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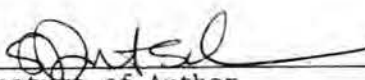
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**God is Going to Change:**  
**A Study of Organizational Change, Prayerbook Development,**  
**Gender-Sensitive Metaphors, and God**  
**Case Studies of Five Reform Congregations**

by  
Stacia Deutsch

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for Ordination  
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

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Referee: Professor Richard Sarason

## Digest

The *Union Prayer Book* spoke the prayers of the Reform movement in America for almost eighty years. During those years, the prayerbook was revised twice, each time reflecting the needs and values of an ever-changing Jewish community. Inevitably, a decision was made to create a new prayerbook altogether. After many years of preparation, in 1975 the Liturgy Committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis published *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayer Book*. The prayerbook brought to the Reform movement a new liturgy that spoke the words of the modern Jew - the post-Holocaust Jew, the Jew with the State of Israel in his or her reality, and the Jew who felt that language should reflect the social experiences of men and woman equally.

Merely twenty years after the *Gates of Prayer* was published, a new "gender-sensitive" prayerbook has come to press. Today, many Jews are no longer satisfied praying to a masculine image of God. Words like "He," "Lord" and "King" feel outdated and limiting. Gender-sensitive, or gender-neutral, liturgy means eliminating gender-specific terms to refer to God, and if any gender-terms are used, giving equal usage to male and female metaphors.

*Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* (1992) was the first published in a series of small prayerbooks with a few gender-sensitive service options. These gender-sensitive prayerbooks have not been universally accepted by all Reform-affiliated congregations. Often cost is cited as a reason the new prayerbooks have not been purchased by congregations. Congregations do not want to purchase a book that is intended to be an interim prayerbook since it is understood that the Central Conference of American Rabbis is developing a new gender-sensitive prayerbook expected to be published sometime after the year 2000. However important financial considerations may be, the dilemma of

changing to a gender-sensitive prayerbook is deeper than the pocketbook.

Changing to the new gender-sensitive prayerbooks affects congregations, congregants, and clergy, in two very profound ways. First, communities are being asked to set aside a prayer service that, even in a short twenty years, has come to be considered as "tradition." Many communities have become rooted in the language of the *Gates of Prayer* liturgies, and change evokes an emotional response reflecting commitment to some Jewish historical tradition - regardless of how long that tradition has existed. The psychological response of a community can encourage, but in more instances, prevent change.

Second, the liturgy in the *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* demands that the community question its perception of God. Theological issues are raised for each congregant as he or she hears a prayer which once read "Lord" and now reads "*Adonai*." Some congregants may not notice the theological change and some may choose to ignore it, but for those who are aware of the specific metaphors in which they pray, changes in God-language can be a spiritual challenge.

This thesis explores five congregations which have either faced, or are currently struggling with, the issue of whether or not to change the gender language for God used during worship services. The decision of Reform congregations to adopt *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* is an important prism through which to judge attitudes toward liturgical change because it is the newest prayerbook officially sponsored by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of Reform Rabbis. These new prayerbooks are being adopted by some congregations, while others are choosing to leave the *Gates of Prayer* series altogether in favor of creating their own prayerbooks, and still other congregations are changing the metaphors in



the *Gates of Prayer* while they read the printed words. Finally, some communities are choosing not to change gender-language at all, remaining faithful to the liturgical text of *Gates of Prayer*.

I selected five Reform congregations that are currently discussing these issues within their Ritual, Worship, or Liturgy Committees. Using Dr. Gordon Lippitt's theory of organizational change and development as my guide, I analyze the experiences of these five communities and make suggestions as to how the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations can best guide these congregations, and all Reform congregations, through the pressing demand for prayerbook revision.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I want to thank all the rabbis, laity, and congregants who welcomed me into their communities, who shared their feelings, and their hopes for the future.

Also, Rabbi Joseph Glaser, ז"ר, who supported this project, Rabbi Ken Ehrlich for first approaching the CCAR on my behalf, and Rabbi Rick Sarason without whose guidance this thesis would still be a mere idea.

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## Introduction

"I am the Lord, I change not."  
(Malachi 3:6)

On the heels of the feminist movement of the 1970's came a new understanding of the role of women in the synagogue and a new push for liturgical language reflecting a woman's experience and her relationship to God. It was no longer possible for God to be envisioned solely with male metaphors, as a Father or a Lord. God needed to be understood also as a Mother, a Nurturer, and a non-hierarchical ruler.

Since the beginning of the 1990's, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the rabbinic arm of the American Reform Jewish movement, has struggled to rewrite the movement's prayerbook, *Gates of Prayer*, published in 1975. When completed, the use of gender-sensitive, or gender-neutral, metaphors for God will be the most fundamental and widespread change. Presently, the CCAR has published an exhaustive number of interim prayerbooks, anticipating a "final" draft in the early twenty-first century. But, as the new prayerbook looms in the future, many Reform congregations and rabbis are turning to their own means to create gender-sensitive liturgy.

"You will not perform intermarriages and you say the reason is a 'thing of conscience,'" Dr. Laurie Warshal-Cohen told her rabbi, "I am telling you now, I can no longer read from the prayerbook - this is my 'thing of conscience.'" Dr. Cohen, the current president of Temple De Hirsch Sinai in Seattle, Washington, feels she can no longer stand on the *bima* and read from the latest edition of the *Union Prayer Book* (originally printed in 1895, revised in 1920, and again

in 1940/45).

Temple De Hirsch Sinai never adopted the 1975 *Gates of Prayer* prayerbook. The older members said it was too heavy. The conservative members said it was too liberal. And now, according to Dr. Cohen, it is too late to change to *Gates of Prayer* because the issue of gender language reflecting God is too vital an issue, and the *Gates of Prayer* does not address the problem.

Dr. Cohen does not blame the rabbi for the congregation's use of the outdated *Union Prayer Book*, nor does she blame the older, classically Reform members of the community, but she is unable to tolerate the language barrier any longer. "Change is very difficult," she comments, "but change is even more difficult when it is not supported by the organization of the Reform movement."

Dr. Cohen feels that the Reform movement has not adequately educated individual Reform congregations about the issues surrounding liturgical gender-language revision. She has now attended two biennial conferences sponsored by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the overseeing body of Reform temples. She remarks that, in her experience at the biennials, she has seen three programs specifically addressing the issue of gender-language and prayer. At the 1993 conference, a prayer service, entitled a "Prayer Service for Women," was so well attended that people were spilling out into the hallways.

"Almost every person I met at these conferences reports that his or her congregation has done something to rework the language of prayer. They have created pamphlets, creative services, and supplements. It is because our movement did not know how to react in 1975 (they did not change the gender-language when *Gates of Prayer* was published) that congregations are

working individually to create gender-language options.”<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Cohen represents many voices of discontent. Reform congregations are struggling to change the metaphors in the prayerbook that represent God. Ted Koppel phrased the issue succinctly in an ABC News *Nightline* program devoted entirely to this question. He commented, “For centuries we have referred to God, depicted God, as a man - now that notion may be unraveling.”<sup>2</sup>

Rabbi Chaim Stern, editor of *Gates of Prayer*, has remarked that at the last minute before publication of the *Gates of Prayer* prayerbook, the issue of gender-language for God was raised.<sup>3</sup> It was decided that the issue was not pressing and it was not worth going through the proofs to make such a monumental change. Now twenty years have passed since the publication of the *Gates of Prayer* and the Reform movement is striving to confront the present and the future. A new prayerbook is in preparation, interim “gender-sensitive” prayerbooks are circulating, but the theological gap has already widened to such an extent that it may be difficult to bridge.

### **The Organization of the Reform Movement**

In order to explore how the Reform movement is approaching the issue of gender-language change in the creation of a new prayerbook, it is first necessary to understand how the movement is organized institutionally.

The Reform movement is an intricate organization; actually, it is an alliance of three independent organizations: the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the Union of American Hebrew Congregations

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<sup>1</sup> Telephone interview with Dr. Laurie Warshal-Cohen, 26 June, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> *Nightline*, 24 May, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 17.

(UAHC), and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR). The UAHC and the CCAR have specific tasks and realms of influence within the body politic of Reform Judaism.

The CCAR is the governing body of and for the Reform Rabbis. Here policies are created concerning pension, rabbinic placement, and other issues affecting the career and well-being of the Reform rabbi. The UAHC is the overseeing institution for the Reform congregations. When the UAHC was founded in 1873 by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, its stated purpose was "to encourage and aid the organization and development of Jewish congregations; to promote Jewish education and enrich and intensify Jewish life; to maintain the Hebrew Union College (and) to foster other activities for the perpetuation and advancement of Judaism."<sup>4</sup>

The organizations interact on many levels. Fundamentally, the College-Institute trains the rabbis who then belong to the CCAR and serve UAHC congregations. Generally, however, each organization functions independently of the other two. The CCAR has created its own committees, for example, in the areas of publications, liturgy, pension for rabbis, and placement. The UAHC has over thirty commissions on many issues affecting congregation life, for example, outreach to the unaffiliated, youth, ethics, and camp-institutes. The CCAR and UAHC also have many joint committees. There is sometimes reason to question whether a particular committee properly belongs under the auspices of the CCAR or UAHC. Rabbi David Hachen of the UAHC explained that when an idea is proposed, "if a new committee needs to be formed to research or implement an idea, usually the umbrella organization that proposed the

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<sup>4</sup> Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Programs and Services of the UAHC (New York, 1990).



initiative carries the ball."<sup>5</sup>

Occasionally an issue arises that transcends the boundaries of one organization and requires inter-organizational cooperation. Joint committees have been formed concerning rabbinic placement, Jewish education, synagogue management and worship.

Liturgical development is also an issue that crosses all organizational borders. Rabbis, congregations, and rabbinical students at HUC-JIR are struggling with modern conceptions of, and language for, God. Since the beginnings of liberal Judaism in America in the late 1800's, the Reform movement, specifically the CCAR, has published prayerbooks meant to unite Reform congregations. The vision has always been that of a common prayerbook for all congregations in the UAHC. In every generation a new prayerbook has been published and has been overwhelmingly accepted by the majority of Reform congregations. This generation poses a new challenge to the CCAR and UAHC.

### The Thesis

This thesis explores how the issues of prayerbook change and liturgical gender-language are being dealt with at the congregational level. After more than thirty phone calls to UAHC offices, to congregations, to lay and rabbinic leadership, I selected five congregations to formally interview. I asked them simple questions about their feelings regarding prayerbook change and gender-language for God. As I conducted my research I discovered that the idea of changing the language of the prayerbook is a very emotionally charged

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<sup>5</sup> Telephone interview with Rabbi David Hachen, director, UAHC Northeast Lakes Council Detroit Federation, 6 June, 1994.

issue. Prayerbooks are emotive in many different ways, but for Jews who believe that the words of prayer reflect, or should reflect, centuries of Jewish tradition, changing the prayerbook raises strong feelings. I met Reform Jews who support the changes, some who feel the changes are years overdue, and many who feel opposed to the changes. The dichotomy amazed me, the emotional issues intrigued me, and I firmly believe that Reform Jews need education and guidelines if the prayerbook is going to change.

I believe that the CCAR needs to join with the UAHC to address the issue of prayerbook change. They need to approach change like any large organization undergoing a fundamental transition. They need to explore different theories of organizational change and take planned steps to guide the transformation.

Dr. Gordon Lippitt is an expert in organizational theory. At the conclusion of the introduction to his book, *Organizational Renewal*, he writes:

The evidence is seen in newspapers and newscasts that schools, voluntary agencies, businesses, government agencies, trade associations, unions, churches, communities, and industries are trying to cope with some of the most difficult issues that either old or new organizations have faced since their beginning.

The challenge to most of these organizations is not only their survival but also their relevancy to the age in which they live...At no other time in my life has there been more need for organizational renewal...The organization that will remain viable, creative, and relevant must engage in the process of search that the renewal process involves.\*

Through Lippitt's model of organizational renewal, this thesis will explore how two independent organizations, the UAHC and the CCAR, are working toward the creation and widespread congregational adoption of a new gender-sensitive prayerbook.

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\* Gordon Lippitt, *Organizational Renewal* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982), p. X.

## Organizational Renewal as a Model for Change

Organizational renewal is the process of initiating, creating, and confronting needed changes so as to make it possible for organizations to remain viable, to adapt to new conditions, to solve problems, and to move toward greater organizational maturity.<sup>7</sup>

Gordon Lippitt writes that "organizations today face multiple environmental forces affecting their survival."<sup>8</sup> Although his textbooks are generally used in management and business courses, the concepts of organizational change and organizational renewal apply to a religious institution undergoing a formidable theological change as well. His theories can be aptly applied and help the Reform movement to close the theological gap the new prayerbook so desperately needs to bridge.

Any situational change can be either planned or unplanned. An unplanned change occurs when a development is determined and implemented instantaneously, as in response to a crisis. Examples of unplanned change involve adaptation because of a natural disaster or change as a result of a strike or walkout. Planned change "involves a series of reinforcing activities undertaken with purpose and intent rather than accidentally."<sup>9</sup> When a change is planned, decisions are made about direction, strategies are designed, and the outcome is predicted. Although its outcome cannot always or fully be predicted, prayerbook change is a planned change because it can be guided.

The seven critical phases of planned change as expressed by Lippitt will serve as an outline and a model for this thesis.

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<sup>7</sup> Gordon Lippitt, Organizational Renewal, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon Lippitt, Organizational Renewal, p.1.

<sup>9</sup> Gordon Lippitt, Petter Langseth, and Jack Mossop, Implementing Organizational Change (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1985), p. 28.

**1) Diagnosis of problem.** Chapter One will be a diagnosis of the problem facing the Reform movement and its liturgy committees. The chapter will examine a history of prayerbook development in the Reform movement in America. A discussion of modern theological issues and feminist theology will be addressed. Conclusions will be drawn as to the effect of feminist theology on the standard liturgy of the Reform movement.

**2) Assessment of change agent's motivation and resources.** In Chapter Two, an assessment will be made of the change agent's motivation and resources. The Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations will be examined for their role in the prayerbook developments of the past and their involvement in the current project. As for the change agent's motivation, issues of leadership, congregational influence, and financial resources will be explored.

**3) Assessment of client's motivation and capacity for change.** Five congregations will be studied in depth in Chapter Three. An assessment will be made of the client's (congregation's) motivation and capacity for change. Change involves hard work on the part of the individuals within the organization. The majority of people must desire the change and be ready to cope with those who oppose it. On the congregational level, when change comes into play, emotions become involved. Individuals see liturgy as tradition, as a bond to an ancient past. Every person relates to liturgy differently because it is comprised of the ritualized actions, words, and symbols through which he or she addresses or encounters the Divine. This chapter will explore the psychological aspects of change and how the case-study communities deal with the proposed change to their images of God. The case-study communities are:

United Hebrew Congregation, Terre Haute, Indiana  
Congregation Beth Tikvah, Columbus, Ohio  
Congregation Beth El, Sudbury, Massachusetts  
Rockdale Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Congregation Shaare Emeth, Saint Louis, Missouri

Having completed an overview of the issue of gender-language change in liturgy, organization, and community, I will draw some conclusions about the study in Chapter Four. Here the thesis will take on a new direction from that of a description of the problem to an outlook and proposal for the future. Using Lippitt's terminology, Chapter Four will:

**4) Select progressive change objectives.** Understand the UAHC and CCAR's plan for introducing the future prayerbook into congregations. Discuss the strategy for organizational renewal.

**5) Choose a role for the change agent.** In what way should the CCAR and UAHC guide congregations in prayerbook change?

**6) Create a plan for maintaining changes.** Once change has begun, should an educational program be developed to guide the congregations to adopt new liturgy? For effective, and widespread change to occur, a support system must be developed for those participating in the change effort.

**7) Develop a method for the termination of the helping relationship.** When an organizational change takes place, there is often a dependency of the client on the change agent. The congregation may turn to the CCAR or UAHC for guidance on how to best introduce the new prayerbook or how to deal with those persons who resist the change. Termination most likely will not apply in the situation of congregational change, but the issues of ongoing support systems must be addressed.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Lippitt, Langseth, and Mossop, Implementing Organizational Change, p. 31-34.



## Chapter One

### Diagnosis of the Problem

"God is Going to Change."  
(Naomi Goldenberger, 1979)

In 1979 Naomi Goldenberger wrote,

"The clergy will have to accept women,"...The feminist revolution will not leave religion untouched. Eventually all religious hierarchies would be peopled with women. I imagined women functioning as rabbis, priests, and ministers. I pictured women wearing clerical garb and performing clerical duties and suddenly *I saw a problem*. How could women represent a male God?

Everything I knew about Judaism and Christianity involved accepting God as the ultimate in male authority figures. If enough women claimed to represent "His" authority - to embody "His" presence in synagogues and pulpits - congregations would have to stop seeing God as male...God is going to change.'

Prayerbooks of the Reform movement have always reflected the ideology of the community, or at least of its articulate elite. As early as 1830, some American Jews began to struggle with the traditional rubrics of worship services. They chose to alter language that they found offensive or outdated in regard to attitudes then prevalent in American culture. For example, this generation of Jews began to worship in the vernacular, English, and removed references to animal sacrifice, return to Zion, and the anticipation of the Messiah.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent generations of prayerbook authors followed the same terms for revision. If an image in a prayer no longer met the needs, or expressed the aspirations of the community, it was expunged. Often, the rubrics of the service were also changed to fit with modern standards of time constraints and the delivery of a sermon.

Reform prayerbook development always meant that any Hebrew prayer,

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<sup>1</sup> Naomi Goldenberger, Changing of the Gods (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Meyer, Response to Modernity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 231.

or more often the English translation, could be altered to conform to the social, cultural, political or spiritual needs of the people. Over the almost 200 years of Reform prayerbook development in Europe and America, many ideological and theological changes have been made, but certain basic aspects of God's character remained the same: God was male, omniscient, and omnipresent, a Father, and a King. In recent history, the use of masculine metaphors for God has been conventional; it has never been intentional or deliberate.

It was not until the late 1970's, after the completion of the *Gates of Prayer* that Reform Jews began to explore the specific theological issues of gender-related metaphors for God. The *Gates of Prayer* only briefly touched on the problem of religious language. In service number six, worshipers address the concept of a Divine Presence without using the word "God." This service was written as a response to the concerns of religious naturalism, humanism and equivocal language, which were widespread in the 1960's. But as for re-envisioning or rethinking metaphors for God with a gender-bias, the compilers of *Gates of Prayer* did not yet see the relevance that the issue would soon possess.

Chaim Stern, the editor of *Gates of Prayer* wrote in 1983:

Several years into the work on *Gates of Prayer*; thousands of people all over have seen much of the text, many have worshiped from an interim edition of part of it. It occurs to me (and unaccountably no one has yet raised this issue) that our commitment to sexual equality requires that the English at least be neutral when referring to human beings. The conventional use of *man*, *he*, and *fathers*, for example, conveys a message about assumptions held by past generations that many no longer share. I take it upon myself to revise the galleys (a late and expensive hour for revisions). It is too late to do anything about masculine God-language, and, it seems to me, very difficult, if not impossible.<sup>3</sup>

In 1979, Naomi Goldenberger believed that theology was about to enter a new era. Chaim Stern also foresaw the need for the gender-language

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<sup>3</sup> Chaim Stern, "The Experience of Writing New Liturgy," *Sh'ma*, 23 December, 1983, p. 30.



changes as early as 1976, but the cost of revisions was at that time too great. Since the 1970's, many theologians, mostly feminist women, have written on the subject of God and the gender-images we project in imagining God. The impact of the feminist movement on liturgy has been profound. Scholarly women are speaking and writing about the changing image of God. Women rabbis, first ordained in 1972,<sup>4</sup> are currently being ordained in equal numbers with their male colleagues. Jewish men are also identifying themselves with the feminist movement and advocating the reform of liturgical gender-language.

Without hindsight to guide us, the following pertinent questions are unfolding in the midst of this generation: How does Reform liturgical development interact with the God-concept derived from two decades of feminist theology? What is the influence of Jewish women theologians on the mass of Reform Jews in their congregations? What is the impact of feminist thought on the organizational leadership of the Reform movement as they attempt to create yet another prayerbook for the Reform movement of the twenty-first century? And how does a prayerbook aimed at all Reform Jews, male and female, feminist and non-feminist, incorporate or respond to these themes?

Turning to the history of prayerbook development in the Reform movement will set the stage to discuss the influences of feminist theology, and future trends in American liturgy.

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<sup>4</sup> After the first woman was ordained in 1972, there were no women ordained in 1973 or 1974. One woman was ordained in 1975 and one in 1976. Only after 1978 was there any statistical significance in the number of women ordained as rabbis.

### Development of Reform Liturgy in America (1830-1979)

Reform Judaism began as a movement of dissatisfied Jews in Germany. The earliest Reformers strove to develop a Judaism that would both bind them to a living past and allow them to progress as assimilated Jews in German society. In the late eighteenth century, some Jews began to reflect on their personal spiritual needs as enlightened moderns and ask whether "the practices of their religion indeed provided spiritual fulfillment."<sup>5</sup> All ritual practices, beliefs, and customs were weighed against this standard of individual religious fulfillment, and those traditions that were not found to be desirable in a modern social and cultural context were discarded. By the mid 1800's, the ideology of the Reform movement had crossed the ocean, and by the close of the American Civil War, Reform Judaism had taken root in America.

The goal of the American Reformers was to refine and redefine Judaism to fit into the cultural milieu of the New World. Following the lead of the more radical Reformers in Germany, American Jews made decisions about Jewish identity, tradition, and culture maintaining some aspects and eliminating those practices and beliefs they found to be outdated. Some changes were determined by the community and others were decided by an intellectual elite.

### Toward a Unified Liturgy - The Influence of Wise and Einhorn

In the 1850's two competing prayerbooks appeared within the ranks of American Reform Judaism. Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900) wrote *Minhag America* with the explicit intention to unite all American Jews into one

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<sup>5</sup> Meyer, p. 18.

congregational union with a common prayerbook. Nine rabbis attended a conference in Cleveland in 1855 at which time a formal proposal was signed making way for the production of *Minhag America*.

Consistency and uniformity of ideology were clearly less important than devising a prayerbook that could gain entry into the largest number of congregations. Moreover, a single prayerbook, even if used differentially, might prove the basis for congregational, as well as liturgical unity.<sup>6</sup>

Although Wise's efforts to unite all American Jewry never came to fruition, his prayerbook had great influence on liberal congregations of the Midwest and South, eventually becoming the most widely used prayerbook in America in the 1870's.<sup>7</sup>

Wise's prayerbook eliminated references to the messianic return to Zion and restoration of the sacrificial cult; it abbreviated the service, though less radically. But *Minhag America* differed fundamentally in the breadth of its appeal....Opened from the right, it presented a totally Hebrew text, with even the prayer rubrics and instructions in (unvocalized) Hebrew. A congregation could easily use *Minhag America* for an exclusively Hebrew liturgy.<sup>8</sup>

In 1872, when Wise chose to revise his prayerbook, he was no longer concerned with Orthodox opinion. And yet, his second edition looked almost identical to the first edition, the major changes being fewer references to the supernatural and more ideological consistency.<sup>9</sup>

Competing with Wise's prayerbook, David Einhorn had created his own liturgy for use in Reform congregations. Einhorn (1809-1879) came from Germany with strong beliefs in the radical reformation of Judaism. He wrote a prayerbook in 1858 that drew substantially from two German predecessors, the Hamburg *Gebetbuch* and Samuel Holdheim's *Gebetbuch für jüdische*

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<sup>6</sup> Meyer, p. 255.

<sup>7</sup> Meyer, p. 255.

<sup>8</sup> Meyer, p. 254.

<sup>9</sup> Betsy Torop, *Individual Creative Liturgies*. (Rabbinic Thesis, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati), p. 30.

*Reformgemeinden*. His philosophy was influenced by Leopold Zunz.<sup>10</sup>

Einhorn modified the Hebrew text, provided his own sometimes non-literal translations, composed a number of well-crafted original German prayers...Moreover, *Olat Tamid* did not provide for alternatives. The worshiper opened it from left to right and followed along a liturgy that contained some prayers in Hebrew, others in German, but did not allow for altering the particular language of a given text.<sup>11</sup>

Wise and Einhorn had different opinions about the composition of American liturgy. The two prayerbooks competed for congregational usage. The animosity between the authors escalated, and it became apparent that the arguments over which prayerbook to use implied the larger issue of who was the true leader of American Reform Jewry. Both prayerbooks saw widespread success, but when the Hebrew Union College, a rabbinical seminary, founded by Isaac M. Wise, ordained its first four rabbis in 1883, there was no doubt who would lead the movement into the next generation, at least from an institutional standpoint.

The visions of both men, Wise, with his goal of a unifying prayerbook, and Einhorn, creator of a non-literal translation alternating with a modified Hebrew text, were equally important in regard to their influence on the *Union Prayer Book*.

### **Development of the Union Prayer Book**

Throughout the late nineteenth century, congregations and religious leaders in America were searching for a prayerbook to meet the needs of the growing liberal Jewish community. Many congregations chose either the Wise or Einhorn prayerbooks, while a few congregations chose to create

<sup>10</sup> Eric Friedland, The Non-Orthodox Prayerbooks in the United States (Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University, 1967), p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Meyer, p.254.

prayerbooks designed to meet their specific needs. The overriding struggle was to determine and define what it meant to be a modern Jew in America. Einhorn and Wise showed divergent visions in their prayerbooks, and the prayerbook conflict continued until the appeal came from the newly established Central Conference of American Rabbis (1889) to create a unified prayerbook, thereby fulfilling Wise's dream.

The goal was one for which Wise had been working for nearly half a century; the result was a prayerbook which in outlook and appearance followed in the path mapped out by Einhorn's *Olat Tamid*. The new prayerbook was readily adapted...but apparently the rivalries were not immediately stilled, for in 1896, directly after the appearance of the *Union Prayer Book*, Emil G. Hirsch produced a new edition of his father-in-law's *Olat Tamid*.<sup>12</sup>

Regardless of Hirsch's objections, the first draft of the *Union Prayer Book* was accepted by the CCAR by a vote of 23 to 3 in July of 1892.<sup>13</sup> The *Union Prayer Book* was finished and accepted by Wise in 1894. Ismar Elbogen, in his comprehensive study of Jewish liturgy, reflects about the *Union Prayer Book*:

The publishers indicate that their goal is to unite the moving memories of the past with the pressing demands of the present, and to enhance the solemnity of the liturgy by bringing together both important elements, the honorable formulas of the past as well as modern prayers and reflections in the vernacular. In its non-Hebrew part, in the theological reflections, as well as in the changes in the Hebrew text following from these, the prayerbook follows Einhorn's model....The *Union Prayer Book* thus adheres consistently to its theological line, but in the selection of prayers and the occasions that it takes into consideration, it is very much guided by the demands of the congregations, to which it has sacrificed the theories of the radical theologians.<sup>14</sup>

A year before publication of the *Union Prayer Book* volume for Sabbaths and Festivals, a new prayerbook for the High Holidays was published. Each CCAR-sponsored prayerbook saw as its goal to unite the congregations of the Reform

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<sup>12</sup> Sefton Temkin, "New Reform Liturgy," *Conservative Judaism*, Fall 1975, Volume XXX, Number 1, p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook*, Volume III, p.22.

<sup>14</sup> Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1993), p. 323-324.



movement in common worship.

The theology of the *Union Prayer Book* reflected the optimistic mood of the time in which it was written. The text promoted universalism and progress.

Its theology was basically Einhorn's, the style of the translations elevated, sometimes even poetic. Responsive readings were introduced to increase congregational participation. Appended for the Sabbath were brief readings in English from the Pentateuch and the Prophets or Writings. In keeping with the importance classical Reform attributed to content, these readings did not correspond to the weekly portions assigned by tradition. It mattered more that the selection should convey a meaningful religious or moral message...Necessarily, the prayerbook also reflected the optimistic mood of late nineteenth-century America.<sup>15</sup>

A revised *Union Prayer Book* was published in 1918/1920. At the CCAR meeting in 1914, the Committee on the Revision noted:

We desire that a vote be taken at this convention as to the extent and nature of the revision to be made. A large majority of the Committee favors a revision which shall be more than merely verbal; yet the feeling appears to be that the main outlines are to be preserved, as something like a tradition has been formed in these twenty years.<sup>16</sup>

The decision was made to incorporate more Hebrew into the Sabbath liturgy and to add more non-Biblical material into the High Holiday volume. But with the exception of these minor alterations, "this first collectively produced liturgy of American Reform Judaism created a model that was slightly reshaped from time to time, but not fundamentally altered for eighty years."<sup>17</sup> The expressed feeling of the Committee that the liturgy of the *Union Prayer Book* had become "something like a tradition" was a profound realization whose impact would be felt far into the twentieth century.

A second revision of the *Union Prayer Book* was published in 1940 (the *Newly Revised Union Prayer Book*). The revisions reflected the situation of European Jews in the 1930's, referred to Zionism, and added more Hebrew.

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<sup>15</sup> Meyer, p. 279.

<sup>16</sup> *CCAR Yearbook*, Volume XXIV, p. 126.

<sup>17</sup> Meyer, p. 279.

Since 1894, the *Union Prayer Book* still spoke the hopes and prayers of Reform Jews in America. Albeit, some congregations chose to create their own liturgies, such as Congregation Rodeph Shalom in New York, where a prayerbook was written in 1906, but as time progressed, more and more communities accepted the authority of the Reform movement's national institutions and adopted the "official liturgy," the *Union Prayer Book*.<sup>18</sup>

The *Newly Revised Union Prayer Book* met the needs of congregations in the 1940's and 1950's. Jews in the 1950's were becoming "suburbanized" and the focus was on synagogue membership, not synagogue attendance. The 1960's, however, were a pivotal era for Jewish identity. American culture was fraying and cultural consciousness was coming apart.

The most visible symptoms of social dislocation in the 1960's were new movements of protest - the civil rights struggle, the antiwar movement, the battle for women's equality, and the so-called counterculture. Each profoundly challenged American society at large and religious institutions in particular.<sup>19</sup>

Social upheaval affected all religious communities, but the Eichmann trial and the Six Day War specifically raised "survival and identity issues for Jews."<sup>20</sup>

These identity issues brought general malaise to the Reform Jewish community. Jews were divided on most, if not every, issue that faced the community, from the way to speak about the Vietnam and Six Day wars to the goals of the movement. The leadership thus divided, it was no coincidence that by the end of the 1960's, Reform congregational membership was declining.

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations had to borrow money from banks in the late 1960's and early 1970's in order to maintain stability and influence. Jews were no longer as interested in congregational membership,

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<sup>18</sup> Torop, p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> Jack Wertheimer, *A People Divided* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), p.18-19.

<sup>20</sup> Torop, p. 36.



but preferred ethnic identification with the Jewish people as a whole, particularly with the State of Israel. Where the congregations suffered, the Federations found new life.<sup>21</sup>

As discontent with the Reform movement rose, so too did a feeling that the *Union Prayer Book* no longer met the needs of the people. It has been speculated that the *Union Prayer Book* became a scapegoat for the many problems plaguing the congregations. No matter what the prayerbook's influence was on the decline of synagogue attendance, "In 1972 only 38% of Reform rabbis surveyed were using the *Union Prayer Book* without some modification, be they minor modifications or major changes."<sup>22</sup> Many congregations in the 1960's and 1970's were choosing to pray from mimeographed creative services in place of the formal prayerbook service.

"As late as 1971, when it was clear that a new prayerbook was going to be produced, there was some disagreement among the laity about the degree of acceptability of certain features of the *Union Prayer Book*."<sup>23</sup> Rabbi Robert Kahn brought together a group of lay people from his congregation to discuss the *Union Prayer Book* and their feelings about it. He discovered a mixed reaction. Some people liked the stylized prayer language, others did not. Some wanted more English, some less. When the conversation turned to revision of the prayerbook, here again there were pros and cons with the focal points being desire for stability, rootedness and tranquility versus the need for constant intellectual challenge. Rabbi Kahn's final analysis of his community's discussion was as follows:

There emerged rather contradictory guidance for any group that would undertake a revision of the *Union Prayer Book*. We need more tradition; we need more

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<sup>21</sup> Meyer, p. 369-70.

<sup>22</sup> Theodore I. Lenn and Associates, Rabbi and Synagogue in Reform Judaism (West Hartford, CT: 1972), p. 119-121.

<sup>23</sup> Torop, p. 36.

contemporaneity. We need less stilted language; we need more elegant language. We need more novelty; we need more security. Take your choice.<sup>24</sup>

The group that undertook the revisions was a committee of rabbis under the auspices of the CCAR. Rabbi Chaim Stern was selected to be the editor of the new prayerbook. Stern had worked as co-editor of the revised editions of the British Liberal prayerbooks, *Service of the Heart* and *Gate of Repentance* in the 1960's. As these prayerbooks were to be influential models for the *Gates of Prayer - The New Union Prayer Book*, Stern was the ideal choice for editor.

Rabbi Kahn, Chairman of the Liturgy Committee, explained in an article written in 1973 that the *Gates of Prayer - The New Union Prayer Book* evolved out of numerous conversations with rabbis and lay persons alike.

Questionnaires were developed and circulated; surveys were undertaken, meetings were held, a Conference *Kallah* took place. One thing was sure: a revision was widely desired. A second thing was equally sure: there was deep division as to the nature of that revision.<sup>25</sup>

In 1975 the new prayerbook was finally issued. The prayerbook had been delayed for last-minute changes made in the galleys by the editor. Rabbi Stern felt a pressing need to change male gender-language for humankind to inclusive terminology for women and men.<sup>26</sup> The final prayerbook met with both praise and criticism.

Chaim Stern's decision to neutralize language in the prayerbook referring to humankind came in the shadow of a landmark decision by the Hebrew Union College to ordain the first woman rabbi. In and of itself, the ordination of Sally Priesand in 1972 was not advertised by the Hebrew Union

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Kahn "A Practical Critique of *The Union Prayer Book*," *CCAR Journal*, October, 1959, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> Robert I. Kahn, "We Were Mandated," *CCAR Journal*, Spring, 1973.

<sup>26</sup> Chaim Stern, "The Experience of Writing New Liturgy," *Sh'ma*, 23 December, 1983, p. 30.

College as a political statement or a feminist-inspired decision, but the event was immediately understood by women, Jews and non-Jews, as a triumph for all feminists. As Sally Priesand left Plum Street Temple in Cincinnati, Ohio, a rabbi, a new era for feminists, Jewish feminists, and Reform Judaism had begun.

Even before the first woman was ordained, in 1972, we spoke about changing gender- language for God. But changing the God- language was a much more far reaching change and a more difficult task to accomplish.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, Rabbi Chaim Stern decided, in 1974, to change only the prayerbook language where it referred to "mankind." "At that time I did not see any good reason for using masculine terms. I saw that I had in my hands the ability to change the text - and I did it. There was never any opposition to this change. I never consulted anyone and I still never heard opposition."<sup>28</sup>

*Gates of Prayer* attempted to meet the eclectic needs of Reform Jews in the 1970's. It had traditional prayers for *tallit* and *tefillin*. It had creative readings and poetry. New services were included for remembering the Holocaust and celebrating Israel's independence.

Critics complained that the book was too diverse. They submitted that the Reform movement sacrificed consistency in the desire for universal approval. "The Reform movement, that is, opted for an inclusive rather than a theologically consistent prayerbook."<sup>29</sup> The greatest concern about the prayerbook was its size. Reduced from more than 1000 pages, *Gates of*

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<sup>27</sup>Telephone interview, Rabbi Chaim Stern, ed. *Gates of Prayer* and *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat*, 9 November, 1993.

<sup>28</sup> Rabbi Stern remarked that in 1978 he did create a gender-sensitive draft of the High Holiday Machzor *Gates of Repentance*. The text was turned down by the CCAFI Liturgy Committee. From that experience he has learned how to change the language effectively. "It took a long time of thought, experimentation, and struggle to be able to also do justice to the English language." (This quotation is from the preface to the new British Reform prayerbook, *Siddur Lev*, edited by Chaim Stern.)

<sup>29</sup> Wertheimer, p. 99.

*Prayer* was finalized in a 779-page tome. Renowned liturgical scholar Jakob Petuchowski commented:

But 779 pages for weekdays, Shabbat, and festivals alone! The overwhelming amount of liturgical material in *Gates of Prayer*, far from proving that Reform Jews have become more prayerful, only indicates that Reform Jews can no longer pray from a common prayerbook.<sup>30</sup>

Even though later editions were printed on a thinner paper stock, making the book less bulky, the criticism of size and weight did not disappear. For all its faults, the *Gates of Prayer* was widely accepted as the prayerbook for the Reform movement.

Because *Gates of Prayer* offered something for everyone and because at least some of the innovation possessed wide appeal, it was able - after some initial resistance - to win acceptance even in temples where attachment to the earlier Reform prayerbook was profound, especially among older congregants. The new prayerbook represented - and celebrated - the diversity that, for better or worse, characterized the movement.<sup>31</sup>

The widespread acceptance of *Gates of Prayer* speaks to the state of Reform Judaism at the time. Reform Jews were ready for liturgical change. Reform Jewish leadership hoped that this new prayerbook would be the catalyst to bring Jews back into the temple for worship. But the change was by no means easy. Ten years after the publication of *Gates of Prayer*, a symposium in the *CCAR Journal* allowed rabbis to reflect on the process of change and how the new prayerbook met the needs of Reform Jewry.

Lawrence Hoffman's comments provide a framework for both evaluating the existing prayerbook, the *Gates of Prayer*, and anticipating the revisions for the next prayerbook. He wrote that the *Gates of Prayer* met the needs of the ever-changing Reform Jewish community by breaking down the social distance between clergy and laity by not labelling a specific reader; it collapsed the

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<sup>30</sup> Jakob Petuchowski, "Bookbinder to the Rescue," *Conservative Judaism*, Fall, 1975, Volume XXX, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> Meyer, p. 375.

distance between God and the community through eliminating the formal language of "Thou"; it demonstrated a commitment to pluralism, heightened orientation to ethnicity and peoplehood, participation in the theology of American civil religion and in the creation of a post-Holocaust identity, and egalitarianism of language when referring to human beings.<sup>32</sup>

These are meaningful contributions to, and reflections of, the creation of a new Jewish identity, but that identity-building subsequently has been strongly influenced by the "second stage"<sup>33</sup> of gender-equality that began with the generations of the 1980's and 1990's.

By 1985 when Hoffman's critique was written, it was already apparent that facets of *Gates of Prayer* were vices rather than virtues. Although the prayerbook became widespread in its use in American Reform congregations, it failed to revitalize the movement by increasing synagogue attendance. Hoffman suggests that many of the prayerbook's vices lie in the realm of technique. "This philosophical and aesthetical model for which a prayerbook author strives I call the Paradigm...and the means of fulfilling it...poetry, grammatical emendation, structural consistency - are called Technique."<sup>34</sup> Hoffman finds that the liturgical language in *Gates of Prayer* is insufficiently aural, that the prayerbook gives insufficient thought to the role of music, that its layout and design are unappealing, and that there is no egalitarian language reflecting God.

On this last point he says:

Whether a failure of nerve or of foresight, the fact remains that the laudable commitment to gender-inclusive language for human beings was not carried out regarding the Divine. This is perhaps the most serious defect of substance in this book. Already one encounters pockets of

<sup>32</sup> Lawrence Hoffman, "Setting the Boundaries for Prayerbook Criticism: Paradigm and Technique," *Journal of Reform Judaism* Fall, 1985.

<sup>33</sup> A term coined by Betty Friedan referring to the needs of the second generation of feminists.

<sup>34</sup> Hoffman, "Setting the Boundaries," p. 44.



resistance across the country where readers replace "He" with "You"; "His" with "Your"; and "Kingdom" with "Realm". As late as the committee meetings on *Gates of Repentance*, it was feared that to abandon such traditional masculine metaphor as "God as King" would produce an embarrassing book that enshrined what would eventually be recognized as a passing linguistic fad; the book would be a period piece. With ten years since *GOP* now behind us, the reverse is proving to be the case. I have not the slightest doubt that the same committee would vote overwhelmingly, if not unanimously, now, to carry the feminist critique on language through to include God-language too.<sup>35</sup>

Hoffman also characterizes the CCAR committee process for the writing of the *Gates of Prayer* as structurally problematic for the development of the prayerbook. This issue will be examined in Chapter Two of this thesis.

In the twenty years since the *Gates of Prayer* was published, gender-neutral language reflecting God has not proven itself to be a linguistic fad. By the 1990's, many Reform congregations were making the changes Hoffman reports hearing in 1985. Prayers were no longer read as written in the prayerbook, and some congregations began to turn to their own creative means for new liturgies. The CCAR recognized the failure of *Gates of Prayer* to meet this one specific need in congregational worship. Although, as Hoffman notes, gender language is not the only failing of the *Gates of Prayer*, it became important enough that in 1992 the CCAR published the *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat - A Gender Sensitive Prayerbook*.

### **Toward a New Gender-Sensitive Liturgy - Many Gates**

Now sixteen years later, we present several services for Shabbat in which the gender-neutral approach is extended to English language references to God, and, in some small degree to the Hebrew.

There are few tasks in liturgy more challenging than the one currently under discussion in the Reform movement and in other branches of Judaism, both in North America and elsewhere; how to respond to the need, felt by many, to reshape the language of our liturgy so that it will reflect our view that masculine language and exclusively male assumptions ought to give way to broader, more inclusive expression.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Hoffman "Setting the Boundaries," p. 44.

<sup>36</sup> *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat*, (New York: Central Conference for Reform Rabbis, 1992), p. V.

*Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* is not meant to be the final edition of a new prayerbook. The criticisms voiced by Lawrence Hoffman and others have shown that it is time for the Reform movement to renew its liturgy. The *Gates of Prayer* served twenty years of Reform Jews, but the time has come to once again respond to contemporary cultural concerns, hopes and fears; to examine the social climate of Reform Jews and to allow the prayerbook to evolve.

H. Leonard Pollar, Head of the CCAR Liturgy Committee in 1992, wrote:

The Liturgy Committee of the CCAR is currently engaged in a revision of *Gates of Prayer*, not because of a dissatisfaction with that volume but because of a recognition that there have again been major changes in the theological views and self-understanding of the Reform Jewish community as it prepares to enter the twenty-first century...That last - the matter of gender exclusivity - is being responded to with the recently - published interim edition of *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat*, whose language is gender-sensitive.<sup>37</sup>

*Gates of Prayer for Shabbat*<sup>38</sup> is an interim prayerbook. It is a book meant to hold congregations, encourage them not to publish their own prayerbooks, but to wait until a new CCAR-directed prayerbook is published, until the new "mythical prayerbook of the twenty-first century"<sup>39</sup> is written.

The new prayerbook will address numerous liturgical concerns, such as spirituality and the poetry of prayer. Metaphors and gender language for God will be changed, but within the context of an already evolving liturgy. And yet, by printing an interim prayerbook specifically called "gender-sensitive," the CCAR is addressing the most pressing concern facing Reform Jews, a concern that cannot wait until the year 2000 or following - that of our changing

<sup>37</sup> H. Leonard Pollar "Symposium: Preparing a New Siddur," *CCAR Journal*, Summer, 1992, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Several other interim prayerbooks have been published by the CCAR as of this writing. Different prayerbooks for Shabbat (1992), Weekdays and at a House of Mourning (1992), and Assemblies (1993) have been published both in separate volumes and in one hard-cover volume (1994) which includes further revisions and some additional materials.

<sup>39</sup> Telephone interview, Rabbi Chaim Stern, March, 1994.



theological views which mirror our changing social views and political metaphors.

### Feminist Theology

Thirty years ago, Betty Friedan wrote a critique of American society that gave voice to a revolution. *The Feminine Mystique* changed the way women in America saw their role in the home and the work force, and how women were defined by society.

It is my thesis that the core of the problem for women today is not sexual but a problem of identity - a stunting or evasion of growth that is perpetuated by the feminine mystique. It is my thesis that as the Victorian culture did not permit women to accept or gratify their basic sexual needs, our culture does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfill their potentialities as human beings, a need which is not solely defined by their sexual needs.<sup>40</sup>

The thesis articulated by Friedan is that women's social and cultural potential for growth has been stunted by historical gender-role expectations. Her suggestion that women "see housework for what it is - not a career,"<sup>41</sup> called on women to re-envision their career potential. Many women, Jews and non-Jews alike, took to heart the cultural revolution Betty Friedan spoke about. Women were first affected by Friedan in the secular realm, but quickly, as women demanded more and more social equality, feminism impacted religion as well.

Friedan herself tells the story that, as a Jewish woman, she was contacted by an Orthodox rabbi immediately after the first publication of *The Feminine Mystique*. The rabbi insisted that she stop her activities immediately. He believed that feminism would cause Jewish women to want to work outside the home. This would ruin the future of Judaism. Women, he suggested, might

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<sup>40</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1983), p. 77.

<sup>41</sup> Friedan, p.342.

choose to work at a career rather than to stay at home and raise Jewish children. The future of Judaism was in her hands.<sup>42</sup>

Friedan continued to publish and speak about feminist values. Inevitably, secular feminism met Jewish tradition head on. Early in the history of the Reform movement, the status of women's participation in ritual began to change. Mixed synagogue seating in family pews was instituted and women were encouraged to study Jewish texts. Reform rabbis in Breslau wrote in 1846: "It is our sacred duty to declare with all emphasis the complete religious equality of women with men in view of the religious standpoint we represent...It is therefore our mission to make legal declaration of the equal religious obligation and justification of women as far as this is possible."<sup>43</sup> Over the course of one hundred years, the status of Jewish women in the Reform synagogue underwent many changes toward equality with men. Reform changes continued to progress in concert with the cultural norms prevalent in the surrounding American society. And yet, by the time that Betty Friedan and other feminists began speaking of social equality for women, the changes liberal Judaism had already made were no longer sufficient. With feminism, a new era of increased religious awareness for Jewish women had begun, both in the synagogue and outside of the home.

In 1972, Sally Priesand was ordained a rabbi. Hebrew Union College was the first seminary anywhere to ordain a woman as a rabbi. Women in Reform Judaism had achieved symbolic equality. The ramifications for the future of feminism in Judaism were to be profound. Twenty-six years later women rabbis find that they have not achieved total equality with their male

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<sup>42</sup> Personal interview with Betty Friedan, May, 1988.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in David Philipson, The Reform Movement in Judaism (New York: Macmillan Company, 1907), p. 309-310.

colleagues. Payment, placement, and sexual harassment are the issues that women rabbis of the 1990's are facing, but with the Hebrew Union College ordaining an equal number of men and women each year, the opportunities for women are naturally increasing because a statistically significant social reality is being created.

In 1992, a book entitled *Megatrends for Women* contained a chapter about feminism and religion. The authors indicated how the ordination of women rabbis affected the future of American religion.

The ordaining of women is a measurable change in the mainstream. But it is by no means the whole story. The issue is no longer equality, says Margaret McManus of the Center of Women and Religion at the Graduate Theological Union, in Berkeley, California. "The issue is the transformation of our religious institutions."

The first phase of change within Judaism is already complete, says Rabbi Ellen Dreyfus of Congregation Beth Shalom in suburban Chicago: women now serve as rabbis and cantors. "Phase two will be transforming Judaism to include women's perspectives and reflect women's lives in ritual, theology, language, and prayer."

According to Rabbi Ellen Dreyfus, the social issues surrounding women and their ordination are only part of the transformation of Judaism. The second phase involves the development of Jewish liturgy and ritual which will encompass Jewish women's perspectives. Feminism began by influencing Judaism in areas of social equality in the workplace and in the synagogue, and even though those issues are still developing, the second stage has begun.

### **Phase Two: Feminist Critique of Judaism**

The implications of the feminist inquiry clearly involve more than the repair of particular laws or traditions...The very bases of Judaism are being challenged from *halakha* to the prayerbook to the very ways we conceive of God. The challenge emerging today demands a Copernican revolution; a new theology of Judaism, requiring new understandings of God, revelation, *halakha*, and the Jewish people

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<sup>44</sup> Patricia Aburdene and John Naisbitt, *Megatrends for Women* (New York: Villard Books, 1992), p. 109.

in order to support and encourage change.<sup>45</sup>

Jewish women, along with women of many other religious faiths, have risen to the challenge of creating a feminist theology. Three common concerns have transcended the boundaries of religious belief and have led to the need and desire for a specifically feminist theology: 1) women feel excluded from or demeaned by religious texts; 2) though much improved over the last thirty years, the existing social hierarchy continues to place women at a lower status than men in matters of religious tradition; 3) linguistic barriers exist inhibiting many women's, and presently many men's, relationship with God.

### Who Can Find a Woman of Valor?

Contrary to the ancient byword, we have not found the woman of valor to be so rare. But in the annals of Jewish history, she did remain hidden, ignored, and thus unknown to most of us. When we first began our journey through Jewish history, we discovered that the Jewish woman was almost invisible; virtually "written out".<sup>46</sup>

Feminism awakened women to the realization that not only were there very few women depicted in the Bible, but that those who are in the text are rarely the focus of Jewish education. The exclusion of women from religious text is inseparably linked with the social status women have held in religious and secular culture.

Professor of Women's Studies, Judith Ochshorn writes, "Among the many salient factors in female socialization is a widespread lack of knowledge about women's own history - in itself a potent instrument of oppression."<sup>47</sup> Jewish and

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<sup>45</sup> Susannah Heschel, On Being a Jewish Feminist (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), p. XXVIII.

<sup>46</sup> Sondra Henry and Emily Taitz, Written Out of History: Our Jewish Foremothers (New York: Biblio Press, 1988,) p. XIII.

<sup>47</sup> Judith Ochshorn, "Reclaiming Our Past", Women's Spirit Bonding (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1984), p. 283.

Christian women theologians found the need to reject traditional interpretations of the Bible, to reclaim women's history, and to oppose the traditional interpretations of texts that have neglected or demeaned women.

Where some feminists find the Bible to be so inherently sexist that it cannot possibly speak to modern women, other women choose to embrace traditional texts and to seek new interpretations with modern meaning. Christians and Jews are simultaneously turning to the Scriptures to understand how women can relate to the texts. Reinterpreting Biblical text is difficult because of the long-standing tradition that God wrote the text. Many Jewish women will simply deny that God wrote the Bible. This makes reinterpretation less problematic, but if one wishes to retain the text as history or metaphor, the search for positive women characters remains difficult. Jewish women are also looking at post-Biblical Jewish sources, such as Talmud and *halakhic* writings, to determine their value for the modern Jewish feminist. Those texts are undeniably written by male authors and criticism often comes easier than revision.

Textual reinterpretation is not just the issue of Jewish women theologians. Christian feminists also struggle to find meaning in the ancient texts. Some feminists, like Mary Daly, find the Bible and New Testament so inherently sexist that they would prefer not to attempt to rediscover meaning in the texts at all. Daly suggests that the Bible and New Testament cannot speak at all to modern women.

Other religious women choose to embrace the Bible, using new commentaries to reinterpret the text. Judith Plaskow talks of "reshaping Jewish memory." She suggests that the stories of exceptional women in the Bible need to be reclaimed and understood from the women's perspective. Women's



traditional roles need to be understood. In a few different texts, women can be found who were leaders and religious scholars. "Reconstructing women's history enables us to see that 'Judaism' has always been richer, more complex, and more diverse than either 'normative' sources or most branches of modern Judaism would admit."<sup>48</sup>

Jews are also taking another look at the ancestors of Jewish history. Some congregations and communities have chosen to add the names of the matriarchs in prayer as they recall the patriarchs. Including the matriarchs in the prayer service is another way to remind worshipers of the women in the Biblical text.

## **2) Created in God's Image?**

Marie Augusta Neal writes: "Symbols represent concepts, concepts being the meaning of the symbols. As distinct from other symbols, religious symbols define the cosmic order."<sup>49</sup> All religions communicate through the meaning and interpretation of their symbols. God is such a symbol.

The symbol of God is at the core of religious conviction. Some religious factions have excluded a God-concept from their belief system. But even this, the lack of a god, is a symbol. If Neal is correct, and cosmic order is represented by this God-construct, the reason why feminists struggle with belief in a male God is evident. The world is cosmically and socially ordered by such a standard.

In a 1973 study, O'Faolain and Martines reviewed Western theological

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<sup>48</sup> Judith Plaskow, Standing Again at Sinai (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), p. 48.

<sup>49</sup> Marie Augusta Neal, "Women in Religious Symbolism and Organization," in Religious Continuity and Change, Harry Johnson, ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1979), p. 222.



treatises on the subordination of women to men. They found that there exists religious legitimization for such a hierarchy in that they could find no documents that portrayed women as having been created in God's image. In the fourth century, the Christian theologian Augustine commented on Genesis 1:27, "God created man; in the image of God He created him; Male and female he created them," as follows: "The woman together with her husband is the image of God, so that the whole substance may be one image. But when she is referred to separately in her quality of helpmate, which regards the woman herself alone, then she is not in the image of God."<sup>50</sup>

Judith Plaskow, a Jewish feminist theologian, also sees the subordination of women as inherent in the Biblical text. While she does not turn to the birth of humankind as her source of contention, she finds the source of Jewish women's secondary status in the text of Exodus.

There is perhaps no verse in the Torah more disturbing to the feminist than Moses' warning to his people in Exodus 19:15, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman." For here, at the very moment that the Jewish people stand at Mount Sinai ready to enter into the covenant - now not the covenant with the individual patriarchs but presumably the people as a whole - Moses addresses the community only as men...At the central moment of Jewish history, women are invisible.<sup>51</sup>

Social order is defined through sacred text. Plaskow sees a male God addressing men. Augustine proclaims women as Other. The symbols are set. God is primarily a God for men and not for women. Or God is a God for women, but only as they are subordinate to men. When a religious society is built on the foundation of these doctrines, women become second-class citizens.

In 1983, Rosemary Ruether wrote about the social issues facing religious women and how they connect to belief in God. She said:

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<sup>50</sup> J.O'Falain and L.Martines, eds., Not in God's Image (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p.130.

<sup>51</sup> Judith Plaskow, "Jewish Memory from a Feminist Perspective," in Weaving the Visions, Plaskow and Christ, eds. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), p.39.

Male monotheism reinforces the social hierarchy of patriarchal rule through its religious system in a way that was not the case with the paired images of God and Goddess. God is seen as addressing this class of males directly, adopting them as his "sons". They are his representatives, the responsible partners of the covenant with him. Women as wives now become symbolically repressed as the dependent servant class. Wives, along with children and servants, represent those ruled over and owned by the patriarchal class. They relate to man as he relates to God. A symbolic hierarchy is set up: God-male-female. Women no longer stand in direct relation to God; they are connected to God secondarily, through the male.<sup>62</sup>

Ruether's response is to break down traditional God-images and to recreate a "God/ess". She contends that where most Christian cultures eliminated<sup>63</sup> the idea of Goddess, Hebrew traditions did not expunge the image entirely. She finds that to make a change in woman's status in society, women must revert back to the roots of Christianity, reclaim past feminine images of the Divine, and break entirely from the hierarchy of male monotheism.

Mary Daly is another Christian feminist theologian. Early in her career she understood the challenge that women were to face:

Her content challenged the sexual assumptions on which theologizing was done, especially that of the fatherhood of God...At a chapel service at Harvard's Memorial Church in 1971...Daly invited all women to symbolize their becoming an exodus community from the Christian churches by standing together and leaving the church, never to enter again until the symbols change.<sup>64</sup>

Symbols are very affective. The issues of symbols and their effect on, and reflection of, social hierarchy is important to Christian and Jewish women alike. Feminist theologians address the issues of hierarchy and social status through their desire to change the meaning of symbols or to change the symbols themselves.

Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist, understood in the late 1960's that the

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<sup>62</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), p. 53.

<sup>63</sup> With the exception of Catholicism, where Goddess-worship is found in an attenuated form as the adoration of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

<sup>64</sup> Neal, p. 229.

use of symbols both reflects and is reflected in the way people treat one another.

Loss of symbols means loss of affective meaning, loss of affective meaning generates anxiety. Symbols legitimate a certain definition of the situation influencing the way people are treated, and the way that people are treated in turn reinforces the definition and the symbols. Treatment and symbol borrow authority from one another.<sup>65</sup>

It is this treatment of women, the subordination of women, that feminist theologians are trying to change. Changing religious symbols seems to be a natural step toward changing behavior. Equality for women in religion requires that they be seen both as created in God's image and as part of God's eternal covenant. But, as Geertz pointed out, loss of symbol, or alteration of symbol, is very emotionally fraught. Change is especially difficult when that symbol is God.

### **3) How Do We Call God?**

God is described in the Bible. God is described in rabbinic sources. But nowhere is the description of God so powerful as in the prayerbook. The prayerbook is the Jews' mode of communication with the Divine. It provides the Jew with the words to say and the hopes to express to God. The prayerbook also gives the worshiper an image of God. Through metaphors and symbols, God comes into a relationship with the worshiper in a way that he or she can understand. Metaphors help people to envision an otherwise overwhelming and, perhaps, incomprehensible deity.

Annette Daum, who was Director of the Department of Inter-Religious Affairs of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, wrote an essay shortly

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<sup>65</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion, M. Banton, ed. (London: Tavistock, 1966), as paraphrased in Neal, p.222.

before her death in 1988, describing the importance of prayer to the Jewish people:

The *siddur* (prayerbook) is traditionally regarded as the mirror of the Jewish soul, a metaphorical reflection of the spiritual and historical development of the Jewish people, expressing the religious and ethical ideals, the trials and tribulations, the joys and sorrows, the hopes and aspirations of the Jews over more than three millennia. As Dr. Joseph H. Hertz, the late chief rabbi of the British Empire, noted in *The Daily Prayerbook*, the *siddur* is both the gateway to communion with God and the bond that unites Jews with their "brethren" scattered throughout the world. Through the ages, the gate has been controlled, the opening filtered through the eyes of the men who developed, translated, interpreted, and taught that tradition.<sup>54</sup>

Daum expressed a concern that the prayerbook, the means for Jews to communicate with God, the mirror of the Jewish soul, is the by-product of centuries of male influences. Men wrote the prayerbook, and so it promotes a relationship with God that many modern women find uncomfortable and exclusionary.

The prayerbook has always contained a liturgy designed by men and written for men and women. Throughout the history of Reform Judaism women have always been welcome at liturgical services. Many women who attended prayer services discovered prayers expressing the hopes of men and women alike in the form of reflections on health, wisdom, forgiveness, justice and peace. They also found feminine images for the Divine and reference to women's experiences. But many women also found that a female voice was missing from the liturgy. Daum notes the following example of a specific women's concern as it appears in the liturgy. "In the *Hallel*, it speaks of barren women becoming mothers." But she explains, "It is difficult to determine whether the prayer expresses female yearnings or male priorities - the desire

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<sup>54</sup> Annette Daum, "Language and Liturgy," in *Daughters of the King*, Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut, eds. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), p. 183.

for progeny - which women internalize."<sup>57</sup> Thus, although women may have found a place in the structure of the synagogue, the liturgy spoke to them only peripherally, and always from a male perspective.

Daum is critical of centuries of Jewish prayerbooks, but it is clear that she also speaks about the 1975 prayerbook of the Reform movement, the *Gates of Prayer*, another prayerbook written by men. The prayerbook intentionally created a liturgy that included women as part of the community. It changed "mankind" to "humankind", but it failed to allow women to reflect on their gender-specific relationship with God. In the language of liberal Jews, God was still a Father, Lord, and King. Although, some women felt, and still feel, comfortable with the liturgy of Reform Judaism, many other, perhaps more vocal Jewish women in the 1980's found it limiting to be included in some parts of the service but not in others.

Presently, many Jews are asking that the metaphors for God found in the prayerbook be changed to gender-neutral language. It is clear that "when we change the words, we invite a changed perception of the reality to which the words point. To demand that the words of faith change is to demand that one's faith change."<sup>58</sup> The "words of faith" are now what those Jews are asking to change. Adding women to the community of Israel through language reflecting humankind as opposed to "mankind" has not been sufficient. It is no longer solely women, or only feminist women, who are looking to the future of Judaism and demanding that God be reflected in universal, i.e. gender-neutral or gender-sensitive metaphors. Men and women are working for the changes together. Jewish and Christian congregations are seeking change. Faith will

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<sup>57</sup> Daum, p. 187.

<sup>58</sup> Browne Barr, as quoted in Kathleen Graves, "Inclusive Language and Feminine Images of God in Worship," *Covenant Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No.1-2, Feb.-May, 1992, p. 70.



change because God is going to change.

Rabbi Donna Berman is on the Liturgy Committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis which is working to create a new prayerbook for the Reform movement. She writes about how important language is in shaping the world. "Language..is a grid or screen through which we view reality. Language doesn't merely reflect the world, it creates it..." Berman suggests that only through metaphor can reality be understood.

The premise that metaphor is a cornerstone of knowledge plays a vital role in the feminist critique of language, for it allows us to identify the source of the problem we perceive in religious language and it opens the way for a fairly straightforward and easily discernible avenue for rectifying it. Put simply, if metaphor is to language what atoms are to matter, then in order to change or expand our world view we must change or expand our metaphors.<sup>59</sup>

Metaphors and language define faith. When metaphors are created by men with the intent to describe their relation to the Divine, barriers naturally develop excluding some people from prayer. And yet changing metaphors is so deeply interconnected with the feelings and religious identity of the individual worshiper, that it remains to be seen how altering people's God-concept through altering the language of prayer will affect religious communities and individual faith.

### **I am the ? your God. (Numbers 15:41)**

There is resistance from men and women to changing metaphors for God. Some people feel comfortable with the prayerbook; it has become part of their own religious tradition and their own religious identity. In the Reform movement, those who are resistant to changing metaphors may soon find

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<sup>59</sup> Donna Berman, "The Feminist Critique of Language," CCAR Journal, Summer, 1992, p.5-7.



themselves in a minority position. A new prayerbook is in development. The language we have used to represent God is undoubtedly going to change. But it remains to be seen how the language is going to change. There are two distinct options in metaphor development. It may be decided to leave the traditional patriarchal metaphors and add new prayers or translations with equivalent female metaphors. Or the decision might be made to change the prayerbook to a "gender-neutral" format. The interim prayerbook, it should be noted, is gender-neutral, or "gender-sensitive," meaning that there are no gender-based references of any kind for God.

Many feminists feel that gender-neutral language is not an acceptable option. Rabbi Maggie Wenig said:

I wish that gender-neutral language would be, not a destination, but a stepping stone. For if we stop here, I am afraid as much would have been lost as gained. For me calling God, "Source of mercy," "Fountain of life," "Eternal One," "Divine Presence," "Teacher," or "Friend" is not enough...At best, gender-neutral language, while removing a barrier to identification with God, does not encourage either girls or boys, women or men to see ourselves in God's image.<sup>90</sup>

Sallie McFague adds, "If we refuse to use any pronouns for God, we court the possibility of concealing androcentric assumptions behind abstractions...God is she and he and neither."<sup>91</sup>

If gender-neutral language is not the answer to breaking the male monopoly on images of God, how should we re-envision the Divine? Marcia Falk is a liturgist struggling with this very question. It has been her project to rewrite blessings and translations which incorporate feminine images for God. She explains her goals as follows:

The search for theological imagery is a journey whose destinations are rarely apparent at the outset. As many feminists have discovered, it is not merely a matter of changing male images to seemingly equivalent female ones...for a

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<sup>90</sup> Margaret Wenig, "Theology and Liturgy," a paper given at the Women's Rabbinic Network Conference, Oakland, California, March, 1993.

<sup>91</sup> Sallie McFague, "God as Mother," in Weaving the Visions (San Francisco: Harper and Collins, 1989), p.141.

feminized patriarchal image is still patriarchal, though now in transvestite masquerade. The process has been instructive, however, in clarifying our theological concerns: in translating the king into the queen, for example, we realize that images of domination are not what we embrace.

And so we find that we must create new images to convey our visions, and to do so we must be patient (though not passive), for images will not be called into being by sheer acts of will alone.<sup>62</sup>

Metaphors, then, are not solely male or female, rather there exists a social structure behind the metaphor. As noted previously, it is this social structure that is most important to break down. The image of God as male no longer works because it suggests a hierarchy that feels oppressive to many women and exclusionary to many more.

Rosemary Radford Ruether suggests that God/ess must be removed from all issues of hierarchy and transcend exclusionary language.

If all language for God/ess is analogy, if taking a particular human image literally is idolatry, then male language for the divine must lose its privileged place. If God/ess is not the creator and validator of the existing hierarchical social order, but rather the one who liberates us from it, who opens up a new community of equals, then language about God/ess drawn from kingship and hierarchical power must lose its privileged place. Images of God/ess must include female roles and experience.... God/ess language cannot validate roles of men or women in stereotypic ways that justify male dominance and female subordination. Adding an image of God/ess as loving, nurturing mother, mediating the power of the strong, sovereign father, is insufficient.<sup>63</sup>

The issues of changing metaphors for God in the context of prayer are very complex. If gender-neutral language is not sufficient, then how to make the appropriate changes becomes a heated issue. Some feminists agree with McFague in suggesting that we should choose metaphors that reflect women's experience of God. She even proposes that we use the image of God as a Mother. Falk and Ruether believe that to add equivalent feminine pronouns to the preexisting male ones will not work because male language feeds an

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<sup>62</sup> Marcia Falk, "Notes on Composing New Blessings," in *Weaving the Visions* (San Francisco: Harper and Collins, 1989), p. 129.

<sup>63</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), p. 69.

already existent hierarchy replete with female stereotyping. They propose creating a new system of communication with God.

Change, especially within religious systems, is a slow process, and, as Rabbi Wenig suggested, gender-neutral language is a stepping stone. Where Reform Jewry is headed has not yet been determined. Committees are now forming, questionnaires being sent, and papers being drafted to decide how God will be presented in the next prayerbook. Perhaps the decision will be to remain with gender-neutral language, or possibly, we will see transformation based on the voices of those feminist theologians who believe that gender-neutrality is not enough.

Change is difficult, but what is vital is that the experience of prayer remain significant.

Jewish prayer demands that the religious experience of communion with God is a genuinely true experience, an experience that also makes a vital difference to man and that also somehow affects God. But there is more to Jewish prayer than the religious experience of the Divine. There is all that the worshiper brings to God in his prayer, all that he receives from God...He searches for the meaning and significance of his life.

Prayer is not merely a form or fact; it is a demand. A demand that the experience of the presence of God be real.<sup>64</sup>

Rabbi Jack Bemporad's language is obviously outdated in the context of this thesis. His references to humanity as "man" or "he" must be overlooked in light of the societal norms and conventions of language that prevailed when he was writing. What is important is his reflection on the power of prayer. Jews are looking for a true experience of God. Rabbi Jakob Petuchowski asks this question of the prayer experience: "Perhaps it should be the final test of any theological system to ask of it: "Can I pray to the God taught by this system?"<sup>65</sup>

The Reform movement is in the business of publishing prayerbooks. The

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<sup>64</sup> Jack Bemporad, *The Theological Foundations of Prayer* (New York: UAHC, 1967), p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> Jakob Petuchowski, "A Traditional View," in Bemporad, p. 31.

movement will eventually print a new book, and embedded in its liturgy will be a theological system for the future of liberal Judaism. Petuchowski's question is then a vital measuring stick for all liberal Jews. The impact of feminism and feminist theology on the worshipers of the late twentieth century has been profound. Both men and women are demanding equality in the social context of the synagogue, they are looking to reclaim the voices of women in ancient texts, and they are searching for an accessible God. Is it possible to create a prayerbook that will feel comfortable to the majority of liberal Jews? Can we pray together to the God that will be taught by this theological system?

## Chapter Two

### The Change Agent: Its Motivation and Resources

“Like a language, a religion is dead  
when it ceases to change.”  
(Israel Zangwill, *Dreamers of the Ghetto*, 1898)

Prayerbook change is a planned change. That is to say that the change takes place according to a deliberate, thoughtful, structured plan. Prayerbook change is not a spontaneous reaction to some unforeseen event; rather a liturgy committee meets many times before creating a new liturgy. Although the reception of the prayerbook cannot be foreseen, the committee can influence the change process and guide the transition as much as possible. A planned change must include a setting of goals as well as an understanding of the environment in which the change is to occur.

The current Liturgy Committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis has been conducting field research and preparing budgets for the new prayerbook. They are trying to plan for the change, but since changes have already occurred in many communities - from the congregation that changes “He” when referring to God to a neutral metaphor, to the congregation that has written its own prayerbook - the CCAR will discover that it is less the catalyst for a planned change, and more the manager of a change already in progress.

Managed organizational change is a type of planned change. The term “managed change” is used to define a system of organizational change wherein

....(the) administrators are seldom in a position to initiate a program from its inception, nor do they work with a sound or full understanding of the factors found in their organizations. They operate within what may be termed an imperfect knowledge of their organizational system.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Garth N. Jones, Planned Organizational Change (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p.6.

The prayerbook to be created by the CCAR is a planned change in Reform worship, but the actual change of prayerbooks on the congregational level must be understood as a managed change by a change agent.

It would be impossible for the CCAR as a professional organization to understand and successfully direct a change process for all its constituents. As a change agent in a managed change, the CCAR can admit its inability to set formalized goals for all pulpits in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The days of Einhorn and Wise are passed - there can be no hope for a single prayerbook uniting all Reform Jews. The CCAR can only hope to unite *most* Reform Jews in common worship. It is now the function of the CCAR to develop new liturgy for "the twenty-first century" and to act as an organizational manager and guide as many communities through the change as possible "with a minimum amount of social pain and dysfunctionism."<sup>2</sup>

### **Change Agent**

The term "change agent" refers to "helping professionals whose roles involve the stimulation, guidance, and stabilization of change in organizations."<sup>3</sup> When I describe the CCAR as a change agent, I do not mean that they are simply the publishers of prayerbooks, but that, through their role as the rabbinical branch of the Reform movement, and through their committees on liturgy and publications, the CCAR is creating dynamic changes in the movement.

To print a prayerbook is not the same as printing a textbook. The

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<sup>2</sup> Jones, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, p.19.



prayerbook is seen as an expression of Jewish faith developed over many years. Congregations do not change liturgy in a vacuum. The CCAR, by sponsoring and publishing this or any prayerbook, is in essence proclaiming its desire to set the tone of prayer for the next generation of Jewish worshipers.

The CCAR's decision to revise the prayerbook again was not unsolicited. This new prayerbook is a direct response to numerous liturgical and theological concerns coming from many different voices in the Reform Jewish community. "The emphasis of a change agent is upon planned and deliberate intervention into the processes of change in and around the client system."<sup>4</sup> The Reform community of congregations is the client system. The majority of congregations in the client system have been demanding revisions. Many congregations are already making changes locally. The umbrella organization is responding as an agent of formalized and planned change; they have decided to produce a new liturgy.

Not every Reform congregation is clamoring for liturgical change, but the voices demanding change are louder and more persuasive than those which are content with the current prayerbook. Because any prayerbook change will be geared toward a national revision of Reform liturgy, all of the UAHC affiliate congregations are to be considered as the client system of the CCAR, the change agent.

*Client System.* The term client system refers to a specific social system that requires a change agent to assist in altering its organization with the objective of improved performance. Social systems are considered as systems of relatively permanent social interaction (relationships) that involve two or more persons, groups, organizations, communities or any combination thereof.

Furthermore, each social system is regarded as a closed or concrete system. By this, it is meant that each social system may be helped without effecting other related higher and/or lower systems. The magnitude of the planned change determines whether or not only one or two or more related social systems must be altered in order to achieve improved organizational performance

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<sup>4</sup> Jones, p.19.

(successful change).<sup>6</sup>

It is the change agent's responsibility to respond to the needs of the client system to make the organization as a whole "perform better." The idea of "better performance" must be taken figuratively - once a prayerbook change is made, it should be assumed that many congregations will enjoy more satisfying services and less theological discord, and that this change will create a more "healthy" organization of Reform Jewry.

### **Who is the Change Agent?**

To this point, I have assumed that the agent for prayerbook change is the Central Conference of American Rabbis because they are the organizational arm coordinating prayerbook development, editing, and publishing. I have defined the congregations as the client system in need of redirection and new liturgy. Yet it is the Union of American Congregations, a separate branch of the Reform movement organization that directly oversees the client system, i.e. the congregations. Thus both the CCAR and the UAHC must be viewed as change agents, working in tandem. In order to better understand how the change agent can best help the client system to adapt to an innovation as emotionally charged as liturgy and God-language, we must explore in more detail how the UAHC and the CCAR interact, and how the needs of the congregations are to be communicated through the UAHC and to the CCAR.

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<sup>6</sup> Jones, p. 16.

## The CCAR and the UAHC - Prayerbook Reform

In 1889, the Central Conference of American Rabbis was founded by Isaac M. Wise to bring together in a single organization all American Reform rabbis. Earlier, Wise's attempts to united *all* American rabbis in a single organization had failed. The newly-founded CCAR "had no authority to legislate, it nevertheless brought order into a hitherto chaotic Reform movement."<sup>6</sup>

In 1890, Wise requested that the Conference create a uniform prayerbook for all Reform Jews. In 1895, Volume I of the *Union Prayer Book* was published and accepted. Other publications were soon to follow. In 1897, the *Union Hymnal* first appeared. A *Haggadah* and a *Minister's Handbook* were printed in their earliest forms at the beginning of the twentieth century. By 1925, the CCAR was publishing enough materials that they were prepared to arrange for the distribution of their own printed materials. "The income received from the sale of its publications has been the chief support for Conference expenditures."<sup>7</sup>

In addition to publications, the CCAR developed an umbrella for committees and responsibilities. Standing committees developed from 1907 to the present on such issues as Ethics, Ritual, Liturgy, Pension for Rabbis, and Placement. With time, some committees remained under the auspices of the CCAR, some became divisions of the UAHC, and others were continued under joint participation between the UAHC and the CCAR.

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations was founded by Wise in

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<sup>6</sup> Sidney Rigner, "The History of the Conference 1889-1964," *CCAR Yearbook*, Volume XCIX, Part II, 1989, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Sidney Rigner, p. 7.

1873 as a lay organization to unite American Jewish congregations nationally and to support an American rabbinical seminary (the Hebrew Union College was founded two years later). As the UAHC grew, rabbis became an integral part of both the leadership and the day-to-day running of the UAHC. Still considered a "lay" - led organization, the UAHC has evolved from its original membership of 27 congregations into a union of 841 member congregations. Through paid membership, congregations are granted certain privileges. The UAHC portrays itself as a resource for congregations seeking program ideas in outreach, social action, youth, and synagogue management. Special services for small congregations are also offered by the UAHC.

The UAHC is the home for numerous committees formed to discuss issues of importance to congregational life. Interestingly, similar to the CCAR, the UAHC has committees on both worship and publications. When asked about these committees, the current president of the CCAR Liturgy committee, Rabbi Peter Knobel, reported that the committees of the CCAR and UAHC are very different in their concerns and interests.

The UAHC says that the CCAR is the publisher of liturgy and the UAHC is the publisher of educational materials - "it has been that way for a very long time." On the other hand, the Commission on Religious Living is a joint UAHC and CCAR committee designed "to deal with a host of issues concerning worship, not liturgy. What happens, not what is said. For example, praying, ethics, ritual, healing and spirituality."<sup>6</sup>

The issues regarding committees and their overseeing organization is perhaps the most confusing aspect of the Reform movement. And thus, when it comes to the issue of prayerbook initiation or revision, it is difficult to understand

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<sup>6</sup> Telephone Interview, Rabbi Peter Knobel, 22 September, 1994.

how the demarcation lines have been drawn. As Rabbi Knobel said, "Prayerbook is technically a product of the CCAR and has nothing to do with the UAHC. But there are some informal connections."<sup>9</sup>

According to the 1989-1990 annual report of the UAHC, the relationship between the organizations is as follows:

The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) is a professional organization of approximately 1500 Reform rabbis. The CCAR is represented ex-officio on the UAHC Board of Trustees, and on the Executive Boards of the Federations and Regional Councils. (The converse, that the UAHC is represented ex-officio on the Board of the CCAR is also true.)...The CCAR also publishes liturgical works for the movement.<sup>10</sup>

Since the CCAR publishes liturgy "for" Reform congregations and communities, the CCAR is in essence the sole power behind liturgical reform. But as Rabbi Knobel remarked, "There are some informal connections."<sup>11</sup>

The issue of changing the prayerbook became important after a UAHC Biennial during which the issue of gender-language and prayer was an important theme. After this Biennial, the CCAR found itself deeply influenced by the reaction of participants who expressed concern that there was no gender "inclusive" prayerbook for Reform Jews. The CCAR heard the message of the delegates to the UAHC conference and in 1992 published the first edition of the gender-neutral *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat*. The message was easily conveyed from the UAHC congregations to the CCAR Liturgy and Publications Committees.

The CCAR Liturgy Committee is informally connected to the UAHC. The Committee is composed of an administrative board, members of which attend all meetings, and an unknown number of corresponding members who receive

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<sup>9</sup>Telephone Interview, Rabbi Peter Knobel, 22 September, 1994.

<sup>10</sup>Annual Report of the UAHC, 1989-1990.

<sup>11</sup>Telephone Interview, Rabbi Peter Knobel, 22 September, 1994.



information about the Committee meetings, provide advice and suggestions, but do not attend the meetings themselves. The six CCAR member rabbis who currently serve on the administrative board of the CCAR Liturgy Committee all serve UAHC member congregations. The committee chair of the CCAR Liturgy Committee, Rabbi Peter Knobel, sits ex-officio on the UAHC Committee on Religious Living. He decides what he wants to bring back to his own meetings with the CCAR Liturgy Committee. The lay leader of the UAHC Commission on Religious Living, Dan Schechter, also sits on both committees.

Schechter is a member of Rabbi Knobel's congregation in Chicago. Rabbi Knobel said, "It is nice to have a lay person sit ex-officio on the Liturgy Committee. Dan Schechter was chosen for his interest and the Liturgy Committee's feeling that lay input was important, although, at this time, the CCAR Committee is not yet sure what to do with the lay input!"<sup>12</sup>

Fundamentally, the CCAR has final control over the new prayerbook. The publication process is entirely under the auspices of the CCAR.

The Liturgy Committee creates a draft it believes is in the penultimate form. The prayerbook is circulated to the entire CCAR membership for comment. Comments are accepted or rejected and then the entire Conference is asked to vote on a final draft. Usually, on things that are not an entire prayerbook, the Publication Committee will make decisions with the Board of the CCAR.

Every project has a main editor and a small committee. A copy editor is hired by the CCAR. The Director of Publications (Rabbi Elliott Stevens) and the head of the Liturgy Committee (Rabbi Peter Knobel) are always consultants.<sup>13</sup>

Before publication, the UAHC and the CCAR share ideas and comments mostly through informal channels of communication. The effect of this subtle overlap between the CCAR and UAHC is very powerful. It means that the CCAR is in constant communication with congregations in the field. In fact, the present Liturgy Committee so much wants to be aware of the feelings of lay

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<sup>12</sup> Telephone Interview, Rabbi Peter Knobel, 22 September, 1994.

<sup>13</sup> Telephone Interview, Rabbi Peter Knobel, 22 September, 1994



people in congregations that it has applied for and received a grant from the Lilly Endowment to do just that, to research the needs of today's Reform Jews in matters of worship and the prayerbook. Of course, as Rabbi Knobel adds, "Whether the CCAR accepts the recommendations of the Lilly Endowment study or not is a big question mark."<sup>14</sup>

## **Resources for Change: The Lilly Endowment and Budgets**

### **The Lilly Endowment**

In May 1993, some of the foremost feminist theologians and liturgists met with numerous congregants from around the United States. The conference was one of two sponsored by a planning grant from the Lilly Endowment. The purpose of the meeting was to share information about experiences in worship.

The heated discussions at the conference led to the need for further information about worship. As of September 1994, a research project was created to specifically promote "lay involvement in liturgical change and renewal in Reform congregations throughout the United States." The two-year study consists of multiple layers of liturgical research and corresponding themes for consideration in the development of new CCAR liturgy. The study had solicited information from a wide range of congregations of different sizes, different worship styles, and different geographic locations. Two Conservative congregations were also asked to participate in the research. "The overall purpose of the project is to examine the role of the congregant in liturgical change and in the development of liturgy. The results of the research will be

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<sup>14</sup>Telephone Interview, Rabbi Peter Knobel, 22 September, 1994.

utilized to make suggestions<sup>15</sup> to the CCAR for consideration in the development of the successor to the *Gates of Prayer* prayerbook. The study will also identify future areas for examination in this project and in future research."<sup>16</sup> The study is sponsored by the CCAR with funding from the Lilly Endowment and the Cummings Foundation.<sup>17</sup> Specifically, \$123,500 was given from the Lilly Endowment and an additional \$65,000 from the Cummings Foundation.<sup>18</sup>

The CCAR research project covers six areas:

1) Self-appraisal of congregational worship. Congregations have been asked to form small worship groups of eight to twelve people and to keep diaries of worship experiences over a three-week period.

A thick packet of materials (Appendix A) was sent to every member congregation in the UAHC in North America in April, 1994. The materials consist of a letter encouraging congregations to participate in the study, a congregation information sheet, and guidelines for self-study and discussion. The letter of introduction specifically asks that laity and clergy work together on the project, making the study a interesting example of a way to transcend boundaries between the CCAR and UAHC. Once the study is complete, the participating congregations will be invited to a conference to "learn the results of the nation-wide study, and to begin the process of liturgical renewal in our movement."<sup>19</sup>

2) Female experience and the prayerbook. The research committee felt that serious effort should be made to explore feminist theology and gender-

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<sup>15</sup> Both Rabbi Knobel and Dan Schechter emphasized that the CCAR is not bound by the results of the research.

<sup>16</sup> Telephone Interview, Dan Schechter, lay member of the CCAR Liturgy Committee ex-officio, 3 October, 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Appendix A: Packet sent to congregations in April, 1994.

<sup>18</sup> Telephone Interview, Dan Schechter, 3 October, 1994.

<sup>19</sup> Appendix A.

language. To promote this research, the Liturgy Committee has enlisted several people to write papers on the implications of feminism on the development of liturgy. These papers will be presented at a conference to which lay leaders and clergy will be invited. To date, the names of those presenting papers have not been released to the public, but the papers are currently being drafted.<sup>20</sup>

Rabbi Peter Knobel, in an interview in May, 1994, suggested that he believes that the research project will reveal that gender-language is only one kind of liturgical change that needs to occur in the movement. Other changes will include the translations of traditional Hebrew, the Hebrew itself, the use of women as role models, and liturgical poetry. With the publication of *Gates of Shabbat* in 1992, the CCAR responded to the need for gender-sensitive liturgy. The task is now to identify the other issues of concern.

3) Computer technology and its implications for the production of liturgy. The question under consideration is: How can computer technology best be used by the CCAR and congregations? Project papers are currently being drafted to discuss the technicalities of the issue, with detailed examinations of desktop publishing, on-line services, and interactive liturgy creation. A conference will be held regarding this topic as well.<sup>21</sup>

4) Unifying force of a common movement prayerbook. Here it is recognized that it is technologically possible for every congregation, clergy, or educator to create a prayerbook. The sociological effect of such a trend must be examined. It can be assumed that almost 12% of Reform congregations are currently using their own prayerbooks.<sup>22</sup> The CCAR should examine the implications of this

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<sup>20</sup> Telephone Interview, Dan Schechter, 3 October, 1994.

<sup>21</sup> Telephone Interview, Dan Schechter, 3 October, 1994.

<sup>22</sup> From a CCAR - sponsored survey asking 550 congregations about their worship. Rabbi Elliott Stevens of the CCAR notes that it is difficult to rely on this figure as some communities may use their own text for one service and not for others. Telephone Interview, Rabbi Elliott Stevens, 3 October, 1994.

trend and its relation to CCAR future planning. The Liturgy Committee plans to examine sample materials donated to the CCAR and UAHC by congregations that write liturgy. These materials are housed in the UAHC liturgical clearinghouse coordinated by Rabbi Sanford Seltzer. They also intend to interview congregations to discover the reasons they chose to create their own liturgy, who was involved, and their future prospects.

5) Training of congregants in worship. A program and conference have been scheduled in early 1995 to help congregants become more competent worshipers and evaluators of worship. The goal is to develop a common vocabulary for congregants to discuss liturgy. In the end, a mini-curriculum on worship will be developed for synagogues and lay people.<sup>23</sup>

6) Worship development teams. This is a sub-project of the research. The hope is that a new mode of developing worship can be identified through the liturgies of small groups. Each group would include musicians, graphic artists, poets, and knowledgeable congregants. The teams would be given an assignment to complete. According to Dan Schechter, this is the most elusive aspect of the research and the idea is still being revised.

## **Budgets**

The budget for the research study came from the Lilly Endowment and the Cummings Foundation, but the results of the study will have substantial impact on the financial holdings of the CCAR. The primary source of revenue for the CCAR is from publishing<sup>24</sup> and, of that, the highest volume sale is

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<sup>23</sup> Telephone Interview, Dan Schechter, 3 October, 1994.

<sup>24</sup> According to Rabbi Elliott Stevens, almost 60% of the CCAR income is from publishing (Interview, 3 October, 1994).

prayerbooks. Looking to the next century, it can be assumed that the new prayerbook will be purchased by a majority of the congregations in the UAHC. This new prayerbook then will provide the basis for the financial reserves for the CCAR for the next generation.<sup>26</sup>

Financial considerations are an important aspect of liturgical reform. Not only is the research itself costly, but the publication and distribution of a new text are very expensive. Financial resources are clearly available. The CCAR, as a change agent, must invest in the future of the organization and they must expect the payoff both in satisfaction of the constituents and financial gains. What is the motivation of the CCAR to make such a costly investment?

### **Motivation to Change**

As described in Chapter One, the impact of the feminist movement on the Reform movement has been profound. The 1970's brought desired equality for women in the areas of congregational leadership and language expressing humanity. As the study of theology merged with feminism, women began to explore metaphors for God, women in the Biblical text, and inclusive language for humanity. By the 1990's, the idea of equality for women in all aspects of congregational life was so pervasive that the demand was made to rewrite the prayerbook allowing for gender-sensitive, gender-neutral, or even feminine metaphors for God. The CCAR responded to this need when the *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* was published in 1992. Now that a new prayerbook is in negotiation, it is clear that the gender-language will not be the only change

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<sup>26</sup> Rabbi Stevens verified this fact, but noted that the publishing branch of the CCAR is also increasing its revenues by expanding its scope of books, to include spirituality and self-help texts as well (Interview, 3 October, 1994).



made in the new liturgy.

The impact of the feminist movement is, then, the predominant (though not the sole) change catalyst driving the perceived need for a new Reform prayerbook.

The concept of the change catalyst in planned organizational change is analogous to that of a catalyst in chemical reactions. A change catalyst is any agent that causes or speeds up or slows down change (catalysis) in an organizational system. In this process, the agent undergoes no permanent change. A small input of catalytic influence has significant and widespread effect in an organizational system, and this is one of its conspicuous properties.<sup>26</sup>

Worship has always been a part of the feminist movement, but it has not been until recent years that the concern over women's relation to the Divine has moved with profound impact into organized religion. American Jews and Christians alike are now engrossed in the struggle for redefinition and reconnection. And it is no longer women, alone, but men, too, who are searching for new ways to relate to God and, under the influence of feminism, who are striving to re-envision God.

Feminism is not a change catalyst solely in the committees of the CCAR. Some congregations were impacted by the feminist movement of the 1970's and chose, at that time, to rethink not only words for humanity, but also metaphors for God. Other congregations have made the changes during the last decade. But, no matter when the change catalyst made its impact on Jewish worship, it is evident today that many congregations in the UAHC are ready for change. Some have chosen to create their own prayerbooks, unwilling to wait and see what the CCAR of the next century will bring. Others use the *Gates of Prayer* changing masculine metaphors as they read aloud. And yet others have not felt the catalyst of change, have no motivation to change and remain either glued to the printed word of the *Gates of Prayer* or

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<sup>26</sup> Jones, p. 16.



even use the Reform movement's previous text, the *Union Prayer Book*.

Many more issues will also be considered before a new prayerbook is composed. In the final analysis, it is the congregations and rabbis who must decide when and how to worship. They will decide how their community will pray, if they will purchase the new CCAR-sponsored prayerbook, or if they need liturgical revision at all.

Since the need for revised metaphors in liturgy is the predominant change catalyst, it will probably be the ideological factor determining the urgency with which congregations purchase new prayerbooks. Economics will be another factor propelling both the publication and the purchase of such prayerbooks. The next chapter of this thesis will explore case-study congregations and the impact of feminist theology. Congregations will be examined for their motivation and capacity to change.

## Chapter Three

### The Client's Motivation and Capacity for Change

"It is now more than ever necessary to preserve  
the Jewish community in a vital form."  
(Albert Einstein, 1929)

The client's motivation and capacity for change is not uniform. When it comes to prayerbook reform, individual congregations, and individuals within the congregations have very different needs. When liturgy is going to be revised, emotions are heightened and exposed. Jewish clergy and laity feel an attachment to the words of the prayerbook. They see the book as a link to Jewish history and to the world community of Jews. In 1974, when the *Union Prayer Book* was replaced with the *Gates of Prayer*, many people struggled with the change. Rabbi Elliott Stevens of the CCAR estimates that close to 95 percent of Reform congregations now use *Gates of Prayer*. And yet, it is interesting to note that this writer found that of the fourteen congregations consulted, three still use the *Union Prayer Book* at least once a month. There are also sub-populations in many congregations that prefer the *Union Prayer Book* for a variety of reasons. Evidently, for these congregations and congregants, a complete change to a new prayerbook never occurred.

It thus becomes vital, when discussing prayerbook change, to speak to the individuals who will be directly affected. Refraining from analyzing the psychological background of each interviewee, or extenuating circumstances in the health of a congregation, patterns appeared concerning each congregation and its congregants' motivation and ability to adapt to a fundamental liturgical change.

In the final analysis, the CCAR will suggest the direction for how Reform Jews will pray in the next century. Since it is unclear if the congregations will follow suit and purchase the new prayerbooks, it is understandable that the current Liturgy Committee of the CCAR is encouraging suggestions and opinions from its clients. Following are some of the remarks, concerns, and hopes of this clientele.

### **The Interviews**

Over a nine-month period, I spoke to rabbis, cantors, and congregants about gender-metaphors for God in their congregational worship. Formally, I visited four congregations and I interviewed one rabbi when he was visiting Cincinnati. Informally, I made numerous telephone calls. The methodology for choosing whom I would contact was imperfect. I called every UAHC head office and asked the regional director which congregations he or she knew of that were either discussing liturgical change in their community or were so ardently opposed to it that they were not discussing it at all. The directors each gave me two or more names. I made random calls and, depending on who returned my calls, I collected data.

The congregations, clergy, and congregants, I initially contacted are as follows: Rabbi George Astrachan, Temple Sinai, Cranston, Rhode Island; Rabbi Sandra Katz, United Hebrew Congregation, Terre Haute, Indiana; Edie Miller, congregant, Steven S. Wise Free Synagogue, New York, New York; Rabbi Jack Luxemburg, Temple Beth Ami, Rockville, Maryland; Cantor Sarah Sager, Anshe Chesed, Cleveland, Ohio; Rabbi Gary Huber, Congregation Beth Tikvah, Columbus, Ohio; Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, Congregation Beth El, Sudbury,

Massachusetts; Rabbi Deborah Bronstein, Leo Baeck Temple, Los Angeles, California<sup>1</sup>; Cantor Aviva Rosenbloom, Temple Israel of Hollywood, Los Angeles, California; Rabbi Mark Goldman, Rockdale Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio; Rabbi Lisa Hochberg-Miller, Temple Israel of Long Beach, Long Beach, California; Rabbi Patricia Karlin-Neumann, Temple Israel, Alameda, California; Rabbi Jeffrey Stiffman, Congregation Shaare Emeth, Saint Louis, Missouri; Rabbi Jonathan Stein, Congregation Beth Israel, San Diego, California.

### **The Case-Study Clients**

I selected five congregations for case studies from among the many rabbis, cantors and congregants with whom I spoke on the telephone. I personally visited with members of the case-study congregations. My methodology varied according to the resources of each congregation. In Terre Haute, Indiana, Rabbi Sandra Katz posted a sign-up sheet for anyone who wanted a 15-minute interview with me. She and I also had a more lengthy conversation.

I never met Rabbi Gary Huber of Columbus, Ohio. Over the phone, he suggested I contact the president of the Ritual Committee, who set up a group interview for me with many congregants of differing opinions.

In Boston, I met with Rabbi Lawrence Kushner and, separately, with Nancy Gossels, a co-president of the Worship Committee at his congregation, under whose auspices the 1980 prayerbook, *Vetaher Libenu* was written. I also spoke by telephone to Joan Kaye, the other co-president of the Worship Committee at that time.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently at Congregation Har Hashem, Boulder, Colorado.

Rabbi Mark Goldman, of Cincinnati, Ohio, met me in his office. He related to me the history of his rabbinate, of Rockdale Temple, and how he manages prayerbook change in his community.

The rabbi of Congregation Shaare Emeth in Saint Louis, Missouri, Rabbi Jeffrey Stiffman, came to Cincinnati. Before his arrival, I spoke to him about his congregation and congregants. He brought a file containing letters from congregants, a written summary of his experiences at the temple, and a number of bulletin articles from his congregation and others - all with reference to the topic of gender-language change in worship.

My questions for the interviews were never formally established. After the initial phone interviews, I discovered that if I asked the interviewee, "Tell me how your congregation is handling issues of gender-language for God during worship," the conversation flowed naturally. I rarely had to explain my question further. From this simple open-ended question, people revealed not only the facts about their community, but also their emotional reactions to the issue. In only one instance did I discover a rabbi who claimed his congregation was entirely uninterested in discussing metaphors for God.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this is a result of the random way I chose the congregations to question, or perhaps his congregation is statistically representative of the congregations that are not currently interested in this issue.

From the initial comments in my phone calls, I was able to narrow the issue of gender-language for God in worship to three main liturgical concerns. From my one open question, it has become evident that the most important issue facing Reform Jewish worship is the use of English metaphors for God.

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<sup>2</sup> Rabbi George Astrachan made this remark, but went on to say that some of his congregants have had contact with gender-language change when the congregation visited another temple. His description of the comments from those congregants will appear later in this chapter.

This finding was not surprising as, since 1990, the CCAR published several "interim" prayerbooks<sup>3</sup> with the only change from the *Gates of Prayer* being the replacement of masculine metaphors and anthropomorphisms for God with neutral, "gender-sensitive" imagery.

Other issues included adding the *imahot* (matriarchs) to the Hebrew text of the first benediction of the *Amidah*, and there was some discussion about the accuracy of the English translations. No other liturgical concerns were explored, simply because, when the interviewees were asked if they had other liturgical concerns, no one suggested any other issue.<sup>4</sup>

Having sifted out the issues in my original interviews, I decided to focus further interviews on the primary concern of gender-language for God. In the phone interviews and later, in the case studies, I inquired of rabbis and congregants about their experiences with different metaphors in worship; specifically, their comfort level with liturgical change, and who, if anyone, was the impetus for change. Certain patterns emerged in the responses I was given.

I have elected to mix the comments of the case-study congregations with the comments from the initial phone interviews to reflect a wider variety of responses. In the appendix to this thesis, the responses from the case-study participants will be found in their entirety.

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<sup>3</sup> Different books containing services for Shabbat (1992), for weekdays and for a house of mourning (1992), and for assemblies (1993) have been published in separate volumes and most recently in one, revised and expanded, volume.

<sup>4</sup> In one community it was suggested that the question of gender-language might not have become such a heated issue if it were not for an unfortunate personality clash of some congregants with the new rabbi.



## Experience with Liturgical Change

It is impossible to know how many Reform Jews have experienced some contact with gender-language change. It has been reported to me, however, that for some Jews, the experience may have come outside of their own congregation or apart from the worship practices of their rabbi. Some experienced gender-language change at a UAHC conference, or at another congregation while attending a friend's celebration.<sup>6</sup> This is to say that, while most Reform Jews probably know that gender-language is at issue for the Reform movement, they may not have experienced it at home.

It is impossible to obtain a list from the CCAR of congregations that have purchased the *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat*.<sup>6</sup> or of congregations that utilize their own gender-sensitive liturgy. Of the congregations interviewed, none reported using the interim *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* regularly. In fact, when I mentioned my search for congregations using *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat*, Rabbi Richard Address commented, "It will be a short thesis! I can't think of any congregations that have formally adopted the gender-sensitive prayerbook."<sup>7</sup> His comment reflects the true nature of congregations in the Reform Jewish community. Of the congregations contacted, five<sup>8</sup> have purchased *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* and all reported using it on a once-a-month or occasional basis. Rockdale Temple in Cincinnati, Ohio; Temple Beth Ami of Rockville,

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<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Astrachan takes his congregants on a trip to Steven S. Wise Free Synagogue in New York City each year. Robin Thomas and Louis Jacobs of Columbus, Ohio, chose to introduce the issue to their congregation after worshipping at a Hillel in Oklahoma.

<sup>7</sup> Rabbi Elliott Stevens reports that oftentimes a bookstore will purchase a number of prayerbooks and resell them to congregations. Thus it is unknown where exactly the books have been purchased and, with that, if they are in use or not.

<sup>8</sup> Telephone Interview, Rabbi Richard Address, Director, UAHC Pennsylvania Council, 24 November, 1993.

<sup>\*</sup> This number may have changed if congregations purchased the books during the past nine months.

Maryland; and Beth Tikvah in Columbus, Ohio are examples of communities that have purchased the prayerbooks and use them infrequently.

Rabbi Gary Huber of Congregation Beth Tikvah in Columbus, Ohio, attributes his congregation's occasional usage of the *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* to its limited number of service choices. "It has only two services and we tend to use Service Number One...Service Two doesn't go over as well."<sup>9</sup> They use the interim prayerbook once a month.

Cost is the most significant factor for those congregations who have not purchased the new book.<sup>10</sup> Cantor Sarah Sager commented that "congregations will not accept an interim prayerbook."<sup>11</sup> And with the number of interim books currently being sponsored by the CCAR, congregations feel that they can wait a matter of months and have different choices in the number of services offered and the kinds of occasions their prayerbook will serve.<sup>12</sup> Thus, most Reform congregations, since they have not bought the gender-sensitive prayerbooks, have chosen to take alternative routes, if they choose to change the language of worship at all.

### Comfort with Liturgical Change

The problem with gender-language change in the congregation is that no two congregations that currently change the liturgy seem to be using the same formula for the substitutions. Of those congregations that use *Gates of Prayer*

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<sup>9</sup> Telephone Interview, Rabbi Gary Huber, 27 October, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> Two of the five case-study congregations own the interim prayerbooks simple because they were donations from members of the community, not because the board or rabbi insisted they be purchased.

<sup>11</sup> Telephone Interview, Cantor Sarah Sager, 29 November, 1993.

<sup>12</sup> The CCAR, as noted above, has published four gender-sensitive volumes and one compilation book. It is rumored that they do not plan to publish any further liturgies until an entirely new prayerbook is completed.

regularly, some service leaders change the male words for God, for example changing "Father" to "Parent" as they read the service, while others have printed their own prayerbooks, not waiting for the CCAR to publish an appropriate liturgy.

In eight<sup>13</sup> of the congregations consulted, gender-language is changed. The rabbi or prayer leader changes the words of the prayer as he or she reads them in English.<sup>14</sup> At Temple Israel of Long Beach, California, Rabbi Lisa Hochberg-Miller reports that her senior rabbi has a set pattern for the changes. She says that he changes "Lord" to "The Eternal," "He" to "Adonai," and "Ruler" to "Ruling Spirit of the Universe." "And yet," she adds, "the biggest problem is still that sometimes the rabbi and the cantor each change to a different word."<sup>15</sup> This is the very reason that response to this change is mixed. Again and again the comment was repeated, "If the words of the reader are not the same as those in the prayerbook, it makes it very threatening and confusing to the individual."<sup>16</sup> This reaction to the changing of the liturgy as printed in *Gates of Prayer* is very common. Rabbi George Astrachan of Temple Sinai in Cranston, Rhode Island, even commented that he never makes changes in language at his own congregation. Once, however, on a Temple trip to New York City, his congregation joined the Steven S. Wise Free Synagogue for worship. "There they make the changes as they go along. Some of my congregants thought the rabbi kept making mistakes."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> This number may have changed over the past nine months. In at least one congregation, the issue of whether or not to change the language had gone to committee as of this writing.

<sup>14</sup> It was suggested that perhaps women rabbis were more open to changing metaphors than men, but I did not find this to be the case.

<sup>15</sup> Telephone Interview, Rabbi Lisa Hochberg-Miller, 30 November, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Personal Interview, Hank Koren, President, United Hebrew Congregation, Terre Haute, Indiana, 11 July, 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Telephone Interview, Rabbi George Astrachan, 8 December, 1993.

As discordant as it may be to hear the rabbi or the reader leading the community in new metaphors for God, some felt that the changes were slow to come. Rabbi Gary Huber does not change the language when his congregation uses the *Gates of Prayer*.<sup>18</sup> And yet, his congregants have been exploring gender-sensitive language options for some eight years. In May 1986, the Ritual Committee of Congregation Beth Tikvah in Columbus, Ohio, wrote a letter to Rabbi Alexander Schindler at the UAHC. It was their concern that the exclusive use of male metaphors for God limited their "view of God and our view of women." They wrote to ask the UAHC to "assume active leadership in bringing about change in this area." They suggested specific steps the UAHC could take to help their congregation and others like them:

- developing a list of recommended speakers on this topic
- developing written materials to raise congregants' awareness on this topic (including research on how pronoun use affects our thinking)
- developing alternative, non-sexist services for congregational use
- distributing the "Glossary of Substitute Terminology" to member congregations

The Committee even went so far as to suggest to Rabbi Schindler, "A future step, but one that can be planned for now, would be revision of the prayerbooks to soften the predominance of male pronouns and metaphors for God."<sup>19</sup>

Rabbi Schindler replied that he would send them a "Glossary for Substitute Terminology" (printed by the UAHC in 1976) and refer their concerns to the CCAR for reply. It would be another eight years before Congregation Beth Tikvah would begin to examine gender language again. In the meantime, other congregations had taken the lead in printing their own gender-sensitive

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<sup>18</sup> For many years Rabbi Huber has been offering a monthly mimeographed gender-neutral service and, in 1993, the congregation purchased the gender-sensitive *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat*. Currently, they are using the interim prayerbook at least once a month.

<sup>19</sup> Suggestions taken from the original letter dated 2 May, 1986.

liturgy.

There are no statistics on how many congregations have actually gone through the expense of printing their own prayerbook. Congregation Beth El of Sudbury, Massachusetts, made the decision to write their own prayerbook before they ever made the costly purchase of the *Gates of Prayer* prayerbook.

According to Nancy Gossels, one of the members of the original Ritual Committee, "The reason the congregation even considered printing their own prayerbook was that, in 1979, they kept running out of copies of the prayerbook."<sup>20</sup> Eight people formed a committee to decide what to do - whether to purchase a book or to create their own."<sup>21</sup> When it was decided that the community would publish their own prayerbook, Nancy Gossels and Joan Kaye co-chaired the committee which invited more than thirty congregants to donate contributions of "calligraphy, editorial skills, typing, original poetry, meditations, as well as translations of Hebrew prayers."<sup>22</sup>

Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, the long-time rabbi of Congregation Beth El, was not overly excited about the congregation's decision to write their own prayerbook. He was especially concerned about how it was to be constructed. He suggested that they spend a year studying an Orthodox prayerbook, the *De Sola Pool Siddur*, in order to learn more about liturgy and tradition. "They rejected that option and went to work on a new book."<sup>23</sup> Nancy Gossels recalled, "The Rabbi was uncomfortable with the writing of the prayerbook, but he said he'd neither support it or denounce it. He was neutral."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The congregation was then using a mimeographed service, according to Joan Kaye. Telephone interview, 27 October, 1994.

<sup>21</sup> Personal Interview, Nancy Gossels, December, 1993.

<sup>22</sup> Dan Cohn-Sherbok, "Varieties of Worship," *The Jewish Spectator*, Summer 1981, p.42.

<sup>23</sup> Personal Interview, Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, December, 1993.

<sup>24</sup> Personal Interview, Nancy Gossels, December, 1993.



As the committee set to work on the new prayerbook, "A member of the committee had (read) an article which talked about the word 'He' being idolatry. That idea had not been raised before and 'people thought she was crazy.' They had an idea to call God 'it' for practical reasons rather than theological."<sup>26</sup> The two co-chairs, Nancy Gossels and Joan Kaye, basically "re-edited" the book and no one ever said another word.

Gossels and Kaye chose to alternate He and She when referring to God.

"At first it was jarring and later it became unconscious."<sup>26</sup>

Sing unto God a new song/All the earth.  
Bless Him/ Proclaim His salvation/ Declare Her glory/  
And laud Her wondrous works/Among all the peoples.<sup>27</sup>

There were a few congregants who resigned over the prayerbook, but Gossels and Kaye had expected a more emotional response. Nancy Gossels appeared triumphant as she reflected, "I guess we don't realize the power of language - I guess many women did feel cut off. The book is now in its eighth printing and is in use all over the world. And this coming year, we will start work on our own High Holiday *Machzor*."<sup>28</sup>

The experience at Beth El has been duplicated in other congregations which have chosen to write their own prayerbooks. It seems that the prayerbooks take on a life beyond the borders of the congregations for which they are created. The Beth El prayerbook was revolutionary in its use of gender-language for God. Nancy Gossels commented that the committee's main goal was to create a prayerbook reflective of an I-Thou relationship between the worshiper and God, "but the gender-language issues got played

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<sup>25</sup> Personal Interview, Nancy Gossels, December, 1993.

<sup>26</sup> Personal Interview, Nancy Gossels, December, 1993.

<sup>27</sup> *Vetaher Libenu*. Prayerbook of Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley, (Sudbury, Massachusetts, 1980), p 23.

<sup>28</sup> Personal Interview, Nancy Gossels, December, 1993.



up more."<sup>29</sup>

In changing the language, there were many arguments when discussing the alternating use of "He" and "She," but when it came to the word "Lord," the committee elected to substitute the word "Adonai," usually translated as "Lord." Joan Kaye remarked that if they were to write the book again she would want to change the word "Adonai" in the English to something else, to an English word rather than maintaining the Hebrew.<sup>30</sup> This problem is reflective of a common theme, evident in all Reform prayerbook change. Be it in congregations that have purchased the interim prayerbooks, those where the the language is changed as the leader reads, or even in those which wrote their own liturgy, when it comes to translating "Adonai" as something other than "Lord," conflict arises.<sup>31</sup> The word "Lord," in the English translation, carries unusual weight and linkage to tradition. It was suggested on more than one occasion that the English word "Lord" is symbolically equivalent to the Hebrew liturgy itself, which most believe consists of the exact same prayers recited by generations of Jews.

"For those of us who neither speak nor understand Hebrew, these time-honored traditional English words are as important to us as Hebrew is to others. As the Hebrew words have a poetry of language to them, so do the English words to individuals like myself."<sup>32</sup> The linguistic traditions referred to here originated in Anglican Christianity, but have passed into American religious culture.

"Suddenly, and without warning we are now asked to substitute the word 'Eternal' instead of the word 'Lord.' Just because two young rabbis enter (newly

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<sup>29</sup> Personal Interview, Nancy Gossels, December, 1993.

<sup>30</sup> Telephone Interview, Joan Kaye, 27 October, 1994.

<sup>31</sup> Maintaining the word "Adonai" in the English translation prevented the Beth El congregation from experiencing a great deal of conflict on the subject.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Weiss in a letter to Rabbi Jeffrey Stiffman, Saint Louis, Missouri. 29 September, 1993.

hired assistants) from Cincinnati, I strongly question whether we should change over 3,000 years of Jewish tradition."<sup>33</sup>

Hank Koren, the president of United Hebrew Congregation shares this sentiment: "How do you say the '*Sh'ma*' without using the word 'Lord'? 'Lord' is a masculine term. It's not 'Lady' it's 'Lord'... I think that the older members will go along with certain adaptations, but they feel very threatened by this one change because everything they have been brought up to say or believe has now been thrown away."<sup>34</sup>

Carol Lloyd in Columbus, Ohio, also agrees. "The term 'gender-sensitive' offends me. I am a woman and I am quite secure in that. I am not here to rewrite history. We all have our own idea of what God looks like. As a convert, I feel very secure and comfortable with *Gates of Prayer* - it embraces me." She was at the first service at which the interim gender-sensitive *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* was introduced. "I totally lack tact. 'I am the Lord your God' is a very profound statement. 'Eternal One' just doesn't cut it."<sup>35</sup>

Sam Schnitzer in Terre Haute, Indiana, summed up the entire discussion about his feelings when the word "Lord" is changed by commenting, "The whole thing can get to be a big pain in the neck. I am just not sure the whole world needs a feminist perspective."<sup>36</sup>

Certainly there are others who appreciate the change from the word "Lord." Dawn Heyman, the Ritual Committee Past-Chair, said,

I personally don't like the idea of "Lord" in the prayers. The word "Lord" is very off-putting. It tells me to be a child or a subservient individual - it doesn't call to me or refer to a helping God. Something that is a "*Y'did Nefesh*" - a "Friend to my spirit" very much helps me to behave as an adult in a religious sense. This has

<sup>33</sup> Richard Blath, M.D., in a letter to Rabbi Jeffrey Stiffman of Saint Louis, Missouri. 27 September, 1993.

<sup>34</sup> Personal Interview, Hank Koren, 11 July, 1993.

<sup>35</sup> Personal Interview, Carol Lloyd, 19 November, 1993.

<sup>36</sup> Personal Interview, Sam Schnitzer, 11 July, 1994.

become, as I am getting older, a more important issue to me. All of the metaphors speaking about God do not even begin to get close to God, but we need more of them rather than less of them.<sup>37</sup>

Dawn Heyman's comment was one of few I heard from a congregant supporting the change from the word "Lord" to some more neutral metaphor. Rabbi Steven Pinsky, Director of the UAHC Midwest Council, commented that, when he served a congregation in Minneapolis, he chose to change the word 'Lord', but "now I might leave it in because it is too upsetting to congregants to change it."<sup>38</sup>

This concern is perhaps the most significant finding from the interviews. Congregants are willing to change the word "He" and "King" when referring to God, but, regarding the word "Lord," there is little compromise.

Rabbi Jeffrey Stiffman of Congregation Shaare Emeth in Saint Louis, Missouri, maintained a file of congregational comments and concerns throughout the gradual changes his community made towards the use of gender-sensitive language. In 1981, he hired the first woman assistant in a congregation in Missouri. She, and the other assistant, refrained from using masculine names for God. Since some people felt uncomfortable with the changes, Rabbi Stiffman approached the issue through the Temple bulletin and discussions.

The change that took place at that time was limited in one respect. "Although we tried to avoid the use of many of the masculine terms, the term 'Lord' seemed to remain the same. Sometimes we changed it and sometimes we did not. Our rationale was that 'Lord' is used more as a term for the Divine and less for royalty - therefore it no longer really has much of a male

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<sup>37</sup> Personal Interview, Dawn Heyman, 19 November, 1993.

<sup>38</sup> Telephone Interview, Rabbi Steven Pinsky, 11 November, 1993.

connotation."<sup>39</sup>

It was not until 1993, when Rabbi Stiffman hired two women assistants, that the change from "Lord" was attempted.

Before the holidays, both (assistant rabbis) mentioned to me that they were uncomfortable with using "Lord." They asked why we couldn't be consistent. I said, "OK, let's go with using 'Eternal.'" My thought was that, since we had been through the discussion twelve years before, we could now complete the process. This was a mistake on my part. Changing "Lord" meant changing the "*Sh'ma*" and other basic prayers. It also was a mistake introducing this without announcement at the *Yamim Noraim* - too many twice-a-year people there. I should have processed it first.

Complaints came in from some twenty congregants by mail, many more by phone and word of mouth.<sup>40</sup>

As of October, 1994, Rabbi Stiffman has made a compromise with his community. All masculine references to God will be changed, except for the word "Lord." Once a month, a Xeroxed gender-sensitive service will be used. Explanation from one of the rabbis will introduce the service. And finally, the congregation will await the publication of the CCAR-sponsored final edition of a gender-sensitive prayerbook.<sup>41</sup>

Rabbi Stiffman commented in a personal interview,<sup>42</sup> that if he had to make the change from the word "Lord" again, he would proceed differently. He said that they made the changes correctly in 1981. If he could re-do the way changes were made in 1993, he would put an article in the bulletin, address committees, speak to the board, and introduce each service. Rabbi Stiffman is aware of his role as the impetus for prayerbook change.

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<sup>39</sup> Summary written by Rabbi Stiffman, 19 October, 1994.

<sup>40</sup> Summary written by Rabbi Stiffman, 19 October, 1994.

<sup>41</sup> Summary written by Rabbi Stiffman, 19 October, 1994.

<sup>42</sup> Personal Interview, Rabbi Jeff Stiffman, 20 October, 1994.

## Impetus for Change

Who determines when is the proper time for a change to be made? The CCAR will determine the time for all congregations to consider changing to gender-sensitive liturgy simply by publishing a Reform movement-sponsored prayerbook. But until the prayerbook is published, the changes that congregations are currently experiencing come directly from the people in these local communities.

Gender language will be changed by the person or persons who feel that it is important that their community not refer to God in only masculine metaphors. The impetus for change can come from either clergy or congregants, but in the final analysis the rabbi holds the power and responsibility. It is almost entirely up to the rabbi as to when and how any changes might be approached. Even in the congregations that are the most lay-driven, the rabbi's tacit approval opens the possibility of liturgical reform.<sup>43</sup>

Numerous times in the course of interviews, I heard that gender-language change must come from the rabbis. Congregants said this about their rabbis, rabbis said it about themselves, and even some rabbis said this about other rabbis. Unfortunately, the sources of last these comments can not be identified because many such remarks came from assistant rabbis with regard to their senior colleagues. "The rabbis (at this congregation) are not liturgically motivated" or "It (gender-language change) is not in the senior's agenda" were a few of the comments.

The voice of the rabbi reflects the voice of the congregant. Congregants

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<sup>43</sup> Congregation Beth El of Sudbury is an example of a place where the rabbi could have vetoed his community's drive to write their own prayerbook. Instead, Rabbi Kushner made a suggestion and, when the Ritual Committee turned it down, he left all the decisions to the Committee.



who were clamoring for changes, such as in Sudbury, Massachusetts,<sup>44</sup> or Columbus, Ohio, felt the need for their rabbis' support in order to make the changes. In Columbus, Ohio, at Congregation Beth Tikvah, Rabbi Gary Huber was not interested in providing his congregants with gender-sensitive liturgy. It was a couple in the community who purchased *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* as a gift for the congregation. One of those who gave the gift remarked, "The Rabbi's views of God are very traditional. He wasn't comfortable with it (the interim prayerbook), but he now thinks it is worth at least this step (to use the prayerbook on a once-a-month basis)."<sup>45</sup> Were Rabbi Huber more opposed to the changes, or less self-assured, he could have blocked the gift and been unwilling to use the interim book.

Rabbi George Astrachan of Cranston, Rhode Island, commented, "When (Rabbi) Paul Menitoff was the Scholar-in-Residence, he addressed the issue of women and the prayerbook. Some congregants weren't even aware the issue existed."<sup>46</sup> Congregants who are not aware of the issue are not being presented with liturgical options by their service leader. Or perhaps the rabbi is not supporting the changes. For example, Rabbi Sandra Katz met opposition to using the *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* in her congregation, even though the congregation owns enough copies for everyone. She commented that her predecessor, "used it a few times, but he didn't like it. He panned it and the congregation followed suit."<sup>47</sup>

The conclusions are not universal, but it appears that the issue is not whether more congregants - women or men - are leading the changes, but

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<sup>44</sup> See description of congregational decision to create a prayerbook, pages 73-76 of this thesis.

<sup>45</sup> Personal Interview, Robin Thomas, 19 November, 1993.

<sup>46</sup> Telephone Interview, Rabbi George Astrachan, 8 December, 1993.

<sup>47</sup> Personal Interview, Rabbi Sandra Katz, 11 July, 1994.



rather that changes must be led or at least encouraged by the rabbis. And it is not clear if the changes are more often supported by men or women rabbis. Rabbi Chaim Stern, editor of the *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* remarked, "If you took an honest vote of the CCAR membership, I predict that you would have a 50/50 split as to which rabbis support gender-sensitive language. If you took a vote of all Reform Jews, the majority would prefer masculine words like 'Lord.'"<sup>48</sup> Liturgical change can only take place when the rabbi supports it, or when a new prayerbook is published by the CCAR.

### General Conclusions

Rabbi Mark Goldman of Rockdale Temple in Cincinnati, Ohio, considers his temple to be a "mainstream"<sup>49</sup> Reform congregation. Indeed, his congregation and their experiences exemplify the findings in this thesis.

1) Experience with Liturgical Change - Rockdale is one of the two case-study congregations that chooses to use the old Reform prayerbook, the *Union Prayer Book*. Their overwhelming use of the *Union Prayer Book* on more than an occasional basis characterizes the congregation as significantly different from "mainstream" Reform;<sup>50</sup> however regarding the use of gender-sensitive language and the congregants' exposure to it, Rockdale Temple is very much the norm. Rabbi Goldman changes the language as he reads in the *Gates of*

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<sup>48</sup> Telephone Interview, Rabbi Chaim Stern, 13 October, 1994.

<sup>49</sup> Personal interview, Rabbi Mark Goldman, 14 October, 1994.

<sup>50</sup> I believe that few Reform congregations use the *Union Prayer Book* regularly. However, two of the five congregations I interviewed in person use the *Union Prayer Book* more than once a month.

Prayer<sup>51</sup> and his congregation owns, but does not often use, the interim gender-sensitive *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat*.

We use them from time to time and when we go on our board retreat...we've used it and then I teach the board. Rather than doing a formal service we use that and then they get a sense of it.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, the congregants at Rockdale Temple are having a similar exposure to gender-sensitive language as those at other congregations around the country. In some form they are aware of the changes, but the changes are not happening at their congregation.

2) Comfort with Liturgical Change - Rabbi Goldman's use of the *Union Prayer Book* illustrates the discomfort congregants have with change. His use of the *Union Prayer Book* is not typical of many Reform congregations, but the issues determining his decision to use the *Union Prayer Book* are the same as in those congregations that are unwilling to make a leap into worship language that is entirely gender-sensitive. The issues are twofold: 1) people find it uncomfortable to hear words other than those printed on the page, and 2) congregants tend to believe and feel that the words of the prayerbook are very old and very traditional.

I was in Long Island for fourteen years and we used principally *Sharey Tefilah*, *Gates of Prayer*. Even there I didn't like the masculinity and I changed it. My oldtimers would say, "You are not reading it right" because that generation was committed to "If it is printed in the prayerbook, it is Torah miSinai - you don't change it!"<sup>53</sup>

In addition, the most difficult change for congregants is not the blatantly

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<sup>51</sup> Personal interview, Rabbi Mark Goldman, 14 October, 1994. "Now, habitually, while using the old book, I will still do what I did as an assistant rabbi at Emanuel (Temple Emanuel in New York City). I will switch what is patently a masculine statement, A) because I feel that that is not what is required today in terms of meaning; B) I shy away from some of the anthropomorphisms. I don't like the anthropomorphisms."

<sup>52</sup> Personal interview, Rabbi Mark Goldman, 14 October, 1994.

<sup>53</sup> Personal interview, Rabbi Mark Goldman, 14 October, 1994.

masculine epithets like "King" or "Father"<sup>54</sup>, but the single title "Lord". "Lord" is a word that is ubiquitous in the English translation of liturgy and in basic, hallowed prayer formulas such as the "*Sh'ma*"<sup>55</sup> and the standard benedictory formula "*Baruch ata Adonai*."<sup>56</sup> These are the most primal and earliest learned Jewish liturgical words that people know. *Avinu Malkenu*,<sup>57</sup> recited on the High Holy Days, is similarly primal.

3) Impetus for Change. At Rockdale Temple, like the other congregations consulted, the impetus for change is predominantly under the control of the senior rabbi. Although I did not talk to his assistant about this issue, it is evident that Rabbi Goldman brought his experiences from his previous pulpits, adapted that knowledge to Rockdale Temple, and does what he thinks makes the congregants there feel the most comfortable. Every rabbi wants his or her congregants to feel comfortable. Whether the rabbi is changing gender-language or not, the rabbi wants support and positive feedback from the majority of congregants. Some criticism will always occur, but a rabbi must feel that he or she is acting in accord with the desires of the congregants in order to have a successful rabbinate and continued employment. This is most evident when it comes to an issue as heated and emotionally charged as gender-language change in liturgy.

She said, "Are you changing God into a neutral-person again tonight?" Next to her was a friend of hers, and she said, "Mark, please don't change the words tonight". So to Danny Rabishaw's (the Assistant Rabbi) consternation and amusement, when we read the service we read just what the publisher printed in the old book (the *Union Prayer Book*). They were in orgasmic delight. After the

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<sup>54</sup> Except as Rabbi Jonathan Stein points out, when it comes to *Avinu Malkenu*, even the most "ardent supporters of the language change suddenly backed down." Telephone Interview, 24 October, 1994.

<sup>55</sup> "Hear, O Israel: the Lord is your God, The Lord is One."

<sup>56</sup> "Blessed is the Lord."

<sup>57</sup> "Our Father, our King."

service, hugs and kisses like I had given them their favorite ice cream."<sup>68</sup>

Across the nation, in congregations that are changing the language, those that are not, and even in those that choose to write their own liturgy, it is evident that, when it comes to gender-language for God in worship, the rabbi will make the final decision. He or she may act on the suggestions of congregants, boards, or committees, but in the end, as renowned liturgical scholar, Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman said, "It all depends on the strength of the rabbi."<sup>69</sup>

The process of changing to a new Reform movement prayerbook will be very difficult. And yet, having a prayerbook sponsored by the CCAR will make a difference in the congregation's ability and motivation to make a change to gender-neutral language; partly because the words will be printed and not randomly changed, often sounding disjointed, but also because the rabbis will finally have the sanctioned backing to make the changes. Whether rabbis agree with the changes or not, they will find themselves in a position to educate their congregants and to offer two service choices, like Rabbi Goldman does - not between the "old prayerbook" and *Gates of Prayer*, but between gender-neutral and gendered metaphors for God.

In response to one man who insisted on yelling out gender-language changes during Shabbat services, Rabbi Jonathan Stein at Congregation Beth Israel wrote a bulletin article reflecting his opinion and his decision to refrain from changing any words in the *Gates of Prayer* at this time.

The more difficult issue we face is what to do about our liturgy, that is, the written services we currently use from *Gates of Prayer* and *Gates of Repentance*. Until the movement produces new prayerbooks (still a few years away), I am faced with four choices: 1) read the prayers the way they were written, masculine-God language and all, 2) change the written word from masculine to gender-neutral each time we find it in the *siddur/machzor*, or 3) produce our own gender-neutral worship services or 4) purchase one of the existing gender-neutral prayerbooks,

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<sup>68</sup> Personal Interview, Rabbi Mark Goldman, 14 October, 1994.

<sup>69</sup> Telephone Interview, Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, 3 December, 1993.

either the newly revised *Gates of Prayer*, or one produced privately or outside the Reform movement.

Many Reform congregations have been changing the written word for some time. I myself find that exercise distracting. It is hard for me to concentrate on making the correct changes in reference to God and also give my attention to the deeper meaning of the prayers. Financial and staffing considerations will not permit us to produce our own liturgy or purchase any other *siddurim* at this time. Therefore it will be my style to read the prayers the way they are written, masculine language and all. Admittedly this is not my first choice, but it is the most practical one until that day when a new, creative, gender-neutral prayerbook is produced by the Central Conference of American Rabbis or by us. May that day come soon.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Rabbi Jonathan Stein, "Tidings", the Bulletin of Congregation Beth Israel of San Diego, California, Volume 109, number 2, October, 1994. In a telephone interview on October 24, 1994, Rabbi Stein reported that since his article was printed, he has had numerous angry congregants approach him. One man suggested that the issue be placed on the agenda of the Ritual Committee. That committee met in the middle of October and discovered that "the problems of implementation are complex. They are committed to the principle, so the question is one of strategy." What will happen with regard to gender-language in worship at Congregation Beth Israel remains to be seen. Rabbi Stein would prefer, if the changes are going to be made, that they spend six to nine months creating their own new liturgy, rather than spending two to five years making the transition into changing the words as they are read. Overall, Rabbi Stein contends, he was not disappointed with the response to his article. In fact he will be glad to change the language if that is what the congregation desires, for he, too, is committed to the idea of gender-neutral language. Nevertheless, he is glad the issue was introduced. "The bulletin article generated good discussion here at Beth Israel."



## Chapter Four

### Conclusions - Approach to the Future

"The past is for wisdom,  
the present for action, but joy is for the future."  
(Benjamin Disraeli, *Alroy*, 1833)

First Lady Hillary Clinton was recently asked the following question in an interview:

The United Methodist Church is very strong on inclusive language for God as both He and She. Are you?

She responded:

I'm sort of agnostic when it comes to inclusive language. I have always thought that language was so inadequate to express the mystery and power of God. I mean, use He, use She - none of us are capable of really describing who God is.<sup>1</sup>

None of us may be capable of describing who God is or what God looks like, but it has become the task of temple and church alike to do just that. Congregants of all faiths are attempting to redefine God in universal language, in gender-neutral terms, in metaphors to which a person of either gender can equally relate.

Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to describe the task of this generation's theologians and liturgists. Many religious groups, men and women, are struggling with metaphors for God, but it is the Jewish Reform movement that is the focus of this study. Reform rabbis and laity are combining efforts to create a new prayerbook for the entire movement of Reform Jews, a liturgy that will speak the words not only of an ancient people, but also of their modern descendants.

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth L. Woodward, "Interview: 'I Believe in Prayer'", *Newsweek*, 31 October, 1994, p. 25.



The American Reform movement has changed prayerbooks three<sup>2</sup> times since its first publication of the *Union Prayer Book* a century ago (1895). The prayerbook has adapted to the hopes and dreams of a modern Jewish people living in a land of freedom. Reform Jewish liturgy evolved to reflect the changing experiences of the Jewish people in America, and today, the process of evolution continues.

Since the late 1960's, feminism has planted itself firmly in the mindset of the modern American Jew. Feminist theology begs for a reevaluation of ancient texts and demands that we reexamine the role of women in both scripture and ritual. The prayerbook, feminism cries, must now reflect the theological insights of the twentieth century. No longer is it appropriate to pray to the image of a male God. It is becoming apparent that not all Jews relate to a single image of God, and, for some, any gender-specific image of God is tantamount to idolatry.

The tension lies between the ever-changing image of God and the constant pull of Jewish tradition. Is a gender-neutral God the same God of the Torah? Is a gender-neutral God the God of the Reform Jew's youth? For many older liberal Jews, God-language is simply a hallowed convention - whatever image of the Deity that language may invoke. For these Jews, the words of the prayerbook are "tradition" and they may not reflect on or even experience the underlying metaphors as gender-loaded. Many younger Jews are willing to part with the ancient language for God, feeling that the metaphors cannot be understood except in their most literal sense. They prefer to imagine God as neither male or female, but either or both. It is the congregational rabbi who must decide how a certain congregation will pray, and what image of God will be embedded in the language with which those prayers will be uttered. This is

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<sup>2</sup> Two revisions of the *Union Prayer Book* and then the publication of the *Gates of Prayer*.

no easy task for a rabbi. Even the most politically savvy rabbi can find his or her congregation wracked with conflict over the image of God in a worship service.

It is the task of the Central Conference of American Rabbis to stand as a support for the rabbi in a congregation in conflict. It is the duty of the CCAR to write a new prayerbook for Reform congregations to bridge the gap between the classical Reform Jews who want to preserve conventional language and the "progressive" Jews who are ready to define God in their own terms. A new prayerbook will address the needs of many rabbis. Reform Rabbis will no longer have to decide if they will be changing metaphors for God as they lead the service in *Gates of Prayer*. They will not have to decide whether to undergo the expense of purchasing the interim *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat*, a gender-neutral, but liturgically limited prayerbook. They will not have to decide whether or not to allow the congregation to print their own liturgy instead of using the CCAR-sponsored liturgy. After the new prayerbook is published, the decision of the rabbi will then be whether or not to purchase the new prayerbook and how that prayerbook will be used. These tasks will prove to be substantially easier for a rabbi and congregation, as the Reform movement will be actively guiding communities into the twenty-first century.

This thesis has followed the stages of planned organizational change as defined by Gordon Lippitt. It is important to have a model for change whenever a major innovation is proposed. Using Lippitt's formula for organizational change as a guide, a specific path emerges that the CCAR can follow when preparing to introduce a new prayerbook to the national community of Reform Jews. According to Lippitt's theory, the CCAR must set goals for itself to track the change it will be making, the progress, and the success.

Before publishing a new prayerbook, the CCAR should first understand

the history of the community they are creating the liturgy for, the social and cultural changes that have led to the need for a new liturgy, and diagnose the problem facing the next generation of Reform Jewish worshipers. As the change agent, the CCAR's motivation and resources to conduct such a sweeping change must be examined. Finally there must be an assessment of the client, the congregations' motivation and capacity for change. This thesis has explored in depth these critical phases of managing organizational change and innovation.

After the new prayerbook is written, Lippitt's model of stages for planned change can help the CCAR to effectively manage the prayerbook change among congregations. After the change has been set in motion, Lippitt suggests:

- 1) Selecting progressive change objectives
- 2) Choosing a role for the change agent
- 3) Creating a plan for maintaining changes
- 4) Developing a method for terminating the helping relationship<sup>3</sup>

By diagnosing and managing an organizational change, like a prayerbook change, the transition will be not only more effective, but more easily obtained. Imagining the final stages of change to a new prayerbook raises many questions. Before any prayerbook change is attempted, the following issues should be examined and answers provided whenever possible. I have included in the analysis my own opinions and suggestions for managing this change.

1) Selecting progressive change objectives - The CCAR must have a plan for introducing the new text. I do not know if the CCAR expects all UAHC-affiliated congregations to purchase the new prayerbook, but it is evident that the CCAR

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<sup>3</sup> Lippitt, Langseth, and Mossop, Implementing Organizational Change, p.31-34.

expects this prayerbook to be an important source of revenue.<sup>4</sup>

The research that is currently being conducted in the name of the Lilly Grant, specifically the involvement of both clergy and laity in the development of the new prayerbook, will help to create a widely acceptable text. Presumably, this research will also help to create a climate of opinion in the congregations that is favorable to the acceptance of that text. However, without a guided transition process on the congregational level, a new prayerbook will meet tremendous resistance. It is bound to meet resistance no matter how it is introduced, but educating congregations and congregants about the reasons and impetus for such a change can be greatly beneficial. It is for this purpose that the CCAR should choose a specific role for itself as change agent.

2) Choosing a role for the change agent - What is the role of the UAHC and CCAR in guiding congregations through the transition into a new prayerbook? David Binkovitz, a congregant at Congregation Beth Tikvah in Columbus, Ohio, suggests:

The Union needs to assist the rabbis almost like an instruction manual that goes with the new book, "So you are about to get a new prayerbook." It should include what the rabbi needs to do and how the rabbi should inform the congregation. We discovered when we introduced the gender-sensitive *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* that before the first service there was a need to educate.<sup>5</sup>

As the agent for this change, the CCAR can preside over the prayerbook change through many channels. It has been suggested by many congregants and rabbis that the CCAR do more than simply publish a new prayerbook. The CCAR can help congregations adapt to the new books in four ways: 1) A manual can be included with every prayerbook order. This booklet would explain why changes were made in the new prayerbook. Perhaps this guide

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter Three, p. 63-84.

<sup>5</sup> Personal Interview, David Binkovitz, Columbus, Ohio, 19 November, 1993.

could include topics for congregational forums on theology and worship. It could include columns of comparative liturgy for study courses, and could include a handout for the first few services when the new prayerbook will be used. 2) Speakers should be available at minimal cost for any congregation desiring more information on prayerbook change. The speakers could be members of the prayerbook editorial staff, the CCAR Liturgy Committee, feminist theologians, liturgists, and experts in managing organizational innovations. 3) A guide for temple bulletin articles could be provided to rabbis to help them introduce the new prayerbook to their congregations. 4) Conferences or sessions at existing conferences should be held. It is in this last forum, by way of conferences, that the new prayerbook is being developed, that sample liturgies are being tested, and it is here that further guidance should be given to rabbis and congregations to facilitate the prayerbook's introduction.

These suggestions are by no means foolproof ways to ease the transition to a new prayerbook. There will always be people who prefer the "old way" and are resistant to change. But with education and information, these people, along with all their fellow congregants, will understand the reasons for the changes and in this way make an informed choice as to their preference.

3) Create a plan for maintaining changes - This new prayerbook should be designed to meet the needs of Reform Jewish worshipers for many years. In order to help maintain that longevity, the CCAR should have a plan for maintaining the fluidity of the prayerbook. Perhaps blank pages should be left at the end of the prayerbook for each congregation to include their own prayers and hopes. A binder edition of the prayerbook might allow changes to be made simply, and creativity in worship to be easily explored at little additional cost.



There are many ways that the prayerbook can be made to ensure years of usage in individual congregations. The CCAR Liturgy Committee is currently exploring all options.

No matter what route the CCAR chooses to physically prepare this prayerbook for a long life, the CCAR and UAHC should always have a phone line open to hear the comments, praise, and complaints from the congregations. In this way, the Reform movement will be prepared to address the lasting power of the new prayerbook because the publishers will always be informed about the theological and spiritual needs of the American Reform Jewish community. This is what Lippitt means by maintaining change. Feedback should be available to the CCAR and UAHC in order for a support system to be successfully established. "Everyone needs support in change, and this usually can be provided if the person desiring change is assured that experimentation in new directions is useful and desirable."<sup>6</sup>

4) Developing a method for terminating the helping relationship - The CCAR may choose not to terminate the helping relationship. There could be a permanently open mode for communication between the pulpits and the Reform movement about liturgical concerns. The CCAR could continually publish liturgical supplements, educational materials on liturgy, hold programs, provide speakers, and maintain oral communication with congregations. If the CCAR feels that it is necessary to allow the individual congregations to struggle with the next stage of liturgical development on their own, a termination must occur immediately after the prayerbook sales goals have been met, because, "if the client comes to rely heavily on the change agent for support and guidance, the

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<sup>6</sup> Lippitt, Langseth, and Mossop, p.33.

termination is apt to be an awkward and painful affair."<sup>7</sup>

I cannot predict how the CCAR will choose to manage this fundamental change in the theology and liturgy of the American Reform Jewish community. I strongly believe that this change to a new prayerbook must be managed. Whether the CCAR chooses to follow Lippitt, or another sociologist's format for managing change, I only hope that they choose to follow a specific plan, including a diagnosis of the reasons for the change and the development of a support system following the prayerbook's introduction.

Steven Lowenstein has been surveying the feelings of rabbinical students on this subject for his rabbinic thesis towards ordination. He asked 116<sup>8</sup> rabbinical students, currently studying in New York City, Los Angeles, and Cincinnati, whether or not they choose to change the gender-language for God as they read the prayerbook. Sixty-two percent of current HUC rabbinical students responding always change the language of the prayerbook to make it gender-neutral. Fifty-four percent of the responding males and sixty-nine percent of the responding females always change the metaphors for God. Nineteen percent of those responding never deviate from the written words in the *Gates of Prayer*. It is clear that the students, male and female, are overwhelmingly choosing to change the language for God to neutral or gender-sensitive metaphors.

These students are the next generation of rabbis. The CCAR is preparing to meet the needs of this next generation and the communities they will serve. There is now little doubt that it is time to change the prayerbook. The CCAR will plan and direct the change; it is the job of the rabbis to prepare themselves and

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<sup>7</sup> Lippitt, Langseth, and Mossop, p.34.

<sup>8</sup> He sent out 182 surveys, 116 replied.

their communities for a new prayerbook and a new theology. "God is going to change."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Naomi Goldenberger, Changing of the Gods (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), p.3.

## Appendix A

### Lay Involvement in Liturgical Change and Renewal

A Project of the Central Conference of American Rabbis

The Lilly Endowment

The Cummings Foundation

April 29, 1994

Dear Rabbi and Congregation President:

We would like to invite you to participate in an historic inquiry into the worship experiences of Reform Jews. We are engaged in a two-year project to explore lay involvement in liturgical change and renewal in Reform congregations throughout the United States. The Central Conference of American Rabbis sponsors this project. Its funding comes from the Lilly Endowment and the Cummings Foundation. We are writing to every member congregation of the Union of Hebrew Congregations in North America through their rabbis and presidents, to enlist as much participation in this project as possible.

We are attempting to describe the worship experiences of Reform Jews at this moment in time. We want to "take a snapshot" of contemporary worship in all of its variety. We want to hear about worship experience from the broadest range of congregants. We are requesting your help in organizing a small group of your congregants to form a team that will explore their worship experiences together and tell us what they have learned.

If your congregation wishes to participate, we ask that you select one of two periods of time for a self-study of the worship experiences of congregants during the largest weekly service. Those periods are 1) between now and June 30, or 2) between September 30 and November 11. Which period you choose will depend on your congregation's worship schedule, vacation schedule, and special events. We are looking for a period of weeks in which the worship services will follow a similar format.

We ask that the members of this self-study team worship with the congregation for three weeks in a row during the period you have chosen. We have enclosed a description of the procedures the self-study team should follow. We are asking that the team include between eight and twelve congregants and that they represent the diversity of the entire congregation, including those who ordinarily do not come to weekly services. The team should begin meeting together immediately after completing the three services. At the meeting(s) they discuss their worship experiences through diaries they have written each week. We also enclose a preliminary description of the diary procedures. The final form of the diary format is still being developed. It will be sent to those congregations who enroll in the study. This sharing of worship experiences leads to a team report in which they try to describe what it is like for them to worship during these services. Deadlines for the report for the first period are August 1, and for the second period December 12.

We know that the first period is very short notice, but we are trying to take a snapshot of what congregants actually experience now. We have included the second period to insure that all congregations wishing to participate may do so. We are hoping that as many congregations as possible will try to use the first period. Which period you choose is entirely up to you. We want to learn about services that are typical of the congregational practice and occurring at approximately the same time throughout North America. If you feel that you cannot constitute a self-study team in time, then we encourage you to select the second period. If however, you can select the team and complete the self-study now, we would be most grateful. Analysis of reports from the initial period will give us more time to prepare the educational conferences and activities for the second year of the project.

Most congregations complete their role in project when we receive their final reports. We will select a very small number of congregations for further study, including a visit by the research consultant. Those congregations who indicate that they are planning to use the self-study for the development of their worship will receive a follow-up questionnaire.

This letter is being sent to the rabbi and president of each congregation simultaneously. Collaboration between clergy and laity has informed every aspect of this project. We want both to be involved in this project. We ask each of you to lend the authority of your position in the community to this project. The future of the Reform movement depends on increasing the number of members committed to supporting our congregations. Providing worship experiences that are meaningful to the broadest range of congregants can be an important part of building that commitment. We ask you to collaborate in selecting the team, in organizing the meeting(s) of the self-study team, and in insuring the completion of the report.

The rabbi's role is crucial in the success of the self-study. It begins with the selection of the self-study team members, in consultation with the president of the congregation. At an orientation meeting for the team, the rabbi should make certain that everyone understands the worship diaries. This is also an opportunity to answer any questions congregants may have about worship practices. This should not become a short seminar in liturgy. It is important that the team members not need any more knowledge of liturgy than they currently have to participate in the study. The rabbi serves as the contact between the researcher and the self-study team. The rabbi handles the worship diaries in confidence, provides the photocopies for the group discussion, and sends the originals on to the researchers. Later, the rabbi also sends the final report and supporting documents. We have enclosed a short survey for the rabbi to fill out to help us understand the history of the congregation, its worship, and its most important community features. Sending back this survey will enroll the congregation in the study.

The president's role is also crucial for success of the self-study. The president works with the rabbi to insure that the self-study team represents a broad cross-section of the community. The president can preside over its meetings. After the deliberations are completed, the president is in an important position to help move the discussion of liturgy



from the self-study team to the congregation as a whole. We have enclosed a short survey for the president to fill out to help us understand the history of the congregation, its worship, and its most important community features. This survey should be filled out independently from the rabbi's survey. Sending back this survey will enroll the congregation in the study.

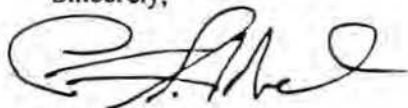
The other members of the professional staff should not participate in this stage of the self-study. There will be plenty of opportunity after the self-study team writes its report for the participation of the cantor and religious educators. The discussions and conclusions of the self-study team should belong to ordinary congregants.

We will invite those congregations who send the final report to us to a special conference to learn the results of nation-wide study, and to begin the process of liturgical renewal in our movement. The date of the conference is not yet set.

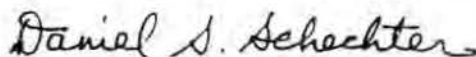
Enclosed please find a description of the self-study procedures and a preliminary description of the worship diary. These will help you understand exactly what your participating congregants must do. These materials go into much more detail than this letter and will answer most of your questions. Worship is complex. To adequately describe it requires effort. We have tried to make the procedures for this study as simple as possible. Nevertheless the team participants will find keeping the diaries and discussing them afterwards to be both difficult and highly rewarding.

Let us know immediately if you agree to act as a co-facilitator of this project by filling in and sending back the enclosed fact sheet to the research consultant, Professor Robert Rotenberg. We must know of your intention to participate in the study and the period of time that is best for you before you begin. When you have filled out the enrollment and information sheet, you should contact Professor Rotenberg in writing at the address or fax numbers below, **as soon as possible**. His address is 2311 W. Greenleaf Ave, Chicago, IL 60645. His fax number is 312/362-5811 (remember to fax all sides of the enrollment sheet). He will then send you multiple copies of the self-study procedures and worship diary instructions that you can distribute to the team, and a very brief questionnaire concerning your selection of the self-study team. Should you have any additional questions about the research, please contact Professor Rotenberg by phone at (312) 362-6743.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Peter Knobel



Daniel Schechter

Lay Involvement in Liturgical Change and Renewal  
A Project of the Central Conference of American Rabbis  
The Lilly Endowment  
The Cummings Foundation

**Congregation Enrollment and Information Sheet**

Returning this fact sheet by post (see cover letter) or fax (c/o Prof. Rotenberg, 312/362-5811) will enroll your congregation in the study. Please provide the following information about the congregation. Feel free to elaborate if necessary. If a question does not apply to your congregation, please note that. This information is necessary to help us better understand what your congregation is like. All information will be held in confidence and will not be made public in any way that will identify your congregation. Please be candid. Presidents and rabbis should fill out and return separate forms. Some of these questions call for interpretation and we would like your separate opinions on them.

This form was filled out by:

☐ Rabbi

☐ President

Name of Congregation:

\_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone /Fax

\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Period for participation:

☐ now to June 30, 1994

☐ September 30 to November 11, 1994

1. In what year was the congregation founded? \_\_\_\_\_

2. In what year did it begin to occupy its present building? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which statement best describes the current membership of the congregation?

- ☐ Initial stage of community building
- ☐ Stage of community expansion/building
- ☐ Stage of stabilized growth with increasing affluence
- ☐ Stage of stabilized growth with decreasing affluence
- ☐ Stage of transition between aging founder group and young families
- ☐ Stage of decline due to out movement of members
- ☐ Stage of decline due to aging of members
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which of the following best characterizes the social and economic characteristics of the congregation? These categories of income and education are always relative. You should use the range of income and education in your immediate metropolitan region or county as a whole, rather than the local neighborhood, or only the Jewish community.

- ☐ Highly mixed with approximately equal proportions of income and education groupings
- ☐ Dominated by the high end of income and education groupings.
- ☐ Dominated by the middle range of income and education groupings.
- ☐ Dominated by the lower range of income and education groupings.
- ☐ Other? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What are the full annual dues per household? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Approximately what **percentage** of the congregation would fall into the following categories?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Raised in a Reform household
- \_\_\_\_\_ Raised in a Reconstructionist household
- \_\_\_\_\_ Raised in a Conservative household
- \_\_\_\_\_ Raised in an Orthodox household
- \_\_\_\_\_ Raised in secular Jewish household
- \_\_\_\_\_ Jew by choice
- \_\_\_\_\_ Active non-Jewish spouse
- \_\_\_\_\_ 100%.

7. What **percentage** of the households who joined the congregation over the last ten years would fall into following categories (if congregation is less than ten years old, use current membership)?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Previously members of another Reform congregation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Previously members of a Reconstructionist congregation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Previously members of a Conservative congregation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Previously members of an Orthodox congregation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Previously secular, not members of any congregation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Jews by choice
- \_\_\_\_\_ 100%

8.. For each member of the professional staff, please indicate year of ordination (if appropriate) and number of years serving the congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

senior rabbi _____	music director _____
associate rabbi _____	religious educator _____
assistant rabbi _____	school principal _____
cantor _____	program director _____
cantorial soloist _____	youth program director _____
executive director _____	early childhood progr. dir. _____

9. Which service attracts the largest number of worshipers each week? This is the service that self-study team members will be attending.

- ☐ Early Friday      ☐ Late Friday  
☐ Saturday morning      ☐ Sunday morning

10. At what time does this service begin? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Please check all of the musical performances at the most attended service every week:

- ☐ Professional Choir      ☐ Volunteer Choir  
☐ Congregational singing      ☐ Cantor/Cantorial Soloist  
☐ Organ      ☐ Piano      ☐ Guitar      ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

12. If congregational singing is part of the musical performance at services, which of the following applies:

- ☐ Congregants are invited to sing specific hymns, but otherwise do not sing.  
☐ Congregants are free to sing anytime they wish to do so, and they do.  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

13. What is the prayer book that is used for the most attended weekly service?

- ☐ Gates of Prayer  
☐ Gates of Prayer for Shabbat  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

14. What percentage of the service is likely to be chanted, sung or read in Hebrew?

- ☐ 10%  
☐ 25%  
☐ 50%  
☐ 75%  
☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

15. In addition to this service, what other services are available to the congregation on either a weekly or a monthly schedule? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Friday sunset service \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Family/ Early Friday Service \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Late Friday Service \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Saturday Morning Service \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Sunday Service \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Alternative Minyan/Torah Study \_\_\_\_\_

16. Check the services that the congregation schedules around special segment of the community. If a different prayer book is used, list it on the line provided, please.

- ☐ sisterhood service \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ children's service \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ youth group service \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ healing service \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

17. Please **check** all of the musical performances at the most attended service for these special services:

- ☐ Professional Choir    ☐ Volunteer Choir  
☐ Congregational singing    ☐ Cantor/Cantorial Soloist  
☐ Organ    ☐ Piano    ☐ Guitar    ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

18. Please **check** all of the musical performances at the high holiday services:

- ☐ Professional Choir    ☐ Volunteer Choir  
☐ Congregational singing    ☐ Cantor/Cantorial Soloist  
☐ Organ    ☐ Piano    ☐ Guitar    ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

19. Are any restrictions placed on children's attendance at any service?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

20. Does the congregation offer regular Hebrew literacy classes for adults? What levels are offered?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

21. Does the congregation offer training for members in particular worship skills:

- ☐ Torah reading  
☐ Divrei Torah  
☐ Leading musical portions  
☐ Adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah

22. Does the congregation have a committee that concerns itself with the ritual, special services, or worship? If so, what are its responsibilities?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

23. Does the congregation encourage its children to attend religious summer camp? If so, how many of the teenage members of the congregation attend camp?

\_\_\_\_\_

24. Over the last five years, what **percentage** of Bar/Bat Mitzvah continue on in their education to be confirmed?

\_\_\_\_\_

25. Over the last five years, what **percentage** of these confirmed teenagers continue on to graduation from religious high school?

\_\_\_\_\_



Lay Involvement in Liturgical Change and Renewal  
A Project of the Central Conference of American Rabbis  
The Lilly Endowment  
The Cummings Foundation

**Self-Study Procedures**

- 1. What is a self-study?** A self-study is conversation among congregants about their worship experiences individually and collectively. The decisions about what is important to say about the worship experience in a community lies entirely within the group. The researchers will provide certain guidelines and questions, but how the conversation proceeds, and how it is presented in the final report by the self-study participants is entirely in your hands. Colleges and universities use this self-study procedure as a way of preparing for accreditation reviews. It gives each department in the university an opportunity to say what they are trying to do and to discover for themselves how well they are succeeding at doing. The self-study allows you, as a team to decide, what you want worship to do and to discover whether that is, in fact, what is happening.
- 2. What are we trying to accomplish through the self-study?** This self-study is designed to look at the worship experiences of congregants only. It is not an appropriate instrument for judging any of the other aspects of congregational life. It is highly inappropriate as a mechanism for evaluating a rabbi, cantor or educator. Instead, the self-study can be a starting point for discussions within the congregation aimed at making the worship experience more inviting for everyone. We are interested in how Reform Jews express their personal and communal piety. That means, when Reform Jews pray together at the weekly service, what is that experience like for people. We describe How we want you to discuss that experience below.
- 3. What are the members of this team, trying to accomplish through the self-study?** Through this activity, you are in a position to discover three aspects of your experience as a congregant that you may not have been in a position to discover before: 1) how similar or dissimilar your reactions to worship on different weeks are from each other, 2) how similar or dissimilar your reactions are from those of the people around you; and 3) what do you, first as an individual and secondly as a member of the congregation, need from a worship service in order for you to have a meaningful experience each and every week. By participating in the self-study team, you learn more about your own religious needs and about how you contribute to worship experiences of your fellow congregants.
- 4. Who among the congregation should become involved in the study?** The self-study team should represent a cross-section of the entire adult congregation: the active, the semi-active and the inactive; those who read Hebrew and those who do not; the Jew by birth and the Jew by choice; the highly spiritual congregant and highly rationalist congregant; the "old guard" and the "young Turks"; those who find comfort in the traditional language for addressing the Deity and those who do not. The best teams are those that truly reflect the diversity of the congregation. These teams are selected by the rabbi and the president of the congregation to emphasize that diversity. 101

The only requirement the researchers have for the teams is that there be at least two members who do not attend weekly services at all during the year, and at least two members who attend fewer than six weekly services during the year.

5. **What do the participants in the self-study teams do?** Participants go to the same three weekly services in a row. After that, they attend a few of meetings to discuss their worship experiences. We ask that everyone on the team commit themselves to attend three Friday night services in a row between certain dates. These dates were chosen by the rabbi to accord with the congregation's calendar. It is vitally important that 1) all the members of the team attend the same services, 2) these services take place within the chosen time frame, and 3) the team members keep a special diary of their experiences at these services. These worship diaries are the most important part of the discussions by the team in the weeks that follow the services. They help the team to write their reports. How many times the team meets depend on the length and quality of these discussions.
6. **What is a worship diary?** A worship diary is your reflection in writing of the experiences you had during a worship service. The act of writing out the diary before you leave the house and when you get home helps you to focus on your experience and to remember the details. When you are discussing a service that happened three weeks ago, you will be grateful for the details you wrote out immediately after the experience. The worship diaries are anonymous. Everyone reads everyone else's, but no one knows who wrote what. The point is not to even try to guess who the authors are. Since all worship experiences contribute to the whole, authorship of a specific diary has no meaning apart from all the other diaries from that same service. The point of the anonymity is to permit people to say whatever they want, depicting their feelings and reactions honestly in the diaries, without fear of creating bad feelings. The diaries become part of the record of the team's deliberations and are submitted along with the team's report to the researcher.
7. **How does the team discuss the worship diaries of the participants?** Each member of the team has a copy of each worship diary before the first meeting of the team. This gives everyone a chance to read all the diaries before the discussion begins. In the discussion, the team picks one topic at a time, like prayer, and each team member offers their impressions of what the diaries revealed about the experience of prayer in the congregation. There will be differences of opinion about congregational prayer in the diaries. There will be differences over how to interpret what the diaries say about prayer. The goal of the group discussion is to understand these disagreements and conflicts and to summarize what steps to take to make prayer more inviting for all congregants. The main question for all the discussions might be phrased as: **How do you keep what you are doing well, and still change to make it possible for more congregants to have a positive experience?** After discussing prayer, the team moves on to discuss the next topic, and so on, until they have discussed all the topics of the worship diaries.
8. **How should the self-study team keep records of their discussions?** The team should appoint two secretaries. It is the role of these members to take notes during

the meetings. Both sets of notes are necessary. The team should also keep copies of the worship diaries and any other written documents that they use in the discussion (new prayer texts, new music, texts of sermons, etc.). Both sets of notes, worship diaries and other written documents should be submitted with the written report.

9. **How does the self-study team write its report?** The team can decide to write its report collectively, or they can assign the writing to a single member. Either way, the report reflects the discussion and summarizes the team's observations and conclusions on the worship experiences of the team members. There is no minimum length, but every effort should be made to accurately reflect the team's feelings about their worship experiences.
10. **What should go into the report?** We would like to see the following questions addressed in the report: 1) **Who within the congregation feels that the current system of worship (the topics from the worship diaries) fulfills their needs, and who does not?** Please summarize the discussion for each topic. 2) **What has the congregation done to change its liturgy in the last few years? In light of the discussion of the themes, what does the team think about these changes?** 3) **What could the membership in this congregation do to make worship more meaningful for more people?**
11. **When is the report due?** The report together with the written records of the team's discussions must be sent to the research consultant within one month after the last service the team attends. It is very important that team complete its work while the memories of the services are fresh in the minds.
12. **What use is the report to the congregation or the professional staff of the congregation?** We suggest that a copy of the report be circulated among the members of congregation and the staff. The president should encourage discussions in a variety of forums between the self-study team and the rest of the congregation. At a minimum, the rabbi should report on the self-study team's observations and conclusions at a time, like the high holidays, when the largest portion of the entire congregation is present. The self-study should become the starting point for continuing discussions of how the worship needs of members can be best met. In October, the Rabbi and President will be sent a letter asking them to review the ongoing discussions of personal and communal piety begun during the self-study. These follow-up surveys are important in helping the project directors gauge how effective the self-study process was in launching a discussion of worship in the congregation.
13. **What happens to the report and the worship diaries after they submitted?** The reports and diaries become a permanent part of the archive of the project. Access to these reports is restricted to the people immediately involved in the project. Our efforts are to summarize and assess the worship experiences of Reform congregations throughout the United States. These reports will be analyzed together with all the others and the results will be submitted to the Central Conference of American Rabbis. The report on the national experience will follow the same general guidelines as the report you prepare. To focus attention on the variety of Reform experiences

nationally, we will report each congregation's experiences anonymously in the project reports. Only in the section discussing innovations in liturgy will specific congregations be mentioned by name, and then only to facilitate the exchange of ideas.

If your team has any questions about these procedures, please contact the research consultant to the project directly:

Robert Rotenberg, Ph.D.  
2311 W. Greenleaf Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60645  
voice/312 362-6743  
fax/ 312 362-5811  
email/ INTRLR@ORION.DEPAUL.EDU



Lay Involvement in Liturgical Change and Renewal  
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The Lilly Foundation  
The Cummings Foundation

**Worship Diary Procedures**

- **What is a Worship Diary?** A worship diary is a record of your feelings during a worship service. These feelings are difficult to remember after time has passed. A worship diary helps us recall those feelings and thoughts. You will use the worship diary to help you remember details of your worship experiences while discussing those experiences with other congregants in the self-study team. The worship diary is not an evaluation or a judgment about your performance or the performance of your congregation, the rabbi or cantor. You may strongly like or dislike something that happened, but those feelings become something you share with other congregants to discover if they feel the same way. There is no right or wrong here. Everyone's feelings are equal contributions to the experience of the congregation as a whole.
- **How should we write the worship diary?** Worship diaries are highly personal. The words we write reflect our innermost experiences. Others will read these diaries without knowing who wrote them. There will be times when you discover that other people do not share your feelings, or do not understand your feelings. These are the way things should be. There ought to be moments in our worship when we are absorbed by thoughts that are meaningful only to us. These are precisely the thoughts that we should write down in our diaries. There are simple pages for you to fill out included in this packet.
- **What should we include in a worship diary?** Actually, you can write whatever you are feeling after the service. There are certain themes that some people have found helpful when describing their worship experiences. You, too, may find it helpful to think about these themes. It is perfectly all right if you do not have something to say anything about every theme, every Friday night. The themes are there to help you remember different aspects of your experience.
- **Does the worship diary have to be in some form?** You can write your thoughts any way that is comfortable for you. There is no minimum length and no maximum length. There are no "correct" feelings, and no "incorrect" feelings. One thing you should consider is legibility. Other people have to read these thoughts. If you can type or print what you write, that is fine. Even block printing or careful writing, that makes every letter in the word legible will do.
- **When should we write worship diary?** You can begin writing the diary before services by writing down how you feel just before leaving for the temple or while waiting for the services to begin. Immediately after the services are finished, you should try to write how you feel again. If you are very tired, you might make some brief notes and finish the writing effort the next morning. If you keep the Sabbath by not writing, you should spend some minutes after the service thinking through everything you will write down Saturday evening. To be effective, the diary must



contain details of the Friday night service that will quickly fade from memory if you do not write them down immediately.

- **In worship, I try to use my head as little as possible. This diary is requiring me to think about my worship and I'm not sure I'm comfortable with that. What am I supposed to do?** People who feel the way you do have found that for a few services they can allow themselves to be self-conscious about worship in this way, and then return quite easily to their preferred way of worshipping. We recognize that we are asking you to deprive yourself of these highly valuable feelings for a few weeks. If we did not feel it was important, we would not be bothering you.
- **Who reads the diaries?** The other members of the team and the researchers read what you write. They do not see your name and they do not see the paper you use. They see copies of what you wrote. The rabbi keeps the originals and sends them to the researcher, along with the final report. The researcher will also treat them confidentially. Nothing you write in the diaries will ever be attributed to you by name or by congregation. If you feel your handwriting is recognizable, you might consider retyping your diaries. Do not make personal references or use proper names in the diaries. Put the date of each service on the pages of the diary for that service. That will keep pages from getting mixed up. Do not put your name on the diaries. Instead, put the diaries in a large envelope with your name on the envelope. When all the diaries are completed, give the envelope to the rabbi.
- **What are the researchers really looking for in these diaries?** We are looking at how you describe your feelings. We are looking at what words people find to describe these experiences. Very few of us have ever the opportunity to try to put our experiences into words before and for some it will be very difficult. For that reason, the words that we do finally write down are highly significant. There are no right words to use. We are looking for nothing in particular. We only want you to search for the words that adequately describe what you feel.
- **How will the diaries be used?** The diaries are primarily for your use. After writing them, you will have the opportunity to sit and discuss your feelings about a particular service with other congregants on the self-study team. That team will write a report that focuses specifically on your opinions about the following themes as they apply to worship in your congregation. This discussion begins by everyone on the team reading all of the diaries. After that, the diaries will have served their usefulness. Still, they will be included, along with the report of the self-study team, and the minutes of the meetings to the researchers to become part of the records of this research.

### Themes for the Discussion of Congregational Worship

- The following is a list of themes you can consider while writing your diaries. Use these themes to stimulate your thinking. Do not feel that you need to have something to say about each one of them. These themes will become more important when you met with your self-study team to discuss congregational worship.

**Prayer:** Prayer is the principal activity of worship. Bringing congregants to the point where praying works for them is what worship services do best. Through prayer we attempt to fulfill our spiritual needs, to feel the presence of a community, and to experience the presence of the Deity. Prayer that does all of these things is hard to accomplish. It requires a lot of practice, a lot of thought and a lot of support. Think about your praying tonight. How did it make you feel? Were there some prayers, or some moments within prayers, that made you feel or think in an extraordinary way?

**Music:** Music supports our efforts to pray by giving us rhythms that are predictable, and melodies that mimic our emotions. Music helps us understand how we should feel at different points in the service. It gives a sense of structure to the different parts. By giving this same message to everyone at once, music helps us form a community that virtually "feels together." Did you have a favorite melody or piece of music at the service tonight? Were there times when you felt the music working to shape your emotions?

**Prayer book:** The prayer book is the script that enables the congregation to pray together. In many ways communal worship is like a play, but in ways it is not like a play. Actors memorize their lines. They do not hold the script in their hands. In plays actors speak different lines. In worship, the congregation speaks the same words. These words are the prayers. By repeating them the same way each Friday night, the order of the service brings the random flow of personal and world events into an orderly pattern. It is the comfort of this pattern that we take with us from the service each week. The prayer book, therefore, is a major piece of the worship experience. Think about the words you spoke, either in Hebrew or in English. Was there something about the text that enhanced or hindered your experience tonight?

**Movement:** There is a great deal of moving around in the service, even though most people never leave the space around their seats. There is standing and sitting, bowing and the covering of the eyes. The traditions of Reform worship place less importance on moving the body during services than other Jewish traditions, but it is still there. Movement, like music, supports prayer. How we move helps us express how we feel. Sitting and concentrating, standing and swaying, respectfully bowing toward the Ark gets our bodies into the worship process. Did the movements come easily to you, or were you struggling to make them fit how you were feeling? How did the movements of others, either those around you or those on the altar, fit with how you were moving and feeling?

**Sanctuary:** Prayer takes place in a sanctuary in which the movement and positions of people are predetermined. Did you feel you were too close to or too far away from other congregants or the altar? Who do you look at at different points in the service? When do you close your eyes? What parts of the sanctuary do you like to look at while you say the prayers? Do you wish you could change some part of the sanctuary layout?

**Rhythm:** Worship service has a rhythm to it. The rhythm changes at different times, depending on the mood of the moment. No two worship services have exactly the same rhythm. The rhythm that begins a service will sometimes speed up and sometimes slow down. Sometimes events in the community over the past week, the presence of a wedding, Bar/Bat Mitzvah or mourning group, an important visitor, or an impending holiday will influence the rhythm of the service. How do you describe the rhythm of the service tonight? Was the rhythm different at the beginning than it was in the middle or at the end? Did these rhythms fit your mood tonight?

**Torah Study:** The central portion of the weekly worship service is Torah study. This is an opportunity for intellectual reflection. A selection from the prophets and/or a commentary on the Torah portion by the rabbi, a congregant, or a visitor is usually added. Unlike the communal prayers that are addressed to God, this part of the service is addressed to us as individuals and as a community. For that reason, everyone responds to the Torah reading and sermon as individuals based on their knowledge of Judaism. How did you respond to the Torah portion and sermon tonight? Did you find a connection between it and your life? Did it fit with the events in your life that occupied your thoughts?

**Your Life:** When we are praying, we can discover an order to our lives that we were not aware of before beginning to worship. What were you thinking about during the silent meditation? Try to remember all of the times tonight when you thought about the events that had happened to you during week. While thinking about these happenings during prayer, did you come to any new understandings? Were there times in the service when you were reminded of other times in your life when you felt especially spiritual?

**Community:** We worship as a congregation, not as individuals. The ritual of saying the prayers together, of experiencing the rhythm and the music together, of moving together in a shared space, of sharing the same emotions has an effect that is quite different from solitary prayer. You may know very little about the lives of the other congregants, about their families, their works, their joys and sorrows. Still, at the end of the service you know that for the last two hours or so you shared an extraordinary experience together. Did you feel close to the other congregants tonight?

**God:** It is difficult for Reform Jews with their tradition of rational theology to discuss the presence of God in worship. Since God is the master image to which prayers are addressed in worship the question, that presence must be part of any discussion about worship. Without some way of identifying this master image, prayer loses its focus. The master image can take many forms. Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman has written that it can represent an internal presence, like our conscience, or an utterly transcendent being beyond our knowledge entirely. For many of us, the master image is somewhere inbetween, a vision of what the ideal friend and comforter might be like. These are just words, images, snapshots for an experience of the divine that we can never precisely capture in language. One thing is certain: when worship is at its most effective, God is present for the worshiper. Was God present in your worship tonight? Is God ever present for you?

### Worship Diary Form

This diary is for the Shabbat Worship Service on \_\_\_\_\_

What were you feeling at the beginning of services tonight?

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How did participating in the service make you feel? Did the service work for you? (Discuss the themes of prayer, music, prayer book, movement, sanctuary, rhythm, Torah study, your life, community and God, if you can do so. Use the other side if necessary. Consider the legibility of your handwriting.)

### **Sample Worship Diary**

The following are excerpts from worship diaries that explore the themes you will discuss in your team. They come from many different people. Your diary will not look like this because you may not have something to say about every theme. The feelings expressed are not the "right" answers to the worship experience. There are no "right" answers. The suggestions made here do not represent the "agenda" of the research project. There is no "agenda". The entries are merely examples of what some of the people in your self-study team might write in their diaries. These examples are intended to give you ideas of what you can write in the diaries and how the themes can be used to express your feelings and your experiences.



**What were you feeling at the beginning of services tonight?** Tired. It had been a long week.

**How did participating in the service make you feel? Did the service work for you? (Discuss the themes of prayer, music, prayer book, movement, sanctuary, rhythm, Torah study, your life, community and God, if it is easy for you do so.)**

The best part was singing Adon Olam. I still remember all the words. It reminded me of camp. And I liked the sermon.

**Prayer:** I read through the prayers tonight, at least the ones that were in English. They always say the same thing. I don't understand what is supposed to happen just because I recite a lot of poetry and praise for a god I don't even in. I remember learning about the prayers when I was a kid, but I go so rarely that I don't remember what's so special about them.

**Music:** I must admit, the music is getting better. I like the guitar and the new melodies. At least they are not like the ones I remember from my childhood. They make it easier to get into the Hebrew.

**Script:** I don't understand why the rabbi changes the language when she reads. Did something happen that I don't know about?

**Movement:** Getting up and sitting down. So? What do I say?

**Sanctuary:** The sanctuary is OK. The seat are comfortable. It relaxes me to be there.

**Rhythm:** I don't have anything to say about this.

**My life:** My kid is sick. During that new healing prayer, I thought about her.

**Study:** The portion tonight was one of those readings that make no sense to life today. I read the editor's notes to see if he could find anything interesting to say about the portion, but that section was pretty boring too.

**Community:** I look at the other congregants and I wonder if they are here for the same reason that I am? If I met some of these people outside the synagogue, would I have anything to say to them? Probably not. So what am I doing with them on Friday night. They all chant along in unison, like sheep. I'm uncomfortable saying this and knowing I will have to discuss it in the self-study group. Aside from our Jewishness, I don't feel like I'm part of them.

**God:** I don't believe in God.

As usual, I want to talk to friends before services start, also want the time to prepare to pray. I always feel conflicted.

The music is perfect tonight and it is while singing that I feel the most prayerful and in touch with my inner self.

I don't feel that the prayer book is either help or hindrance. I know the service so well that the mechanics are automatic.

Because I participate in a Friday morning Torah study, the reading of Torah in the service has become more meaningful. I think it is because of the sequence. Tonight's D'var Torah touched me. It is something that I think much about. Why I am the way I am, how I can become closer to God, where I fail.

Still have trouble with movement. Bowing is something new for me and I am still very much aware of the when and the how.

I feel a great sense of community tonight, in contrast to the last two weeks. This is very important to me and probably is the most comforting feeling I have at services.

**PRAYER:** During V'ahav-ta and Ma-ariv Aravim, I tried to focus on the meaning of the words in Hebrew, to the best of my ability. Otherwise, I do the whole thing by rote. I realized that I can't actually translate a lot of the words, and that my understanding of the prayers is based on the English translation in the siddur. Since I've been told that this may not be accurate, in large part, I feel more confused than ever about what I'm saying.

**MUSIC:** The place was packed tonight, and it seemed that a lot of people were singing. I always find that (to sing along with a lot of people) to be a moving experience. Jeff picked melodies I like for almost every song, and teaching the 2-part harmony for the closing song was great; I think it brings people closer and gives everyone the feeling that they are an integral part of the service.

**PRAYERBOOK:** The service seemed short tonight; I suspect things were cut to give extra time to the visiting scholar. Still, it was good to have a long moment of silence before the Kaddish. I was brooding about the similarities between Holocaust victims, trapped in their synagogues and burned, and the people in Gorazde (safe haven!) and Rawanda, in the soccer stadium. More silent time, maybe later in the service, would be good.

**MOVEMENT:** Now practically everyone is "bowing" at the required moments. Do most people know why at those times and not at others? I don't. I used to bow because the clergy did it, but now I resent the sense that this is "proper". Do we need to do everything in unison?

During L'cha Dodi, I still turn (in my seat) at Bo-i Kallah. I do this because it helps me feel that I personally am welcoming Shabbat, and it reminds me of other times and places where this was commonly done. I also like turning to watch the Torah procession; it's like watching the bride at a wedding - so special that you can't take your eyes off of it.

**TORAH READING:** Seemed abbreviated tonight, although we did allow time for the English to be read from the bimah as well as the Hebrew. Even when more verses are read, I often feel that this part of the service is rushed, so that there's no chance to try to follow the Hebrew, read the English and commentaries and integrate the ideas. While I don't think every d'var Torah should be about the portion, it would be nice if the rabbi could make a few comments about the parsha.

**LINKAGE:** As mentioned earlier, my thoughts were with the victims in Bosnia and Rawanda, and in some ways I resented the fact that these issues were not addressed from the pulpit. While I realize that the scholar-in-residence was scheduled ages ago, I wonder: at what point do we decide that current events take precedence over planned programs? I need to hear what my rabbis think about these issues!

**COMMUNITY:** I was aware of the presence of some non-Reform Jews whom I know in the congregation tonight, and wondered what they thought. Overall, I'm proud of my choices as a Reform Jew, although my lack of knowledge in some areas, even within the liturgy, are astounding.

## Appendix B:

### Case Studies

"No proof from a word torn from its context."  
(Maimonides, *Iggeret Teman*, 1172)

An introduction to each case-study congregation and transcripts of the interviews conducted are contained in this appendix. Except for those of the rabbis, all names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

#### **United Hebrew Congregation Terre Haute, Indiana Rabbi Sandra Katz**

Rabbi Sandra Katz graduated from the Hebrew Union College (New York campus) in 1993. United Hebrew Congregation is her first pulpit as an ordained rabbi. United Hebrew is a congregation of 120 families in a small town. The congregation is housed in a building built in 1911 and has, until recently, been led by a classical Reform rabbi.

When Rabbi Katz attended Hebrew Union College, she became accustomed to the freedom to express her own theology through liturgical development. She was encouraged at the College to change gender-language for God, to write creative services, and to choose aspects of the *Gates of Prayer* liturgy to which she related. Upon arriving in Terre Haute, Rabbi Katz discovered that the congregation was not only more staunchly classical Reform than she had been led to believe from her interviews, but was also deeply resistant to change.

Beginning with the first service she led, Rabbi Katz chose to alter the language for God as she went along in the reading. The congregation was accustomed to praying from the *Union Prayer Book* during the summer months and *Gates of Prayer* throughout the remainder of the year. She made changes to the rubrics of the *Union Prayer Book* at the first service she led in Terre Haute. She commented that no one mentioned the changes at first<sup>1</sup>, but immediately after the High Holidays, a meeting was convened. One congregant threatened to resign from the Temple over the linguistic changes, and two of his friends were planning to join him in protest.

Although Rabbi Katz began her first few months in Terre Haute with the fear that she would be fired at any moment, she was unwilling to compromise on this theological issue. She refused to read unacceptable passages from the prayerbook and suggested that other congregants read them instead. Some protested that they had hired her to read the service and that leadership in

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<sup>1</sup> Personal Interview, Rabbi Sandra Katz, 11 July, 1994.

prayer was solely her job.

Throughout her first year in Terre Haute, Rabbi Katz has held her ground and will not read a service without the linguistic changes. The issue is foremost on people's minds and a rift is developing between the rabbi and her supporters and those opposed to linguistic change.

Rabbi Katz arranged for me to speak with congregants in 15-minute intervals over a two-day period. She posted a sign-up sheet for interested congregants and sent a letter specifically to those she thought would give me differing opinions and insights. I spoke to Rabbi Katz for an hour before the first congregants arrived for their interview time. The text of those conversations appears here in their entirety, with a few editorial emendations for clarity and focus. Any comments that I feel were told in confidence have also been omitted.

### 11 July, 1994

**Stacia Deutsch:** Can you tell me about what has been happening here with regard to gender-language and metaphors for God during worship services?

**Rabbi Katz:** Change comes slowly or not at all...Worship and God issues are mommy and daddy issues. I talked to representatives of the Synagogue when I was hired and asked them to back me up in any changes I made. They did not. One congregant walked out of my first Shabbat services. Some congregants leave for the winter and were shocked by changes when they returned. I felt that the first pulpit committee meeting was not a dialogue, but a lynch mob...

The congregation bought the *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* - gender-sensitive prayerbook. Rabbi (Joseph) Klein (the previous rabbi) used it a few times, he didn't like it. He panned it and the congregation followed suit. We do own enough copies, but no one uses it even when it is offered. They hate guitar, hate too much Hebrew, etc. It is not possible to separate all the issues plaguing the congregation. It all fits together like a web. It is all part of the same package and must be reconnected with other issues in the congregation like Jewish identity and architecture.

My thesis advisor suggested I use the gender-language they want. He believes that losing that piece of ground is the only way I will gain ground I need in this congregation and that I have to give in. I think there has got to be some other way - using inclusive-language is a religious principle.

**Congregant A:** I have two separate opinions. One as a board member of the congregation and also, I have my own personal opinion. I don't necessarily agree with all things the board wants to do. Rabbi Katz introduced the gender changes. Before her, Rabbi Klein purchased the gender-sensitive prayerbooks, but I don't remember using them.

Looking at the congregation as a whole, the gender-neutral language doesn't seem to bother the younger members. The older members - it does. There are several reasons: How do you say the "*Sh'ma*" without using the word



"Lord?" "Lord" is a masculine term. It's not "Lady" - it's "Lord!" I think that the older members will go along with certain adaptations, but feel very threatened by this because everything they have been brought up to say or believe has now been threatened away. If you are going to do this for most of gender-neutral language, you must do it very slowly and may not get all gender-neutral terms.

If the words of the reader are not the same as those in the prayerbook, it makes it very confusing and threatening to the individual. They come for the reason of having some way to communicate with God. Even though they might communicate with God everyday, this is a formal communication. If you come to hear the organ and allow it to prepare you for prayer and suddenly the organ is not there you are no longer prepared. I come to the synagogue for peacefulness, not to be angered. It is very very difficult. Younger people are raised with the idea of gender-neutral language. I think what I am trying to tell you is.. your religion is whatever you were raised with and what you feel comfortable with and change is very difficult. This is what I hear from older congregants. They will accept some changes, but not others. For example, you could never change *Avinu Malkenu* in my personal opinion.

I can understand some gender-neutral language, but find gender-neutral to be dehumanizing to God. God cannot be dehumanized, but I'd rather see God as both female and male. But prayers like *Avinu Malkenu*, there is no other translation. But (for the Rabbi) to say "I will not say this, the congregation can, but I won't" is not fair. The congregation needs a leader in the reader. The issue of gender is only one thing.

**Stacia Deutsch:** When do you use the gender-neutral *Gates of Prayer* for *Shabbat*?

**Congregant A:** They were out last Friday and no one attempted to use them, the reader<sup>2</sup> had to change his plans to go along with the community.

Attempts to change to gender-neutral prayers become a particular problem around the High Holidays because of the people who only come on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. They don't want any change. I have proposed a compromise of one creative service a month and the rest read directly out of *Gates of Prayer*. It was not accepted by the Rabbi. There are three unhappy congregants and this can be a very hot issue with a limited number of people.

Change is good, but not change for change's sake. That is a terrible mistake, a terrible mistake. You should make sure the congregation has an understanding of what is going on before you start any change at all.

**Congregant B:** When we saw the same issue on "Northern Exposure," we felt that we were not alone in our struggle. It was never an issue until Rabbi Katz came. Sandra came and it became a big issue - to some it was very strange.

We use the *Union Prayer Book* during the summer for nostalgic reasons.

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<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Katz was out of town and a congregant was leading the worship services.

When the sensitive prayerbook was introduced under Rabbi Klein, it wasn't a big issue because he didn't make an issue of it himself.

**Congregant C:** I think the major issue is that people prefer to read the words that are written.

**Congregant B:** I think it is really a resistance to change. Once it is raised to a conscious level, people are resistant.

**Congregant C:** I never knows what word is going to be substituted. I prefer everyone to be in the same place. Some of the women today, they prefer to see God in the masculine. I relate to the story told by Rabbi Katz that God created man and women in our image. Asexual. I want to know what happens with language in California.

**Congregant B:** I like the changes. I am not even concerned with the words in the prayerbook. It helps me to think and wonder about the unknown power without personification issues. It helps the process of personal exploration. I feel left of the average congregant. The resistant people are more vocal.

**Congregant C:** The creation story legitimized the changes for me. Rabbi Katz changed the language from the first service - said masculine language bothered her and that she'd be changing the language... the uproar led to a Pulpit Committee meeting after the High Holidays. I am on the Pulpit Committee with six people. The idea was to take the burden off the president who was getting many phone calls. The first meeting was a big mess - the rabbi was paranoid about the whole thing. She felt threatened, there were other factors involved. She insisted on being there. Then she blamed the committee. She should not have been at the first meeting. She then decided to ask their input and to use the committee to her benefit. It's been better with the Pulpit Committee. It displaces the blame.

**Congregant D:** I don't see the need for the changes. It is comforting to see God as a man. The gender-sensitive *Gates of Prayer* never picked up. Rabbi Katz made the changes in the very first service. She didn't mention gender. She said she's be making some changes, "please join in if you feel comfortable." She never discussed the issue with the congregants. The older members were and still are irritated. I think people are resentful of the changes. Last week, in the services every one was reading 'He' except the young woman behind me. I found it to be irritating. It is stupid to read it different than everybody else. Insistence on the prayerbook change ruins the beauty of the services.

It seems to be a matter of age - if you hear it one way for a long time, it is not beautiful to hear the changes.

I attend the services every Friday. This is not the largest issue facing the

congregation at this time. Although it is divisive, it is not an issue that we won't eventually swallow.

**Congregant E:** I heard that the changes were being made by rumor in the community. I had never previously given the issue any thought. I describe myself as very ultra liberal - I will go along with the rest of the community.

When I heard "Him" or "He" to refer to God in the past, I understood that it did not mean that God was necessarily a male. I would be just as concerned with a God who was a "She." It is not disturbing. I find it similar to someone nearby wearing a *tallis* or *yarlmulke*. There seems to be logic to the changes.

**Congregant F:** If a prayer is changed, the older you are the more concerned you become. I believe that the controversy could have been avoided if it were forwarded by an explanation of what was being done. The additional reinforcement of a discussion would have been good also. We need the reasons behind the changes.

**Congregant G:** I have only been here two years. My husband was a Conservative Rabbi. I resent the way the changes were introduced. The rabbi had two strikes against her from the start: 1) she is female and 2) this is a mixed congregation of Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative Jews. A different presentation would have made it easier...

**Congregant F:** I think it is ridiculous. I don't believe in revisionism. I feel there is a deeper problem in that the gender-neutral English does not reflect the translation of the Hebrew. You don't make changes just to make people happy. You don't revise Shakespeare, Chaucer, or Plato - why the prayerbook? I would like someone to explain "Why?" Political correctness doesn't cut the mustard. It is just idiocy.

The Dean and President of the College<sup>3</sup> told me that the rabbi should have freedom in speech and expression.

No one has a problem if they are reading the same page with the same words. I am waiting for the gender-neutral *Tanach*. We should be teaching mental transference of image - so mentally God is not "He," but an entity. And we should teach people not to be so God damned sensitive.

How do they handle it in gendered languages like French, German,<sup>4</sup> Hebrew. The Union<sup>4</sup> isn't pushing it and lay people could care less. The rabbis are the ones trying to please everyone. I know because I am on the national board of the UAHC.

**Congregant I:** With ten different words for God - it is too unpredictable. Old habits are hard to break. These are the prayers we have been saying all our lives. I walk away from services upset and not tranquil. I don't mind the gender-

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrew Union College.

<sup>4</sup> Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

sensitive *Gates of Prayer*.

**Congregant J:** I believe that there are two bases for the changes:

1) changes in society move to masculine and feminine equality and 2) women entering the rabbinate.

Rabbi Katz brought her perspective, this has to do with who she is and her belief system. She makes deliberate efforts to avoid gender-specific language.

Personally, I don't care. It feels awkward and as if it is being carried to extremes. There is nothing so terrible about certain words like "fellowship."<sup>6</sup> I ignore gender-specific Hebrew. It gets confusing when the prayerbook says one thing and she says another, and she's leading the prayer! Eyes and ears need to correspond or else there is an impression of discord. I think that to throw an occasional gender word into the service would not kill anyone.

The whole thing can get to be a big pain in the neck. I am just not sure the whole world needs a feminist perspective.

**Congregant K:** I support Rabbi Katz. I am her sounding board. Some members are uneasy with a rabbi in a skirt. I don't care how the services are led. I resent those who complain about the changes and say you should read the prayer as written. Rabbi Katz wants to feel comfortable when she prays, but no one in the congregation feels comfortable when they pray. I think the whole issue is baloney. People have at least a 15-year habit of how things are to be done. Some people aren't even comfortable with the *Gates of Prayer*.

**Congregant L:** When I was in Boston, I disliked Temple Israel's way of substituting "*Adonai*" for "God." Why substitute a Hebrew word in an English prayer? English is meant to be a translation. I am tolerant and proud to be Reform. It is ever-changing. But the discrepancies between the Hebrew and English do not make for a nicer service.

Let us rewrite the prayerbook. A prayerbook should be updated. I think it is also time to de-emphasize the Holocaust, even though I am a survivor.

**Congregant M:** Changes are hard to take and not right or wrong. It is a matter of what you are accustomed to. I miss the old way of the *Union Prayer Book*. The rabbi has a right to do what she wants to do, whether I like it or not.

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<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Katz insists on changing this word also when it appears in the prayerbook.



**Congregation Beth Tikvah  
Columbus, Ohio  
Rabbi Gary Huber**

Congregation Beth Tikvah is a community of 430 families. There are 350 children in the religious school. Rabbi Gary Huber has been the congregation's rabbi since 1982. The congregants describe the congregation as an "intellectual community made up of people from other places - people who moved to Columbus from somewhere else."

In May, 1986, the Ritual Committee of Congregation Beth Tikvah wrote a letter to Rabbi Alexander Schindler at the UAHC. It was their concern that the exclusive use of male metaphors for God limited their "view of God and our view of women." They wrote to ask the UAHC to "assume active leadership in bringing about change in this area."

\*Steps the UAHC could take immediately include:

- Developing a list of recommended speakers on this topic
- Developing written materials to raise congregants' awareness on this topic (including research on how pronoun use affects our thinking)
- Developing alternative, non-sexist services for congregational use
- Distributing the "Glossary of Substitute Terminology" to member congregations.

A future step, but one that can be planned for now, would be revision of the prayerbooks to soften the predominance of male pronouns and metaphors for God."

Rabbi Schindler replied that he would send them a "Glossary for Substitute Terminology" and refer their concerns to the CCAR for response.

Eight years later, Beth Tikvah is beginning to examine gender-language again. In November, 1993, the president, Robin Thomas, and her husband, Louis Jacobs, attended a Reform congregation in Tulsa, Oklahoma. They found that the congregation there used the *Gates of Prayer*, but changed the gender pronouns for God as they read. Spiritually uplifted by the experience, they decided to make a donation of the *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat*, gender-sensitive liturgy, to Beth Tikvah.

The Rabbi made it clear to the ritual committee that they did not have to accept the gift if they did not want to. After examining a few prayerbooks including *Vetaher Libenu* from Congregation Beth El of Sudbury, Massachusetts, the committee decided to accept the new prayerbook and to try the services. Overwhelmingly, there is the feeling that the congregation would



not have faced the issue of gender-language for many more years had the charitable donation not been made. The lack of need for a financial decision made the acquisition easier for the community.

I met with nine members of the congregation on July 14, 1994. The group was selected by the current Ritual Committee Chairman, David Binkovitz and included the president and her husband, the past Ritual Committee Chair, and other congregants whom Mr. Binkovitz felt would provide me with the broadest range of opinions.

The prayerbooks were introduced to the congregation in November, 1993, and used once a month. The discussion that followed expressed the concern of some congregations that the new prayerbook does not make consistent changes in the Hebrew and English, that the prayerbook is "bland" and lacks poetry, alters centuries of tradition, and also that it was not appropriately introduced into the community. Proponents expressed that the changes had taken too long to realize in Beth Tikvah, and that the primary reason for change was to provide meaningful religion to the children.

A transcript of the conversation follows. I have omitted the interviewer's questions except where they are needed for clarification. The conversations have not been altered except to protect the speaker or to remove conversations that strayed from the subject at hand.

#### 14 July, 1994

**Congregant 1:** There wasn't much of a process to buy it or introduce it.

**Congregant 2:** Some people felt very uncomfortable. It bothered them to change the Hebrew. They felt that the language (in *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat*) was stilted. They also knew it was an interim prayerbook, and so what would it hurt to have it and use it occasionally. We have congregants that feel very limited by gender-language for God that is totally masculine. It is certainly not unanimous. Some people really hated it (*Gates of Prayer for Shabbat*) when we first used it and gradually have felt it isn't so bad.

**Congregant 3:** We had a meeting of the Ritual Committee. It was productive to get a sense. The concern was not about whether the language should be gender-sensitive, but how it was done and the the actual language that may appear. We understood that it was a gift. But we found that some texts appeared generic and bland. The meeting was an interesting process. It became a consensus to accept it as an experiment to see. I think unfortunately, our Committee made a mistake after the Committee meeting. We should have written in our Temple bulletin what we are doing, why and how it will be used. A lot of people did not know what was going on. People felt uncomfortable because it was unfamiliar and the language felt stilted. We needed to discuss how the book affected them personally. Sometimes we say its experimental, but as soon as it is purchased it becomes more fundamental.

**Congregant 4:** The term "gender-sensitive" offends me. I am a woman and I am quite secure in that. I am not here to rewrite history. We all have our own idea of what God looks like. As a convert I feel very secure and comfortable with *Gates of Prayer* - it embraces me. I was at the first service and I totally lack tact. "I am the Lord your God" is a very profound statement. "Eternal One" just doesn't cut it.

**Congregant 5:** One of the biggest problems was the way the book was introduced. The choice of service was not the best. I heard a lot of unhappiness. I knew what the problem was for me, but I don't know for everybody else and it had very little to do with the language. It had to do with the service and when we discussed it in the Ritual Committee later, we agreed that the best word for that service was "bland." The text, not the pronouns. And we did the second service first. At this temple there has been a discussion of gender-neutral language for quite a while. We have used mimeographs, etc. The primary thing is the service, language is secondary. The best comment I heard was that the book was "not as bad as I thought." That's not a positive comment about Shabbat. We have done mimeographs that involved people much more.

**Congregant 6:** I think *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* is bland. I am livid. There are almost ten years.. we have had a whole generation of children come through our congregation, and they still are hearing male references for God. We have been aware that it is a problem and I am livid that we haven't changed. This is very close to my heart.

**Congregant 7:** I don't think the issue is gender-sensitive language. The real issue in my opinion is that the service doesn't really provide the function of a service. The flowing language is there, in English, but the Hebrew has been changed and there is a certain historical significance to prayers that have been around for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Most people know the prayers by heart and suddenly people were mumbling because they didn't know where they were. I think the problem is the historical significance, that people believe their ancestors were saying these and we'd like to say them the same way. I don't think people would object to adding the women to add the balance.

**Congregant 8:** We have used a series of prayerbooks, none of them have been uplifting or the only time I can say that I felt good and excited about services is during the times we have had creative services. I don't think it has anything to do with the gender-language.

**Congregant 3:** I think some of the language is some of the issue. I have found *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* to make sense to me and if you allow yourself to relax and become aware, the messages of *Gates of Prayer* are

there. I think changing the language does have an effect.

I separate the changes into two parts: changes to include women - I find very inspiring. Women have always been part of our heritage. I find that inspiring and helpful. The problem for me is references to God that have been changed in the text. Changes can exclude certain concepts or expand the text. I find those changes very, very unsettling. God to me has a wide variety of images and each of those is very personal or very powerful.. I think some of the language has become such a part of our vernacular it is no longer seen in male or female terms. For example, the word "Lord." We no longer have a King so these words take on a higher meaning in our prayerbook. They refer to something that is not part of my normal world.

**Congregant 2:** I personally don't like the idea of "Lord" in the prayers. The word "Lord" is very off-putting. It tells me to be a child or a subservient individual - it doesn't call to me or refer to a helping God. Something that is a "*y'did nefesh*" - a "Friend to my spirit" very much helps me to behave as an adult in a religious sense. This has become, as I am getting older, a more important issue to me. All of the metaphors speaking about God do not even begin to get close to God, but we need more of them rather than less of them.

**Congregant 6:** At one point I read an article by Rita Gross. It made some important points. One, that if we insist on male pronouns, it is a form of idolatry. I am aware of studies that tell us that male pronouns make us think in male terms. To think of God as female is a very moving thing for me.

**Congregant 1:** I suspect that this new prayerbook was a compromise because I imagine that using female pronouns would also be jarring. Adding actual female metaphors would have been much more jarring.

**Congregant 9:** We used the gender-inclusive prayerbook at our daughter's *Bat Mitzvah*. I felt very proud to have her use a prayerbook that included her. It is about change. I grew up where the "t's" were pronounced "s." This was a big change for me. Changes in the Hebrew make the prayers so that no one is able to say them by rote. The fact that they are changed is very significant and wonderful. We have tried to grapple with the substantive, not just symbolic, but it is also a symbolic matter: as in how to make Reform Jewish religion, for us, resonate in our own lives and in our own modern constructs and theories and the reality is what appeals to me is the tolerance and openness. And I see the gender-exclusiveness as something that just doesn't serve that process.

**Congregant 4:** Maybe education on who the women in the text are and what they did would help.

**Congregant 5:** The inclusion of women in the service is a separate issue from the gender-language. Inclusion of women is sadly lacking. It needs to be there,

but it is a separate issue from the language. Inclusion of other prayers along with those prayers is a better idea. It is important to keep in mind that we don't want to lose people because of what we are doing, we want to make it as inclusive as possible. We are doing this and we are also doing this makes more sense to me.

**Congregant 1:** In the Temple's long-range planning it has been considered to write our own prayerbook. Even if we go that way it will be controversial. Many people do not want to be spiritually challenged at services.

**Congregant 8:** Change is very difficult, especially for adults. We have a 4,000 year old tradition that we'd like to see last another 4,000 years. We should put up with some grief so that the next generation can benefit.

**Congregant 1:** We have a congregation of many converts who learned Judaism as adults. We have a great capacity to grow toward the things that really speak to us.

**Congregant 7:** There are 2,500 years of commonality in Jewish worship. I have a concern that changing the prayers causes a break with tradition. If we add to it - it will enhance it. I want to make sure that the ties to the past are not separated.

**Congregant 1:** It is nice to go to any congregation and to know what is going on and to generally be able to follow it.

**Congregant 6:** To make any changes needs strong leadership of the rabbi.

**Congregant 9:** Our rabbi was initially resistant.

**Congregant 1:** The rabbi's views of God are very traditional. He wasn't comfortable with it, but he now thinks it is worth at least this step.

**Congregant 6:** The CCAR-sponsored book made it more official.

**Congregant 4:** We should be careful of what is given up. It may be irreversible.

**Congregant 2:** I would be upset if the *Sh'ma* was changed.

**Congregants 7 and 5, with Congregant 9 in agreement:** It becomes an issue with *Avinu Malkenu*. The English may not be the issue. It is too hard to change the English to *Avinu Malkenu*.

**Congregant 5:** For me, the change in the language is not so critical. I think



we really have to look generally at the kids. When we were growing up, feminism and language were not such an issue. Now the issue is discussed everywhere. If we suffer with it, we may have to because it is necessary for the kids - for the boys and the girls. The language is really important.

**Congregant 9:** If you change the English you have to change the Hebrew.

**Congregant 3:** The Jewish connection is to the past and the future. Within the tradition is "reforming." This is not just a woman's issue. The fact is that the rabbinical system is always changing. For example, we no longer slaughter sheep. In Judaism, the connection to the past is very important. It can be changed as long as you respect the balance. The rabbi is trying to strike a balance. The rabbi mentioned at a meeting that he finds that the converts tend to embrace the *Gates of Prayer* - it is part of their tradition. Another part of the balance is the need to make the changes to include people and not to exclude any people. The rabbi came to the committee meeting, but did not push any opinion. He was supportive. He seemed more reluctant in the past.

**Congregant 6:** He did make some changes in the past, but he didn't go all the way.

**Congregant 3:** The Union needs to assist the rabbis almost like an instruction manual that goes with the new book, "So you are about to get a new prayerbook". It should include what the rabbi needs to do and how the rabbi should inform the congregation. We discovered when we introduced the gender-sensitive *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat* before the first service there was a need to educate. When I led services I took eleven minutes to introduce the Avot..

**Congregant 4:** Faith has its feet planted firmly in history and time. I think I am now willing to go through the process of change. [Note: This is a new attitude since the meeting's beginning.]

**Congregant 1:** Perhaps if the congregation had to spend the money it would have been a longer and a better process. Or if the rabbi had taken a more decisive leadership role.

**Congregant 3:** The gift of the books "forced" the issue. That was a good thing. The rabbi said we do not have to accept this gift.

**Congregant 6:** My husband and I felt inspired by the other book and purchased the gender-sensitive *House of Mourning* prayerbook.

**Congregant 3:** The donation avoided some of the controversy. The rabbi will accept the views of the majority. It is part of tradition that the rabbis argue and



disagree and then accept the majority - the rabbi taught us that.

**Congregant 2:** He is able to listen and respond. He hears the congregation.

**Congregant 1:** This is a congregation that does not want to be told what is to be done.

**Congregant 5:** The rabbi views his primary function as an educator.

**Congregant 3:** The prayerbook was first introduced more than once a month.

**Congregant 1:** On the calendar he had blocked out once a month. But he himself said he tends to use it more often.

**Congregant 9:** In this congregation there may never be a pattern. It is going to be experimental.

**Stacia Deutsch:** Please give an example of one way this prayerbook or a new one could be introduced. What would be helpful from your experience?

**Congregant 1:** It seems that there is a two-step process. The first step is deciding to purchase and to use it. The second is to teach the congregation how to use it. Like the *Avot* prayer, when it was first introduced there was no tune to it, it was like subliminal man on SNL (Saturday Night Live). The rabbi needs to say, "This is how we are going to do it."

**Congregant 8:** Use all the temple facilities - the religious school teachers, the music director. Tell them what the new prayerbook will have, what it will not have. Also have an open forum available for people to talk about it.

**Congregant 2:** Teach it in the religious school.

**Congregant 5:** The rabbi should introduce it before the service.

**Congregant 3:** I think it is imperative that it is announced in the temple bulletin with a welcome to people to respond to this process. To let people know that we want to hear from them.

**Congregant 5:** If the change is going to be policy, I think I would wait to see if there are complaints. Maybe later bring in a speaker.

**Congregant 9:** There will always be arguments. We've had congregants quit over a sermon. This discussion will go on - but until you have the concrete, this conversation is really meaningless and polarizing.

**Congregant 7:** A choice of a prayerbook is very important to a congregation. I think we should examine what we want, what we find important, and see if we can find a prayerbook. The congregation should set standards and have a one year process where we use many different services and offer people a chance to respond to them - to make the process engaging and involving.

**Congregant 6:** I think the rabbi should take a leadership role into why it is religiously grounded that we do this.

**Congregant 3:** The Union needs to make a guide for rabbis in general to foster awareness in *Klal Yisrael* and the power of words. Words can exclude or include. The Union needs to look at text and not to conform to some rule, maybe not even be consistent. If there are one or two "his" that fall back on the page - no harm done if it reads better or makes a more personal message. Maybe services in various stages of transition in the book, one that is not too different, one that is very. It is not good if we are changing - if where we are going is not that good.

**Congregant 9:** Gradualism, if it is shorn of the rationale, inclusivity is not just to have some pretty word, there is serious meaning on the page.

**Congregant 1:** We shouldn't imagine that there aren't deep differences among Reform Jews as to what the meaning should be. For some the meaning is not gender, but I think it is. Look at us thinking about what would go down at one congregation. The Union has hundreds of congregations. They aren't going to go leaping into the twenty-first century on this - they'd leave too many people behind.

**Congregation Beth El  
Sudbury, Massachusetts  
Rabbi Lawrence Kushner**

Congregation Beth El is a community of 400 households. Rabbi Lawrence Kushner has been in Sudbury for twenty-three years. Eighteen years ago, when the Worship Committee said they wanted to make a new prayerbook, Rabbi Kushner suggested they spend a year praying with the Orthodox *De Sola Pool Siddur*. They rejected that option and went to work on a new book. He did not attend the Committee meetings, but did teach a liturgy class when asked. The comments of Nancy Gossels, co-chair of the Worship Committee in the late 1970's, follow. Her words have been edited to remove the interviewer's questions and to highlight the important aspects of the conversation.

December 1993

**Nancy Lee Gossels**  
**Co-Editor, *Vetaher Libenu* :**

In 1979, we kept running out of copies of the prayerbook. Eight people formed a committee to decide what to do - whether to purchase a book or to create our own.

A member of the Committee had read an article which talked about the word "He" being idolatry. It was a new idea to us and some people thought she (the woman with the article) was crazy. So, we decided to call God "It" for practical reasons rather than theological.

Joan and I, basically "re-edited" the book alternating metaphors for God, and no one ever said a word. Because of the prayerbook there were a few resignations, but we had expected a more emotional response.

The Rabbi was uncomfortable with the writing of the prayerbook, but he said he'd neither support it or denounce it. He was neutral.

We chose to alternate "He" and "She" - at first it was jarring and later it became unconscious. The book is in its eighth printing and is in use all over the world.

I guess we don't realize the power of language - I guess many women did feel cut off.

It was done just for our congregation.

We felt that the idea of creating an I-Thou relationship with God was most important. But other stuff, like the gender-language got played up more.

There are a few things I would do differently in writing another prayerbook. I think we should do our own typesetting of the Hebrew. I would change a few words, and change more of the Hebrew... The prayerbook was revised in 1980 to add some other needs of the congregation. This coming year we will start work on our own High Holiday *Machzor*.

**Rockdale Temple  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
Rabbi Mark Goldman**

Rockdale Temple is a 1,000-family congregation in Cincinnati, Ohio. It is located less than a mile from two other large Reform congregations. It is one of the oldest synagogues in Ohio and also in the country.

The issues regarding gender language at Rockdale are interesting, because, although the Rabbi considers the congregation to be "mainstream" Reform, they continue to use the *Union Prayer Book* regularly.

Rabbi Goldman's comments are found here in their entirety, with very little editing:

**14 October, 1994**

**Rabbi Mark Goldman:**

To give you some perspective, I was ordained in 1967 during the Six-Day War in Israel.

Rockdale Temple was founded in 1824, ironically as an Orthodox congregation. There wasn't any Reform Judaism then. It converted to Reform around 1840-1850. David Phillipson was one of the passionate Reformers and a peer of Isaac Mayer Wise, who they thought was God, not Wise, but Phillipson and he mirrored after his death what continued here vis a vis prayerbook style and gender usage. As far as that generation was concerned, God was a man - the Father in Heaven.

I was ordained in 1967. I become an Army chaplain and I went to Temple Emanu-El in New York. I become the Assistant Rabbi at Temple Emanu-El. Dr. Nathan Perelman was the Senior Rabbi, Dr. Ronald Sobel was Associate, who is now Senior. In New York City, that is the largest synagogue in the world and to this day they are still using the old *Union Prayer Book* and to my knowledge they are still saying "Father" and "mankind" and using Ashkenazic Hebrew. However, when I first was the Assistant there, the UAHC came out with a glossary of terms or preferred substitutions. I can't remember what office sent it and I began to sneak in where it said "mankind," "humankind," or "humanity". Or if it said "Father" I would do something like, "Author of Peace" - which I continue to this day. Your specificity about Rockdale becomes colored in what I experienced.

Then I was in Long Island for fourteen years and we used principally *Shaare Tefilah, Gates of Prayer*. Even there I didn't like the masculinity and I changed it. My oldtimers would say, "You are not reading it right" because that generation was committed to "If it is printed in the prayerbook it is Torah miSinai

and you don't change it."

So when I came to Rockdale, they were still a classically Reform Temple. That was in 1986. The preponderant majority of the service was in English. I am in my ninth year now. My first year was difficult because I was questioned about my Jewishness because of how I prayed. My first service, the president of the Temple (we are dear friends now) was seated on the *bima*, and we get to the *Va'anachnu* and after I am going to go back and do "May the time not be distant.." and he taps me on the shoulder and he says, "Mark we don't do that here." "Do what?" He says, "We don't genuflect." So I said to him I'd talk to him later and I told him after the service, "You may tell me you don't like the sermon, or you don't agree with something, but you may not tell me how to pray." That is what happened. I use that story metaphorically because in my first year I started to bring changes about here. I'd call this a mainstream temple now. Although what we do, some people might call traditional, much more Hebrew - you'll see people bowing during the *Barechu*, and certainly during the *Va'anachnu*, and we hold hands at the end of the service during *Oseh Shalom*, none of that went on. And it is still anathema to some people although it has grown in popular acceptability. So to hear people singing and davening this year during the High Holidays was a *fer piece*, as they say in the South.

From 1986 however... that is the canvas background to your question... From the moment I got here, if I changed a word in the book to a gender-sensitive or gender-neutral, I would say the people over 60 and above - sometime reacted in what I'd call an anal retentive way. They didn't want to change. Change is difficult. They felt it was sacrilegious. To be responsive to the needs of those who want the old book - they call *Gates of Prayer* the new book even though it was published in 1975 - I still from time to time will be using the old *Union Prayer Book* - it is like giving salt and pepper to a salad. And we announce it so that the old crowd, if they really are *kvetching*, "You're only using the..." if they bother to read the *Israelite* and they want to have a service that is "theirs," it's announced.

Now, habitually, your friend and soon-to-be-colleague Mark Goldman while using the old book will still do what I did as an Assistant Rabbi at Emanu-El. I will switch what is patently a masculine statement A) because I feel that that is not what is required today in terms of meaning; B) I shy away from some of the anthropomorphisms. I don't like the anthropomorphisms.

We had services this last July in the outdoor chapel. There is a woman in the congregation who is the librarian now. She is in her early fifties I would guess - from Temple Israel in Saint Louis, and she grew up classical Reform. This woman, when I first came to Rockdale, I was here a few weeks and had just done my first *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*, she had made an appointment, and I am just giving you the facts here, she came in with a legal pad listing



everything I had done wrong. What she meant by wrong was that it wasn't right for her. One of the things she said was, "Didn't I learn at HUC that God was Father and King, it says *"Melech."* Further she didn't like that I was letting in anyone in the Temple that didn't agree with her. I should tell them to please join Wise or Sholom. Needless to say this was one of my more painful encounters in my early ministry here at Rockdale.

She can't accept change. So there she sat when we came back from Martha's Vineyard in the outdoor chapel. I was early for the service.. and she said "Are you changing God into a neutral person again tonight?" Next to her was a friend of hers, and she said, "Mark, please don't change the words tonight." So to Danny Rabishaw's (the Assistant Rabbi) consternation and amusement, when we read the service we read just what the publisher printed in the old book (the *Union Prayer Book*). They were in orgasmic delight. After the service, hugs and kisses like I had given them their favorite ice cream. ..

That generation says the following.. They feel that the eloquence of the old book is superior to the rhetoric of the new book.

One of my favorite men....he was president of the Temple... is still a little uncomfortable when I do that...for that group, the changes mean I am taking away their childhood. What is even funnier, Stacia, is that there is a group of their children, who are younger than I. I will, if God lets me, be 55 in January. They are in their 40's and I had them in Sunday School when I was an intern. Some of them would be happier if I used just the *Union Prayer Book* and the old *Union Hymnal*.

So, I did something very interesting. Every year for the last several years, I started doing one Shabbat where we are going to honor someone or someones...Last year we honored a family that came from Germany, Bavaria, and the like, in the mid 1800's and became very wealthy. They wanted a short service. I did a service using the old *Union Prayer Book*, not changing a thing, using old music - "God is in His Holy Temple," "God of the Fathers.." - again orgasmic delight. I have never had so many compliments from that age group. Again it was nostalgic, it was a wonderful service.

Those who came in as members in the last decade thought it was horrible.. "How could I?," "The music was.." Where was their *Oseh Shalom*?" The dichotomy became apparent. So what did I do? I, from time to time, use the old *Union Prayer Book*. We announce it. On Saturday, when there are no *B'nai Mitzvah* we use the *Union Prayer Book* or *Gates of Prayer* alternately or simultaneously.

Eight years ago, I discovered that when there is no *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* - very few people come. It seems ridiculous to have a soloist and the organist

come for three people. So I started a "Bible Study in the Boardroom." There, I would start studying the liturgy with them. I would juxtapose the *Union Prayer Book* with the *Gates of Prayer* and talk theology and the meaning of the prayer. And they discuss it and they talk about it. And my little old blue-haired ladies...they adore this and they get mad at the *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* because we don't have this. But in that context we will use alternately the two books...Therefore they will have both language idioms present.

There is a man in the Temple...he, amazingly, has kept abreast of the times. In honor of his 83rd birthday, he donated the gender-sensitive prayerbook of the Reform movement because he felt we should have them available. So we use them from time to time and when we go on our board retreat...we've used it and then I teach the board. Rather than doing a formal service, we use that, and then they get a sense of it.

Were I to analyze this, when I teach I use a time line that I learned from Dr. Rivkin...what we see is that Judaism is a meandering stream. There used to be a religious school textbook by that name, "Judaism is a Meandering Stream." If we were to look at the Ohio River, where it is flowing in its riverbed is not where it flowed hundreds of years ago. So geology teaches us that the river changes its course. So did Judaism. I love the metaphor of the river - so that if you take the idiom and push it to its limits - the course of the water will push out dirt here, rocks here, and shmutz, so that it is not only water and over the aeons of time, it changes its route. So too Judaism. We like to think that Judaism grows up monolithically like a statue. Right? On the contrary, no...

And so it is...we use at least two-thirds *Gates of Prayer* kind of stuff. One-third the other. And that is being generous. And we are one of the only temples that tries to do that. It has also helped me manage change here.

The bottom line is that there is still a component of the congregation that would prefer I don't change the language. God is a man and is King in Heaven and "If you do it that way all is right in the world, Mark." And interestingly enough the most ardent supporters of that are women. They get security from daddies in the sky or grandpas in the sky. It is like Michelangelo's depiction of God on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. So God is with a long beard. They don't want it to be a woman.

By contrast, the moment I became a rabbi, the feminist movement was in full swing. I come into Emanu-El as the Assistant Rabbi and we are having a ladies auxiliary lunch, that is the Sisterhood to you and me. And those were the days of Betty Friedan...and since I was the Assistant Rabbi, I was invited to do the *motzi*. I do it, you know, "...*melech ha olam*..." And the speaker, who was a feminist, says to me, "What makes you think God is a man?" And we got into this hot discussion. She realized I was on her side, but I was doing what I was told.

She used it then in her speech to talk about women's issues when they were *de novo*....

What I have done in my teaching is not only to get into gender-issues, but to talk about what God is...It is a catalyst for what do we really believe about God -issues of theodicy arise if we are not tied to God as Father and so forth.

There is a woman in my community who is a Jew by choice. She was severely sexually abused by her father. So this young woman who today is 40, she found Rockdale in her spiritual search from church to temple. She came here, found a home here, and developed a relationship with me. It has been one of the most difficult pastoral relationships in my life. And she has blossomed....she hated any reference to God as "Father" because it always conjured up what her father did to her. Fathers are bad. Fathers can hurt you emotionally and sexually. And I have been even more sensitized, when I am with this woman to the language of prayer, spinning off impacts in other chunks. I have had to help her to understand that if we are using the *Union Prayer Book*, I am doing it for Mrs. Kaplan who prefers it that way every once in a while, but she can say other than "Father."

**Congregation Shaare Emeth  
Saint Louis, Missouri  
Rabbi Jeffrey Stiffman**

Rabbi Jeffrey Stiffman is the Senior Rabbi of a 1,700 family congregation in Saint Louis, Missouri. He met me in Cincinnati during a business trip. I suggested a few questions for him to think about before our discussion. Rabbi Stiffman came prepared with a typed synopsis of both the history of gender-language change in his congregation and a file of bulletin articles and response letters. Presented here in its entirety is the document he wrote entitled, "A Brief Outline of Language Issues at Shaare Emeth."

**19 October, 1994**

**Rabbi Jeffrey Stiffman:**

In 1981, Susan Talve and Jim Goodman came to Shaare Emeth to share the position of Assistant Rabbi. They avoided using masculine names for God. This made some of the members uncomfortable, so I processed it through the Worship Committee and then the board. We had some bulletin articles about the subject, and some discussions in auxiliary meetings, etc.

Although we tried to avoid the use of many of the masculine terms, the term "Lord" seemed to remain the same. Sometimes we changed it and

sometimes we did not. Our rationale was that "Lord" is used more as a term for the Divine and less for royalty - therefore it no longer really has much of a male connotation. Susan, Jim, and I thus avoided all masculine terms except Lord.

Gaylia Rooks came to us in '84 and Lucy Dinner in '88. They, along with Jim Bennett continued the practice of using "Lord," but not other male names. The regulars who worshiped with us became used to the changes. Many who came irregularly or only on the Yamim Noraim still complained that the changes took their mind off the prayers and onto the changes.

In September '93, Janine Schloss and Lisa Goldstein replaced Lucy and Jim. The congregation was excited, yet concerned, that both Assistant Rabbis were women. It was a time of education until the holidays when both rabbis impressed everyone with their pulpit demeanor and the quality of their sermons.

Before the holidays, both mentioned to me that they were uncomfortable using "Lord." They asked why we couldn't be consistent. I said, "OK, let's go with using 'Eternal.'" My thought was that, since we had been through the discussion twelve years before, we could not complete the process. This was a mistake on my part. Changing "Lord" meant changing the "Sh'ma" and other basic prayers. It also was a mistake introducing this without announcement at the Yamim Noraim - too many twice-a-year people there. I should have processed it first.

Complaints came in from some twenty congregants by mail, many more by phone and word of mouth. A Vice-President of the congregation, a very intelligent man, said that it ruined his holiday. Many people found the change intrusive. Some blamed the two new women rabbis.

I then sent a reply on gender-sensitive language to all who complained to me, plus the officers. Processing it through the Worship Committee, we decided to do the following:

1. For the time being, when using our regular prayerbooks, we will continue using "Lord" but change all other words.
2. Once a month, we will use a Xeroxed gender-sensitive service, with an explanation at the beginning by one of the rabbis. This was done twice last year. All but one of the critics said that using the service was fine. Most liked it better because they didn't have to think about the changes.
3. We will await the publication of a gender-sensitive prayerbook.

Since that time, all has quieted down. Now that the CCAR has published its hard-back gender-sensitive book, a group of families within the committee

and congregation is trying to raise the funds to buy 350 of them for our regular Friday night worship. This will be processed through our committee and Board of Directors. It is our hope to use them for at least half of our services until a complete prayerbook is published. Stay tuned for updates.



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(Ecclesiastes 12:12)

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