community organizations. The finding of the Washington, D.C., survey, "that women are dramatically underrepresented in proportion to their numbers in leadership positions in Jewish communal organizations," was corroborated in other cities. A salutary effect of this activity, said Mrs. Wolfe, was that those who developed questionnaires in various cities have had their own consciousness raised, and that the mere act of answering these queries has helped respondents understand the problems. The surveys served, too, as starting points for affirmative-action programs.

Other Jewish organizations have begun to find it advisable to alter their basic structure to obviate opposition and encourage growth. B'nai B'rith, which had long maintained sex-segregated groups, has experimented with

<sup>78</sup>*Jewish Post of New York*, August 1, 1975.

<sup>79</sup>*Jewish Advocate*, Boston, May 15, 1975.



"co-ed" units, as a way of reversing a decline in membership among young adults (25-35). Fifty-three such units, enrolling 4,000 members, have included single men and women, young married couples, members of a specific industry or profession, single parents, and persons isolated in small towns. These members manifest an unusually high degree of involvement. B'nai B'rith president David M. Blumberg, stating that "nine out of ten . . . have no interest in joining voluntary groups that are segregated by sex," maintained that this new arrangement offers potential for growth.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, a newly chartered Machar group of Hadassah in Cleveland is for married couples.<sup>81</sup>

Among a number of outstanding American Jewish women's organizations, Hadassah has been the most influential and probably the most potent force in the lives of its members. Its more than 300,000 members are heavily involved in raising money for Israel and in study. Many would agree with the contention of Rose Feinberg, past president of the New England region and a member of the national board, that Hadassah has helped women feel themselves to be "worthwhile, active individuals."<sup>82</sup> Although she had no objection to Hadassah members serving coffee and cake to male delegates at the first Brussels World Conference on Soviet Jewry (February 1971), she felt that Hadassah members had long been liberated. Among Hadassah's achievements are its lowest per capita operating cost among Jewish organizations and its members' high individual contributions to Israel, second only to UJA.

If the women's movement, with its rejection of sex-segregation and volunteerism, begins seriously to challenge "women only" organizations, the American Jewish community will have a major task in providing for their creative reconstruction. Coed chapters may be the way.

#### ROLE IN SOCIETY

All Jews, except those living in almost self-contained, isolated communities like the hasidic village of New Square near Spring Valley, N.Y., realize that women are aware of the women's liberation movement. Although the synagogue or Jewish school may be shielded from its impact, the family and other societal structures are generally affected. Jewish women are increas-

<sup>80</sup>Irving Spiegel, "B'nai B'rith Gains with 'Coed Units,'" *New York Times*, August 3, 1975.

<sup>81</sup>Bernard Postal, "Postal Card," *Jewish Week-American Examiner*, May 24, 1975, p. 17.

<sup>82</sup>Elaine S. Cohen, "Hadassah Ladies and Liberation," *genesis 2*, March 25, 1971, p. 4.

ingly choosing roles other than that of wife, mother, and home-maker. Recent figures for Greater New York indicated that only "four to five out of every ten Jewish women (16 years of age and older) are housewives."<sup>83</sup> Conversely, just over half of those women are either employed or students. A young woman today is likely to view her work as more important than did her mother or grandmother who may also have worked outside the home. Bracha Sacks, who is Orthodox, speaks of wanting "a fulfilling career,"<sup>84</sup> a concept which was probably foreign to her grandmothers, whether or not they were gainfully employed. If one can derive fulfillment from both career and family, one must value both.

Dr. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin has long claimed that a significant part of the problem of Jewish women derives "from the fact that the importance and dignity of the home-maker and mother are not sufficiently stressed in our civilization . . ."<sup>85</sup> While proclaiming that sex-roles as defined by Judaism make sense, Dr. Weiss-Rosmarin would like women to be given an equal opportunity in the rabbinate, education, and communal and professional work, if they desire it.<sup>86</sup> Although the importance of home-making and mothering is not to be underestimated, one doubts that any profound shift in public attitudes will take place in the near future.

One is constantly besieged by alarms which purport to signal the breakdown of the Jewish family, and the subsequent breakdown of the Jewish community as a whole. This is not a new situation. According to Professor Gerson Cohen, "even before [Jewish] emancipation, when the stability of the Jewish family could be more effectively enforced by social controls, families seemed to totter from time to time."<sup>87</sup> The idyllic picture of the Jewish family of the past is a myth which, as Paula Hyman indicated, will not convince women to leave their jobs, but "may provide a group of angry and guilty Jewish working mothers who feel that their community is not supportive of them."<sup>88</sup> Rabbi Wolpin, on the other hand, felt that the home should occupy all of a woman's time:

<sup>83</sup>Fred Massarik, "Basic Characteristics of the Greater New York Jewish Population," AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, Vol. 76 (1976), p. 248.

<sup>84</sup>*Loc. cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>85</sup>"Jewish Woman in a Man's World," *Jewish Spectator*, May 1950, p. 9.

<sup>86</sup>"Women's Liberation," *Jewish Spectator*, March 1973, pp. 4-7, 31.

<sup>87</sup>"Dr. [Gerson D.] Cohen Talks of the Jewish Family," *The Jewish Theological Seminary of America Bulletin*, November 1975, p. 1a.

<sup>88</sup>Paula Hyman, "The Jewish Family: Looking for a Usable Past" (unpublished paper for Conference on Changing Life Styles in America, sponsored by American Jewish Congress); see also Charlotte Baum, "What Made Yetta Work?," *Response*, Summer 1973, pp. 32-38, and I. Epstein, "The Jewish Woman in the Responsa," *ibid.*, p. 24 and *passim*.



When a woman does focus her interests, activities and designs for fulfillment outside her home, this can become a factor in the destruction of the family as a viable unit in society. Statistics need not be cited.<sup>89</sup>

But all Jewish women will not be restricted to their homes; therefore, it is reasonable to expect the Jewish community to move toward meeting the new needs of women. In the New York area some YM-YWHAs are beginning to offer expanded programs for the pre-school children of working parents, which may be extended to infants and school-age children. It would be appropriate for the National Council of Jewish Women, which has done much in the field of day care for disadvantaged minorities, to initiate some Jewish programs as well.<sup>90</sup>

There are also increasing numbers of Jewish women who are not married—never married or formerly married, single-parent or childless, young or old. Their situation results from extended schooling, challenging careers, a growing divorce rate, and prolonged widowhood. Their far less numerous predecessors of earlier generations had usually found a niche under the protecting shelter of the extended family. Today, as Rosa Felsenberg Kaplan pointed out, family seating and family-centered activities make single persons feel out of place. She suggested as “a possible option . . . the development of co-educational or non-gender-specific and non-marital-status-specific educational and community action groups which meet at times convenient for most working people.”<sup>91</sup> The need for such programs is underscored by the near-universality of Dr. Naomi Bluestone’s personal experience that “there is virtually no place in my Judaism for an unmarried woman over twenty-five.”<sup>92</sup>

Though they accept many feminist strictures with regard to the need to restructure communities, Jewish feminists can differ from the others on problems of direct Jewish concern—e.g., zero population growth for Jews:

No one inherits the Holocaust as pointedly as the Jewish wife who . . . is still getting pregnant long after it is safe, in a mighty effort to right the Jewish population deficit. The Jewish feminist is the only feminist who is told by mentors who are feminists too, that the abortion option is not for her.<sup>93</sup>

Married Jewish women also have their own special problems of adjustment, especially after their children no longer need baby-sitters. Pauline Bart, who has carefully examined the problems of middle-aged depression

<sup>89</sup>*Loc. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>90</sup>*Impact*, National Council of Jewish Women, Biennial Report, 1973–1975.

<sup>91</sup>“The Noah Syndrome,” *Davka*, Winter 1975, p. 32.

<sup>92</sup>Naomi Bluestone, “Exodus from Eden: One Woman’s Experience,” *Judaism*, Winter 1974, p. 96.

<sup>93</sup>Susan Dworkin, “A Song for Women . . .,” *loc. cit.*, p. 53.

in Jewish women, found that it is because of the demands made on the Jewish mother that she is more likely to be depressed once the "mothering" role becomes attenuated:

The literature on the Jewish mother is practically unanimous in painting her as "supermother" especially vulnerable to being severely affected if her children fail to meet her needs, either by not making what she considers "good" marriages, not achieving the career aspirations she has for them or even by not phoning her every day.<sup>94</sup>

Many of these women have been so conditioned to define themselves in terms of their husbands and children that they cannot see any value in their own independent existence.

Divisions among Jews regarding feminism have spilled over into the political world. In the fall of 1975 many Orthodox spokesmen argued against the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the state constitutions of New York and New Jersey, contending that the amendment would destroy the fabric of family life. One outstanding Orthodox rabbi, Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, implied that it was related to a Marxist view of the family; that despite First Amendment guarantees, its adoption might force religious schools to compromise their principles regarding separation of sexes for the sake of government grants, and that "the amendment might be used against rabbinical courts," which "exist by virtue of corporate charters given by government and enjoy tax exemption." To try to bring about the equalization of Jewish women in divorce by resort to the amendment, however, would be counterproductive in that it would only make the rabbinical courts more intransigent. Mrs. O. Asher Reichel, a well-known Orthodox *rebbitzin*, claimed that "all laws which segregate the sexes in places such as private schools, prisons, dormitories and rest-rooms will be stricken from the books," and intimated that it would be difficult to obtain single-sex accommodations in hospitals.<sup>95</sup> While many Jewish organizations relied on the First Amendment to protect Jewish religious law and supported the amendment, there also was significant non-Orthodox opposition to it.

Many people perceived the women's movement and its Jewish feminist subdivision as threatening, overly strident, and destructive. While many men and women have come to accept the movement's assumptions, a significant proportion of Jews have reservations about one or another part of its program, and a small minority remains in total opposition.

It seems clear, however, that the feminist movement is not likely to

<sup>94</sup>"Portnoy's Mother's Complaint," *Response*, Summer 1973, p. 133.

<sup>95</sup>*West Side Institutional Review* (publication of West Side Synagogue), October 1975.



disappear. Since the founding of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1965, the movement has grown in both organized and unorganized support. It has changed the perceptions of many women and men. In Jewish life, courses on the Jewish woman have been given in universities, free universities, Hillel Foundations, and adult-education programs. The best-selling *Jewish Catalog* contains a chapter on Jewish women. There are now Jewish women who are rabbis and Jewish women who are terrorists.<sup>96</sup> One might hope there would be more of the former than of the latter, though movements are not easily controlled. The image of Queen Esther is becoming less persuasive. Professor Leo Pfeffer sees in "the feminist revolution . . . not an enemy of the Jewish people [but] a challenge that can be met and lived with."<sup>97</sup> Judaism has always survived by evolution, never painless. The "new" Jewish feminism must be confronted and accommodated to ensure the survival of American Jewry.

<sup>96</sup>Elenore Lester, "What Drives a 'Nice Jewish Girl' into Life of Guerilla Violence?" *Jewish Week*, July 26, 1975.

<sup>97</sup>"Feminism and Judaism," *Congress Monthly*, June 1975, p. 14.





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