PART FIVE

The Impact of the Women’s Movement
Chapter 16

Feminism and American Reform Judaism

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Over 150 years ago in Germany, a group of “like thinking, progressive rabbis” convened a series of conferences through which the ideology of the nascent Reform movement began to take shape. Among the issues discussed was the role of women in Jewish religious life. At the Breslau conference of 1846, a commission appointed to reevaluate women’s traditional roles in the light of modernity recommended that “the rabbinical conference declare woman to be entitled to the same religious rights and subject to the same religious duties as man.” Although no formal vote was taken, neither were any objections voiced to David Einhorn’s pronouncement that it was nothing less than their “sacred duty” as Reform rabbis “to declare with all emphasis” men’s and women’s complete religious equality.

In 1907, American Reform rabbi David Philipson concluded that while the commission’s report was neither discussed nor voted upon, “in practice” the commission’s various recommendations as to how women’s equality might best be achieved “have been carried out in reform congregations, notably in the United States.” Philipson pointed to the abolition of a separate women’s gallery in the synagogue and the introduction of mixed seating by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise in Albany in 1851. Indeed, in his prayerbook, Minhaq America, published in 1857 and revised in 1872, Wise went so far as to describe the minyan, the quorum necessary for public worship, as comprising “ten adults, males or females.” Similarly, Kaufmann Kohler, president of Hebrew Union College, told members of the
Central Conference of American (Reform) Rabbis (CCAR) gathered together at the historic Pittsburgh Convention of 1885 that “Reform Judaism will never reach its higher goal [of spiritual and moral elevation] without having first accorded to the congregational council and in the entire religious and moral sphere of life, equal voice to woman with man.”

Yet, Classical Reform's commitment to women's equality was more theoretical than real. As Riv-Ellen Prell has observed,

The Reformer's concern for women was an inevitable outgrowth of their commitment to the Enlightenment's values of equality, reason, and humanism. That the role of women in Judaism was not actively addressed until the last decade of feminist activism in America, despite its prominence in Reform's initial program, is as much because social reality lags behind ideology as it is because the women's issue for Reformers was a logical consequence of their ideology, not a central cause.

My own research on the roles and status of women in Reform Judaism bears out Prell's assessment. Despite early pronouncements of commitment to women's equality in Germany and in the United States, “it was not until the late 1960s, as the burgeoning feminist movement [in the U.S.] began to create new expectations among women themselves,” that Reform women began to press for and achieve significant change. Thus, even though members of the CCAR overwhelmingly passed a resolution as early as 1922 maintaining that women could not “justly be denied the privilege of ordination,” it was not until 1972 that women gained entrance into the Reform rabbinate.

In attempting to ascertain why this was so, it is instructive to examine more closely the 1922 CCAR Resolution and the discussion preceding its adoption. Rather than arguing for women's ordination (perhaps on the basis of Reform's understanding of progressive revelation or of the need to create a Judaism more in line with the spirit of the modern age), supporters of the resolution maintained that, given all that Reform stood for (or did not stand for, including strict observance of traditional Jewish practice), there were no legitimate reasons for denying women the opportunity to become Reform rabbis. When the CCAR recommendation was overturned by HUC's Board of Governors a year later, the Board did so not because it
disagreed with the CCAR but because its members felt that practical considerations outweighed philosophical ones. Given that women as religious leaders in (Protestant) America were the exception rather than the rule and that Jewish women were not clamoring for entrance into the rabbinic school, there seemed to be no reason to “change the present practice of limiting to males the right to matriculate for the purpose of entering the rabbinate.”

In 1956, a CCAR committee was formed to reconsider the issue. A number of mainline Protestant denominations in the United States had begun to admit women into their seminaries and to ordain them as ministers, while a few women had begun to seek admission either to Hebrew Union College or to Stephen Wise’s Jewish Institute of Religion (which merged with HUC in 1950). At least two women, despite their lack of rabbinic training, had already succeeded in becoming Jewish religious leaders. The first, Tehilla Lichtenstein, assumed spiritual leadership of the New York–based Society of Jewish Science, a Jewish countermovement to Christian Science, in 1938. While Jewish Science did not formally affiliate with Reform, its major proponents, including the Society’s founder, Tehilla Lichtenstein’s husband Morris, were Reform rabbis and members of the CCAR. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, some of them attempted with little success to induce the CCAR to endorse its understanding of spiritual healing as central to Jewish religious life. Therefore, members of the Central Conference in 1956 were not unaware of Tehilla Lichtenstein’s achievements. Indeed, by then she had been leader of the Society for almost twenty years—a position that she retained until her death in 1973.

Perhaps more influential was Paula Ackerman, who assumed spiritual leadership of Reform congregation Beth Israel in Meridian, Mississippi, in 1951, following the death of her husband, the congregation’s rabbi. Ackerman continued to lead the congregation through the fall of 1953. During her tenure, she regularly led services, preached sermons, and officiated at weddings, funerals, and conversions. According to Ackerman, members of the Reform rabbinate treated her with great respect. Correspondence between Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, then president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (the association of Reform synagogues) and Sidney Kay, president of Temple Beth Israel, concerning the congre-
gation's request that Ackerman serve as their leader, seems to indicate that initial approval of this request reflected a desire, at least by some Reform rabbis, including Eisendrath, to determine whether women could gain congregational acceptance as religious leaders.¹⁴

This interpretation of rabbinic interest in Ackerman's tenure at Temple Beth Israel is strengthened by Michael Meyer's claim that by the end of the 1940s "the Hebrew Union College found itself hard pressed to keep up with the demand for rabbis." Responding as best it could to Reform's congregational growth, HUC introduced a more active recruitment program and in 1950 merged with the Jewish Institute of Religion. Consequently, Meyer writes, "from less than 500 rabbis in 1943, [CCAR] membership rose to 850 in 1964 and grew even more rapidly thereafter."¹⁵

Finally, a new receptiveness in 1956 to the idea of women as rabbis may be attributed to new leadership. Certainly, the membership of the Board of Governors had changed since 1922, as had the presidency of the College. Even before the CCAR voted to reaffirm the 1922 resolution supporting the entrance of women into the Reform rabbinate, Nelson Glueck, then president of the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), publicly expressed his support for this proposal and stated that the Reform seminary would ordain any woman who passed the required courses.¹⁶

Yet it was not until the late 1960s, when Sally Priesand, after receiving a joint B.A. degree from HUC-JIR and the University of Cincinnati, decided to continue her studies at HUC, that the doors to the Reform rabbinate were finally opened to women. It should be noted that Priesand's decision to enter HUC's rabbinical program came with little fanfare.¹⁷ That Priesand completed her rabbinical studies and received ordination testifies both to her tenacity and to the support of members of the faculty and administration, most notably Glueck and Alfred Gottschalk, who succeeded Glueck after his death in 1971 as president of HUC-JIR.

In short, it was not a change in Reform ideology that led to the ordination of women as Reform rabbis; it was the changed social climate of the late 1960s.¹⁸ Female religious leaders were gaining acceptance within Protestant denominations; qualified women were interested in entering the rabbinate; there were indications
that congregations might be willing to accept them; and the Reform movement was in need of more rabbis to serve its congregations.

Feminism does not seem to have directly led to the entrance of women into the Reform rabbinate. Indeed, in the late 1960s, when Sally Priesand entered HUC’s rabbinical program, the second wave of American feminism, spurred by the publication of Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique* in 1964, was still in its infancy. In contrast to the controversy about women’s ordination in the Conservative movement ten years later, public discussion did not refer to the admission of women in the Reform rabbinate as a “bow to feminism.”

 Nonetheless, the impact of feminism on the ordination of women as Reform rabbis since the early 1970s cannot be underestimated. Feminism insured that once women were granted the privilege of ordination, a sufficient number of qualified women would seek to enter the Reform rabbinate with all of its personal and professional demands. Since the mid-1980s, feminism has taken deeper root in the Jewish community. As women rabbis within the Reform movement have become more visible and accepted, standing on the bima beside equally visible women cantors who gained entrance into the Reform cantorate in 1975, feminist expectations have begun to transform the Reform rabbinate.¹⁹

In an essay entitled “How Women Are Changing the [Reform] Rabbinate,” Rabbi Janet Marder points out that, as of June 1991, few of the 168 women ordained by HUC-JIR “have achieved prominent positions of leadership in the movement”:

None heads a thousand-member congregation; only three serve as senior rabbis of congregations larger than 300. But it would be wrong to conclude that women’s impact on the [Reform] rabbinate has been minimal. On the contrary, one senses in conversations with women rabbis that we are witnessing the beginning of a profound transformation within the rabbinate—a change brought about by distinctive values and goals women have brought to this once exclusively male enterprise.²⁰

Many women rabbis, she maintains, consciously see themselves as “agents for change” and are attempting to reshape the role of the American Reform rabbi. Most, she continues, share a commitment
to three fundamental values, all of which can be described as feminist: balance, intimacy, and empowerment.

While American feminism of the late 1960s and early 1970s may have viewed the struggle for women's equality as the gaining of equal pay for equal work, by the 1980s increasing numbers of white, middle-class feminists (including Jewish feminists) began to rethink the notion of equality. If equality meant working eighty hours a week at a high-pressure job at the expense of one's health, family, and friends, perhaps the concept needed to be redefined. While the goal of equal pay for equal work was not abandoned, increasing numbers of feminists began to claim that the demand for equal access did not mean that women wanted to be "just like men." Although this realization initially helped create the phenomenon of the superwoman—a woman with a high-powered career who also attempted to be a superb wife, mother, gourmet cook, housekeeper, and so forth—by the mid-1980s, as Gloria Steinem put it, increasing numbers of American middle-class women came to realize that "having it all" meant "doing it all."

Consequently, many feminists of the late 1980s and early 1990s replaced the notion of "having it all" with that of "achieving balance." While not all of the 168 women ordained as Reform rabbis would identify themselves as feminists, the feminist emphasis on balance has proved to be appealing not just to the vast majority of women rabbis but to a small but growing number of male rabbis as well. Marder notes that "many younger male rabbis are trying to make family time a priority." While some of those she interviewed doubted whether this was a realistic expectation, I have observed, as a former faculty member at HUC-JIR in New York and as a lecturer or scholar-in-residence at dozens of Reform congregations throughout the country, that Marder's observation is accurate. I have heard an increasing number of Reform rabbis, male and female, ask, "How can I teach my congregants about the importance that Judaism attaches to family life and then sacrifice my own?"21

This question is related to the two other feminist values that Marder describes in her essay: intimacy and empowerment. As psychologist Carol Gilligan, theologian Catherine Keller, and others have noted, women seem to place greater value than do men on human relationships, a value that Keller calls "connectedness" and
that Gilligan identifies as an "ethics of care." Whether biologically or culturally based (or both), concern for others is reflected in what Marder describes as intimacy: the desire among many of the women rabbis whom she interviewed to form close relationships with their congregants, leading them to choose small congregations in which it was easier to create a sense of community. Feminism has claimed that intimacy and connectedness, long identified as "feminine" inasmuch as they are supposedly rooted in women's eternal nature, have been used by men, most notably in the last two hundred years, to relegate women to hearth and home. But connectedness is an important human value that, in the Jewish context, affirms that caring for others, recognizing the uniqueness and absolute worth of each person, and working in community move us closer to the repair of the world, tikkun olam.

Has the feminist emphasis on relatedness as an important human value led increasing numbers of male and female rabbis to seek smaller congregations in which greater intimacy is possible? Not only is there no evidence that supports this claim, but the data seem to point to a different conclusion. While women on the whole do not seem to be seeking larger pulpits, most male rabbis still hope to move to larger, "more prestigious" congregations. Certainly the desire for greater intimacy is not the only reason why the majority of women rabbis have not aspired to larger pulpits. Nor do male rabbis who aspire to larger congregations necessarily fear or lack interest in intimacy. But if feminism has influenced the decision of many women rabbis not to seek larger, more prestigious pulpits, it has also meant that there are few if any women rabbis today who can be considered among the leaders of American Reform.

Some might attribute this both to the relatively short period during which women have been in the rabbinate and to the average youth of women rabbis in comparison to male rabbis. Yet, as long as greater prestige is attached to serving larger congregations (in the words of Joseph Glaser, executive vice-president of the CCAR, as long as our society continues to believe that "big is beautiful") and as long as most women rabbis opt out of the conventional path of "upward mobility," few women will serve on the CCAR's most important committees, few will hold offices, and few will be invited to speak at CCAR conventions or to serve as spokespersons for the
Reform movement, either in the United States or at international meetings.

If women seek a style of rabbinate that precludes many of them from gaining public recognition as "leaders of Reform," their greatest impact in the United States may not be exerted "from above" but rather "from below." Women serving as pulpit rabbis have already had enormous influence on their congregants. Those serving as educators, directors of Hillel foundations in American colleges, or in other ways with Jewish youth have had impact upon students, while those working in communal positions have had effect on a great number of lay people.

The third value emphasized by many women rabbis has been empowerment. Even those who do not identify themselves as feminists speak about replacing hierarchical structures with shared responsibilities, privileges, and power. Some might label this "network model of leadership"\(^{25}\) as female or feminine (rather than feminist) because it is self-consciously critical of current male models of leadership. It is, however, a form of leadership that many women rabbis have already experienced in explicitly feminist settings (for example, in consciousness-raising groups, college women's centers, feminist organizations). In my view, using these nonhierarchival models to empower others (without sacrificing one's self in the process) is most certainly feminist.

Increasingly, lay committees are creating new Friday-night liturgies;\(^ {26}\) growing numbers of congregants are participating in the Torah service (and adult women are becoming *benot mitzvah*); congregants are leading daily *minyanim*; parents are writing baby-naming ceremonies for sons and especially for daughters;\(^ {27}\) twelve-year-old boys and girls are creating, with their parents, special *bar mitvah* or *bat mitzvah* services for themselves. Scholars-in-residence are frequently selected by a lay committee that invites the scholar and works with him or her in selecting topics to study.\(^ {28}\) To be sure, not all of these developments have been initiated by women rabbis, but growing numbers of Reform rabbis and congregants have been influenced by feminism's understanding of empowerment as essential to self-realization.

Indeed, the increasing number of women who have assumed leadership roles within their congregations testifies to the impact
that feminism has had on the Reform movement. As early as 1970, 96 percent of all Reform temples in the United States had elected a woman to their congregational boards. Since then, the numbers of women serving on boards and as officers of their congregations has increased further. By the mid-1970s, it was no longer unusual for a woman to serve as synagogue president.

While much of the leadership of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) remains male, women have increasingly assumed positions of leadership within the movement as a whole. Since 1973, for example, when the UAHC elected its first woman vice-chair, several women have been elected to this position.

Eleanor Schwartz, the former executive director of the Women of Reform Judaism (formerly known as the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods), has argued that feminism is currently having a positive impact upon the organization. She maintains that sisterhoods, always "radical in goal if not in style," recently have begun to attract younger, college-educated, professional women who would not have considered joining the sisterhood of their congregation twenty years ago. According to Schwartz, temple sisterhoods seem to be "undergoing a renaissance" as the participation of women in Reform congregations has increased, as more women have taken on leadership roles in their synagogues and in the secular world, and as feminism has reasserted the importance of women's organizations and of women's forming social, professional, and spiritual bonds with one another. To be sure, not all local sisterhoods are flourishing, but Schwartz predicts that the number of local chapters throughout the United States will rise.

Feminism has also affected religious education within the Reform movement. By the mid-1970s religious school textbooks "began to present female role models other than mothers and teachers." Growing numbers of women have gained full-time positions within the last decade as education directors of Reform congregations, where they have become increasingly involved in selecting the textbooks being used. (However, the centrality of women in Jewish history and religious life does not yet seem to be a major priority among those developing curricula for Reform religious schools.)

In 1988 the six-hundred-member National Association of (Reform) Temple Educators (NATE) elected Zena Sulkes as its first woman
president and, two years later, Robin Eisenberg to succeed her; the election of Sulkes and Eisenberg reflects both the increasing number of women entering the field of Jewish education and the growing influence of women educators within the Reform movement.34

Feminism can also be credited with changes in Reform’s liturgical texts. Michael Meyer maintains that the increasing influence of the feminist movement accounts for beginning efforts to eliminate gender-based language:

_Gates of Prayer_ [published in 1975] in its English portions removed male language in reference to the worshipers: “all men” became “all”; “fellowship” became “friendship.” One English version of the _Avot_ prayer made reference to the “God of our mothers” as well as our fathers. Yet, although there were experimental substitutions of nongender names and pronouns also for God, the standard Reform liturgy in the 1970s continued to refer to deity as “our Father, our King” and as “He” and “Him.” Moreover, the Hebrew prayers remained untouched by feminist criticism.35

By the late 1980s, references to God and the words of Hebrew prayers were no longer immune to feminist criticism. As a result of changes on the local level, including the creation of congregational gender-inclusive _siddurim_, it has become difficult to speak of a “standard Reform liturgy.” In response to increased support from members of the Reform rabbinate, cantorate, and laity, the Central Conference of American Rabbis has finally revised some of the services in _Gates of Prayer_ so that English references to God are gender inclusive and the mothers of Israel are mentioned in both Hebrew and English prayers. Similar changes were made to the CCAR Haggadah, originally published in 1974 and revised in 1982: while the earlier edition refers to God as “Lord” and “King of the universe,” the later edition identifies God as the less gender-specific “YHVH” and “Sovereign of existence.” All references to God as “He” are omitted. Two recent publications by the CCAR Press refer to God as “Adonai” and “Ruler of the Universe,” scrupulously avoiding any reference to God in male terms. Both texts deliberately make reference to women as central to Jewish history and contemporary Jewish life.36

Thus far, the feminist call for a more radical revisioning of liturgy has met with resistance from the majority of Reform congregants. Judith Plaskow, Marcia Falk, and I, along with others, have
pointed out that gender-inclusive language is not in itself a sufficient rethinking of the underlying theological issues.\textsuperscript{37} Although by addressing God as “Sovereign of existence” we may have succeeded in demasculinizing images of God, praying to God as “Sovereign” or “Ruler” continues to designate the human-Divine relationship as one of hierarchical domination. Emphasizing God as Ruler makes it all too easy to lose sight of the human side in the encounter with the Divine.\textsuperscript{38} Feminists have thus argued that there is a need for new, nonhierarchical images of God (e.g., Co-Creator, Co-Partner, Teacher, Friend) that reinforce the mutuality of the covenant.

A suggested liturgical change that has already gained some support in the Reconstructionist movement—that of Marcia Falk—proposes that the opening of the traditional blessings be transformed. Substituting “Nevarech” (“Let us bless”) for the formulaic “Barukh atah adonay eloheynu melekh ha-olam” (“Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe”) eliminates the exclusive maleness and anthropocentrism of the prayerbook’s God language, while at the same time claiming for the community the power of blessing.\textsuperscript{39} Falk’s \textit{Book of Blessings}, published in 1994, may well lead to a greater receptivity to such ideas within the Reform community.\textsuperscript{40} In the future Reform liturgists will hopefully struggle with new ways of transforming the liturgy so as to create images of God that reinforce the belief, so central to Reform Judaism, that the Jewish covenantal partnership with God entails human action and responsibility.\textsuperscript{41}

There has been greater receptivity to the creation of feminist \textit{midrashim}. Long used by rabbis to make traditional texts come alive, \textit{midrash} has recently become a popular and effective means of writing women back into biblical history. At the instigation of Jewish feminists in the 1970s and 1980s, growing numbers of Reform Jews are writing \textit{midrashim} that explore the actions and feelings of biblical women and their significance for today.\textsuperscript{42}

Among other steps taken by the Reform movement in the 1980s for which feminism should receive at least partial credit was the adoption by the CCAR of the patrilineal descent resolution. Breaking with the halakhic principle that a child of an interfaith marriage is Jewish only if the child’s mother is Jewish (unless the child
formally converted to Judaism), the resolution maintained that the child of one Jewish parent—mother or father—was "under the presumption of Jewish descent." A proviso was that the child's Jewishness would also be established "through appropriate and timely public and formal acts of identification with the Jewish faith and people." Influencing those CCAR members who voted in favor of the proposal in 1983 was the recognition that, given men's growing involvement in the raising of their children (itself a byproduct of the feminist movement), "the standing of the Jewish spouses and parents in mixed marriages" should be equalized. According to Rabbi Herman E. Schaalman in his 1987 report to the CCAR assessing the patrilineality resolution, "equality of status between female and male. . . [was] the core of our 1983 statement."  

The CCAR adoption of an ad hoc committee's report on homosexuality and the rabbinate also reflects the impact of feminism. First created in 1986, the seventeen-member committee sponsored an information session at the 1987 CCAR convention, local consultations, and a plenary session followed by workshops at the CCAR convention in 1989. Finally, the committee's report was approved by the members of the CCAR at the 1990 convention in Seattle. The most widely publicized aspect of the report was an endorsement of HUC-JIR's newly introduced policy of viewing the sexual orientation of an applicant to HUC-JIR's rabbinic program "only within the context of a candidate's overall suitability for the rabbinate." This policy reflected a change in the former policy of viewing heterosexuality as a necessary component of rabbinic suitability and therefore denying admission to openly gay or lesbian applicants.

The concern of many within the Conference about homophobia in American society and the Jewish community resulted in a call for "greater education and dialogue in our congregations." More than a liberal commitment to pluralism, this also reflects a growing awareness, mainly through feminist writings, that religious and societal attitudes toward homosexuality, like religious and societal attitudes toward women, are culturally based. Within the liberal Jewish community, there seems to be a growing acknowledgment, as Judith Plaskow has written, that "the creation of Jewish communities in which differences are valued as necessary parts of a greater whole is the institutional and experiential foundation for the recov-
ery of the fullness of Torah." To be sure, neither the Reform rabbinate nor the laity is unanimous in its support of the ordination of gay and lesbian Jews. Those within the Reform movement who value difference do not agree on the kinds of differences that should be valued. Yet the feminist emphasis on naming and valuing differences echoes the liberal commitment to civil rights and "unity in diversity," as well as to the Jewish belief that all human beings have been created with equal dignity and worth. As such, it has clarified and strengthened among many Reform Jews the view that "homosexuality can be a legitimate expression of Jewish and human personhood" and that the Reform movement should accept homosexuals "as they are and not as we [i.e., those of us who are heterosexual] would want them to be."47

Last, feminism to a great extent can be held accountable for shifting relationships among the Jewish movements. Many feminist-influenced positions have led to a widening gap between the Reform and Orthodox movements at the same time as they have brought Reform and Reconstructionism closer. On the role of women in the synagogue, Reform and Conservatism have become more similar, whereas positions on conversion and patrilineal descent have underscored the differences between them. In short, feminism has become a crucial factor in Reform Judaism's ongoing understanding of itself as an authentic yet diverse movement that continues to occupy a significant place in contemporary American Jewish religious life.

Notes

2. Ibid., 219.
3. Ibid., 220.
4. Ibid., 219.
5. Isaac Mayer Wise, Minhag America: The Daily Prayers for American Israelites (Cincinnati: Bloch, 1872), 12, in the section introducing the morning prayers. I am grateful to David Ellenson for bringing this reference to my attention.
6. Out of that conference emerged the Pittsburgh Platform, the statement of the principles on which Classical Reform Judaism in America rested.


12. Included among them was Helen Hadassah Levinthal, who actually completed the entire rabbinic course at JIR in 1939. The faculty seriously debated the issue of ordination but decided that the time was not yet right to ordain a woman as rabbi. As a compromise, she was given a Master of Hebrew Literature degree and a certificate in Hebrew designating that she had completed the curriculum. (Rabbi Israel Levinthal, letter, April 14, 1972, to Prof. Jacob Marcus, Correspondence File, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio).

13. This was repeated to me by Paula Ackerman on numerous occasions between 1984 and 1989 at her homes in Atlanta and Thomaston, Georgia.

14. In one letter, dated December 1950, for example, Maurice Eisendrath wrote to Sidney Kay,

I will be especially interested in learning whether Mrs. Ackerman does accept [the congregation's offer] and will appreciate being kept informed as to the reaction in your congregation and community. . . . I wish to emphasize my genuine desire to hear from you as I may possibly make some comment on this step that you have taken in some future reference either by the spoken or written word. (Ackerman File, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio)


18. I am grateful to David Ellenson for helping to clarify my thoughts here.

19. For a more detailed discussion of women's impact on the Reform cantorate, see Mark Slobin, "Engendering the Cantorate," in Deborah Dash

21. See, for example, “Thoughts of a New Generation: Rabbis of the 1990s,” in *Reform Judaism* (Summer 1990): 9, in which male and female rabbinic students at HUC-JIR spoke of the importance of balancing family and work.


26. I served on such a committee in 1990 and 1991 at the Jewish Community Center of White Plains, the Reform congregation to which I belong. I was the only member of the committee to have worked on liturgical change before. The process, for all of us, was an exhilarating one, and we have twice since used the service that we created (with members of the committee assuming leadership roles). In deciding to undertake this task, we were encouraged by similar work already accomplished in other Reform congregations.

27. Commenting in 1984 on the recent development of parents creating covenant ceremonies for their daughters, Reform Rabbi Cary D. Kozberg wrote,

> [These ceremonies] require greater legitimacy and more widespread acceptance. *Berit Milah* is a male-oriented ritual that carries with it the spiritual and emotional weight of several thousand years. Because of this tremendous weight, it has received more emphasis than the recent ceremonies for baby girls. Though I find it difficult to throw off this male emphasis, I do believe it is necessary to promote more vigorously these rites of passage for girls. Perhaps it is time to standardize them within the Jewish community. Certainly, it is time to infuse them with the “pomp and circumstance” and emotional energy that has always accompanied circumcision for males. (*Journal of Reform Judaism* [Summer 1984]: 8)

While these ceremonies have not been standardized, they have for the most part been successfully promoted by Reform rabbis in congregations throughout the United States.

28. Of the many Reform congregations in which I have served as scholar-in-residence over the past few years, approximately half have had such lay committees.

30. Temple sisterhoods were first established in the late nineteenth century as social, educational, and philanthropic organizations. By the second decade of the twentieth century, they were in existence in almost every Reform congregation in the United States and in 1913 they were coordinated on a national level as the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods.


34. My thanks to Sherry Blumberg, assistant professor of education at HUC-JIR in New York for providing me with this information.


36. *Haneirot Halalu: These Lights Are Holy* (1990), a liturgy edited by Rabbi Elyse Frishman to be used at home in celebration of Hanukkah; *Seder Tu Bishevav: The Festival of Trees*, edited by Rabbi Adam Fisher for congregations or small groups gathering together to celebrate the renewal of nature. I would argue that the Hebrew "Adonai" (Lord) remains a male image of deity. The intention of the creators of these new liturgies, however, is to invoke an image that congregants do not consciously view as male, perhaps because they do not know Hebrew, perhaps because the word "Adonai" does not conjure up as easily the kinds of exclusively male, anthropomorphic images as does the English word "Lord."


40. Soon to be published by Harper and Row.

41. Certainly other Jewish movements see the covenant as central and affirm the importance of God and the Jewish people as covenantal partners. What my statement implies is that "covenantal theology," as articulated most clearly by Eugene Borowitz, has come to occupy a
central place in Reform theological teachings. While not all Reform Jews would agree with Borowitz's belief that being God's covenantal partner means that "somewhat greater priority must be given to Judaism in the balance of belief than to personal self-determination," most if not all theologically minded Reform Jews would agree, I think, that "the autonomous Jewish self derives its autonomy as part of the people of Israel's Covenant partnership with God. Such a Judaism knows no isolated, atomistic, worthy self. Rather, selfhood itself necessarily involves God, people and history" (Eugene Borowitz, "The Crux of Liberal Jewish Thought: Personal Autonomy," in Borowitz, ed., Choices in Modern Jewish Thought: A Partisan Guide [New York: Behrman, 1983], 269, 271).

42. Those interested in feminist midrashim might look at the first and second editions of Taking the Fruit: Modern Women's Tales of the Bible, ed. Jane Sprague Zones, published by the Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education in San Diego (1982, 1989). Feminist midrashim can also be found in the pages of the Melton Journal, the Reconstructionist, Tikkun, and the Journal of Reform Judaism (now the CCAR Journal). As someone who writes feminist midrashim, I have met dozens of Reform Jews throughout the country who are working to create feminist midrashim, often with the support and guidance of their rabbi. I have also received from numerous Reform rabbis, male and female, feminist midrashim that they have written and delivered in sermons to their congregation.


46. Judith Plaskow, Standing Again at Sinai, 106.