Rabbis in Relationship:

A Feminist Critique of *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*

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Abstract

The purpose of this work is to explore the ways that feminism and the presence of women in the rabbinate has changed the model of the rabbinate set forth in Rabbi Jack H Bloom's book *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar.* This thesis explores the ways in which it is ineffective and unhealthy to use the rabbi as a symbol. Symbolic exemplarhood upholds unrealistic expectations for both the rabbi and the rabbi's family, and it can also in some cases preclude the congregation from developing their own meaningful relationships to Jewish life (because the rabbi symbolizes an unattainable ideal). Additionally, the model is outdated as it assumes a hierarchical mindset of the rabbi as 'separate from' the community in all areas of life.

Because Bloom completed his research before women were first ordained, I reasoned that women in the rabbinate and the influence of feminist thought would have had a significant impact on breaking down his model. I used narrative interviews as well as feminist scholarship, Jewish text, and prior research done on clergy and the Protestant ministry in order to determine the ways in which modern rabbis in the field do and do not adhere to Bloom's guidelines of symbolic exemplarhood. The results of my research have informed my articulation of an alternative model for the rabbinate that focuses on authenticity rather than living up to projected expectations. This model encourages rabbis to be in relationship with their congregants, allowing them to have boundaries that are appropriately porous. This model discourages the presence of walls built so high that the rabbi and the rabbi's family is never welcomed as part of the community because symbolic exemplarhood stands in the way of anyone ever knowing who the rabbi really is.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this work would have been impossible without advice, input, feedback, critique, and support from numerous people along the way.

First, it is crucial to acknowledge the generation of women rabbis who paved the way for me to not only embark upon this journey to the rabbinate, but who challenged the existing structure to the extent that one is able to see measurable change over the last several decades. I would like to specifically thank Rabbi Laura Geller, who first 'broke the stained glass ceiling,' and was the first to help me see that my discomfort with the model of *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar* was likely a question of gender.

I would also like to thank my mentor, Rabbi Paul Kipnes. He first introduced me to *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*, and has accompanied me through every step of my struggle with Bloom's work: from pushing me to see it's value, to helping me to discover a model for the rabbinate that aligns more closely with my priorities and values.

There are eleven rabbis who are known in this study only by pseudonym. Without the time that they gave to me, and their honest, candid and heartfelt words, much of this thesis would be only conjecture. I am indebted to them for allowing the "Torah of their lives" to be the primary source for this study.

I am grateful to Dr. Bruce Phillips, who walked me through the process of narrative research and helped me to filter the enormous amount of data I collected.

It is an honor for me to acknowledge Dr. Rachel Adler, who worked with me every step of the way in the creation of this work. She helped me to ground my theories seriously and intentionally in feminist thought and Jewish tradition. She pushed me to make deep connections and thoughtful conclusions as she edited draft after draft of this work. I am so grateful for her discerning eye and insightful guidance.

My initial shock at *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar* came because I had two parents who successfully kept me from feeling as though I was in a fishbowl for most of my life. Thank you to my parents, Rabbi Steven Mason and Patty Mason who never allowed me to take myself too seriously, or to see myself as 'separate from' my community in any way.

As this study has shown, to be a rabbinic spouse is complicated enough to inspire a thesis unto itself. It is impossible to express my love and appreciation throughout this writing process, this path to ordination, and on this life journey to my loving husband, Josh. Thanks to his eternal patience, love for editing, and penchant for honesty, he is truly prepared to be a rabbinic spouse.

And last but not least, I am thankful to, and in deep admiration of Rabbi Jack H Bloom. While we disagree on the ideal rabbinate, his deep scholarship and courage to name this phenomenon opened this area to me, my criticism, and my exploration.

To all of you, *Todah Rabah.*

Contents

Section One: Introduction

I'd like to begin this paper with two short stories that will give you insight into who I am, and why I've taken on this project:

Story number one: Friday nights in our home when I was growing up always started out the same. We'd eat dinner in the dining room instead of the kitchen. My mom would light the candles, my dad would bless the wine. My brothers and I would say *motzi* over the *challah*, and then, start arguing about something. Either he hit me or I was looking at him or something that started off funny turned sour very fast. My mother would scold us, sighing, "Kids, please. Not on Shabbat." Then one of two things would happen: my dad would leave for work, and the rest of us would cuddle on the couch and watch sitcoms together. Other nights we would go to temple as a family. There, my brothers and I would run around with the other kids, trying to get the good cookies at *oneg*, or stealing candy from the secretary's drawer. We may have been the rabbi's kids, but as far as we were concerned, we were normal.

Story number two: It is October in Buffalo. Being a wonderfully quaint Western New York autumn, the temple youth group hosts a Halloween Hayride and Pumpkin Picking event. I am 13 years old. When my friends and I are appropriately reprimanded by the chaperone for breaking the rules, I say to him in a most unbecoming manner, "*Don't you know who I am?*" He was un-fazed, either because he did not know, or more likely because he did not care. When my parents caught wind of my behavior, I was in more trouble than I had ever been for sneaking out of services, for interrupting my parent's *oneg* conversations, or for stealing candy from the secretary's drawer. "You are not different," my

parents told me sternly. "You are held to the same standard as everyone else."

I grew up understanding this completely: that I was not different from other people simply because my father was a rabbi. As shown in the story above, when I tested those waters, I was swiftly corrected. I was expected to be good because those were the expectations – not because I was on display for the rest of the world. In my fourth year of rabbinical school, I was assigned to read Rabbi Jack H Bloom's book, *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*. The assignment was intended to highlight the complexity of rabbinic relationships. Many of my classmates were shocked by Bloom's warnings that congregants would someday peek into their shopping carts at the store, or gossip about their children. Classmates shared horror stories of the rabbi's families they'd known – like the rabbi's son who was obligated to scan any restaurant or store he entered in order to say hello to any congregants that might be there. Many of my peers left class that day wondering if this journey was a wise decision for their families and themselves. They were apprehensive of the 'fishbowl' life Bloom described, and worried that they and their families would never live 'normal' lives again. They felt overwhelmed by the expectation that they would represent God on earth, and I left class feeling frustrated that Bloom's interpretation of rabbi/congregant relationships was the only model given to us. It seemed to me that Bloom's strictly drawn boundaries and assumptions that the rabbi as a symbol of God separate the rabbi from the people in, what I felt, was a detrimental manner.

The life that Bloom describes in *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar* was not the life I had lived as a rabbi's child, and it was not the life that I had seen my parents live as a rabbi and a Jewish educator. When I was throwing a temper tantrum or asking for a piggyback ride from my dad who was dressed in a freshly pressed funeral suit, I knew that

my father was not God – or even a symbol of God. (And certainly no child would refuse to go to bed if they thought God – or even God's representative – was the one giving orders!) I knew that the rabbi must not be the perfect Jew, because even his children misbehaved by drinking our grape juice before finishing our blessings, or kicking one another under the table and disrupting the *shalom bayit*. As a rabbi's child, I learned to love a Judaism that was open to my own interpretation, a Judaism that never had to be performed in the perfect way in order to be valid. Judaism in our home was a very real way to live. It was not something fragile that had to be kept on a shelf, or only used very carefully.

A rabbi's child knows that if her or his parent is the rabbi, then the rabbi cannot be God, or even a symbol for God. I was surprised to learn that there are those who believe the rabbi to represent God at all, and even more surprised when I was taught that I ought to resign myself to this belief. I felt that the *Rabbi as a Symbolic Exemplar* portrayed an **unhealthy** and **unsustainable** model of the rabbinate. I knew that there must be another way to approach the unique role of rabbi. I was looking for language to describe a Judaism in which there is no conflict between who rabbis are as people, and how rabbis represent themselves to (and are perceived by) their congregations. I was looking for a model of the rabbinate where congregants learn from their rabbis as the people that they truly are, not as a representation of a God on high, or even as a representation of a perfect Jew.

It seemed clear to me, based only on my own observations that the model of Symbolic Exemplarhood that Bloom proposed in the 1970's does not carry the same weight for rabbis today as it did for Bloom at that time. When I mentioned my area of interest to my mentor and supervisor Rabbi Laura Geller, she wondered whether or not the change in approach to symbolic exemplarhood might be related to gender. Perhaps women in the

rabbinate have influenced the ways that both men and women approach the role of the rabbi in a different way than BIoom describes. I was intrigued by the thought, and set out to learn more. I wanted to know how feminist theory might redefine the rabbinate, and how feminism may have already shattered the model of *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar.*

Impact of Women in the Rabbinate

In 1991, Rabbi Janet Marder wrote about the impact women are having on the rabbinate, and the ways that the rabbinate seemed to be changing since Rabbi Sally Priesand's ordination in 1972. In her article, "How Women Are Changing the Rabbinate," Marder noted the trends of the last nineteen years as she observed more and more women entering what had previously been an exclusively male profession.[1] Marder noticed trends related to the ways that women set boundaries differently than their male colleagues, the kinds of congregational jobs that women prefer, and the ways that women build relationships with co-workers and congregants.[2] Since Marder's article, the presence of women has become even more normative. When I entered Hebrew Union College as a rabbinical student in 2004, my rabbinical class was made up of fifty-four students – only sixteen of whom were men. In 2006 the first transgendered rabbi was ordained at the Hebrew Union College,[3] thereby complicating the supposed male-female gender binary, and expanding the understanding of what it means to identify as either male or female in

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1. Janet Marder, "How Women Are Changing the Rabbinate." *Reform Judaism Magazine*, (Summer, 1991) 1-8, 41.

2. Ibid.

3. Rebecca Spence, "Transgender Jews Now Out of Closet, Seeking Communal Recognition." *The Jewish Daily Forward Online*, (December, 2008) http://www.forward.com/articles/14854/.

the rabbinate.

These trends show that the rabbinate *is* changing, in ways that Jack Bloom might not have anticipated when he first published *The Rabbi as a Symbolic Exemplar* in 1972. While Bloom does not intentionally present a gendered model of the rabbinate, I have come to the conclusion that his model is androcentric in ways that he might not have considered. This is explained further in chapter three of this paper.

Today, characteristics that are assigned to males and to females can be found in all rabbis, regardless of whether or not they identify as female or male. As both male and female rabbis redefine stereotypical gender roles in the work that they do, a blending of female and male voices becomes the norm. The changes we have seen in the gender makeup of the rabbinate chip away at the model that Bloom sets forth in *The Rabbi as a Symbolic Exemplar*. The new rabbi that emerges is able be his or her authentic self without the unreasonable limitations that Bloom sets forth.

Methodology and Literature Review[4]

I approached my question about the relevance of *The Rabbi as a Symbolic Exemplar* in three ways, which are represented by the following four sections of this paper.

- The second section, which follows this introduction is dedicated to the examination the role of symbols in religion, and the ways in which imagining the rabbi to be a symbol is problematic.

4. Throughout this methodology I will name the books I used that were influential to this study. Material will be cited here if I am expanding on ideas presented in the literature. I will also include a citation for materials that are mentioned here, but not cited directly in the paper. For books that are only named here but expanded upon later in the paper, full citations can be found when the material is quoted directly.

- The third section explores symbolic exemplarhood through a feminist lens, determining the ways that feminism provides a different vision for the rabbinate.
- The fourth section is the analysis of research that I conducted via individual interviews with rabbis in the field.
- The conclusion and fourth section of the paper contains my own vision for a future rabbinate that is based on a feminist model of relationships and authenticity.

Section Two: Changing Symbols

Symbols are a meaningful and important part of religious life. Therefore, it is important to understand how the rabbi might be misinterpreted as such. Included in the first section of the study are reasons why relating to the rabbi as a symbol is dangerous for the rabbi, the rabbi's family, and the congregation. Using primarily Victor Turner's 1967 book *The Forest of Symbols*, along with supporting evidence from Catharine Bell's *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions,* James Heisig's article on Symbolism from the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, and Mari Womack's *Symbols and Meaning* I was able to define religious symbolism as a means by which rituals, objects and myths are multi-vocal and multi-layered in helping people to make meaning of their complex and mystifying life experiences. Turner's research was enormously influential in helping scholars to understand that which is familiar (their own beliefs and symbols) by studying and analyzing that which is unfamiliar. Turner examines the role of symbols in Ndembu culture, studying and interpreting the ways that rituals and objects in this society function in the lives of the Ndembu people. From there he draws conclusions that shed light on our own familiar customs, recognizing that though our cultures are very different, there are similarities in the ways

that we use the symbol systems of religion and culture to make sense of our lives.[5]

Bloom would have his readers believe that the rabbi is utilized as a symbol in Jewish culture. In *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar,* Bloom describes the ways that he believes the rabbi functions as a symbol by both representing the Jewish people to God, and representing God to the Jewish people. He bases this on his own experience as a rabbi, research in the field of psychology, and the role of the rabbi in Jewish life as he understands it. Bloom goes on to describe the way that symbolic exemplarhood separates the rabbi and the rabbi's family from the community. Bloom explains that when one is living as a symbol, one must give the appearance of living up to the expectations of the community whenever one is observable by the community. If it is ever discovered that the rabbi does not fulfill those expectations, it can shatter the relationship to God and Judaism for the person who understood the rabbi as a symbol of those things. Naturally, the pressure of these expectations is very trying for the rabbi. The book continues with suggestions for living with this life in which one is constantly living out other's projections of what a rabbi ought to be, rather than whom one actually is inside.[6]

The idea of symbolic exemplarhood creates an aura of mystique around the rabbi. Perhaps it is for this reason that the life of the rabbi often seems very intriguing to those who do not get to know the rabbi well. Books are written by and about rabbis in order to attempt to explain the complexities of the rabbinic role. In *The New Rabbi*, Stephen Fried details the growing pains of a congregation and its rabbi as the rabbi enters retirement, and the congregation looks for someone to fill his shoes. Both the rabbi and the congre-

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5. Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,1967).

6. Jack H. Bloom, *The Rabbi As Symbolic Exemplar: By the Power Vested in Me* (New York: The Haworth Press, 2002).

gation struggle to redefine themselves: both the rabbi without the congregation, and the congregation led by someone who does not fit their image of what and who a rabbi ought to be.[7] In *American Rabbis: Facts and Fiction*, Rabbi David J Zucker seeks to vocalize the challenges and changes of the American rabbinate over the last 150 years.[8] Books like these were important to my research order to examine the way that the rabbi is perceived by others, and the way that the rabbi perceives the rabbi's own role. This literature gave a perspective other than Bloom's on the expectations and challenges of presumed symbolic exemplarhood. Similarly, there is an extensive body of literature on the lives of Protestant ministers and the ways that they function in their communities that can be found in numerous journals like *Sociology of Religion*, *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, and *Christian Century*. Christian researchers have directly asked the question about how happy pastors are in their roles, whether or not they are symbols, and how this expectation might be affected by the way that they encounter relationships in their work. Some of these publications have questioned the assumed boundaries of pastoral relationships and friendship, exploring a possibility for closeness that *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar* advises against. It was important in this study to compare the research of Protestant ministers who allow for close relationships in their work to the loneliness described in the literature above, which is focused on the lives of rabbis.

In examining the ways in which symbolic exemplarhood is problematic, I came across a body of literature that explored the connection between clergy and abuse of power (particularly clergy sexual abuse). Essays like Dr. Rachel Adler's "A Stumbling Block Before

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7. Stephen Fried, *The New Rabbi* (New York: Bantam Books, 2002).

8. David J. Zucker, *American Rabbis: Facts and Fiction* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1998).

the Blind: Sexual Exploitation in Pastoral Counseling" and Anne Underwood's "Clergy Sexual Misconduct: An Issue of Ethics and Justice," are academic looks at the reasons why clergy are sometimes perpetrators of sexual abuse. Charlotte Schwab gives a first hand account of her own experience as a victim of clergy sexual transgression in *Sex, Lies, and Rabbis: Breaking a Sacred Trust."*[9] This literature concludes that clergy sexual abuse is not a direct result of symbolic exemplarhood, nor are rabbis victims of the expectations placed upon them. However, it does elucidate a link between the power assigned to rabbis as symbols, and power that is sometimes abused by rabbis. In analyzing the danger of symbolizing something that is larger and more powerful than oneself, it is important to recognize the pitfalls of believing that one *is* or that one *symbolizes* more than a human is capable of being.

Section Three: Lessons from Feminist Theory for Symbolic Exemplarhood

I was particularly interested in the ways that feminist theory and women in the rabbinate may provide insight into relationships and boundaries that would challenge the assumptions of Jack Bloom's model of the *Rabbi as a Symbolic Exemplar.* While some of this feminist theory did exist while Bloom was doing the research for *The Rabbi as a Symbolic Exemplar*, there were not yet women practicing as rabbis, nor was God often pictured in non-male terms. I felt it was important to read Bloom's work with a feminist lens, and to consider the ways his conclusions might be different if he were to widen his perspective to include a feminist approach to role modeling and boundaries. In order to have a full understanding of each of these phenomena, it was necessary to research the impacts

9. Charlotte Rolnick Schwab, *Sex, Lies and Rabbis: Breaking A Sacred Trust* (Bloomington: Charlotte Schwab, 2002).

of Jewish feminism, and perspectives of women in the rabbinate that might challenge the hierarchical nature of Bloom's model.

At the suggestion of my thesis advisor, Dr. Rachel Adler, I began my study of feminism with Carol Gilligan's 1982 discussion of the way that women and men differ in their approach to ethical decision-making. Carol Gilligan's *In A Different Voice* served as my basis for critique of Bloom's model of Symbolic Exemplarhood. Her identification of hierarchy as a typically male method of determining ethics as distinct from relationships, which are often a female method of determining morality was critical to this study.[10] Since its publication, Gilligan's theory has been met with both acclaim and criticism. Whether or not Gilligan's model of care is true for all women, it is clear that relationship has become a highly valued aspect of rabbinic life. This is supported by other research on the effects of women in the rabbinate, like "Women, Men and Styles of Clergy Leadership" by Barbara Brown Zikmund, Adair Lummis and Patricia Chase and "In the Same Voice or is It Different?: Gender and the Clergy" by Pamela Nadell and Rita Simon. These articles use Gilligan's language of care to support the hypothesis that women do tend to have a different rabbinic style, and that this is changing the face of the rabbinate for both women and men. This is also reflected in Rabbi Janet Marder's article, "How Women are Changing the Rabbinate."

In order to gain a clear understanding of the impact of women on the rabbinate, and the changing way that women rabbis are perceived as women rabbis become more normative, it was important to have a grasp on the spectrum of Jewish feminist thought

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10. Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

over the last thirty years. Susannah Heschel's compilation *On Being a Jewish Feminist* was important as a thorough examination of the past, present and future of Jewish feminism. Similarly, essays like Rabbi Shaon Brous' "Holy Guilt Trip,"[11] and Rabbi Karen (Chai) Levy's "Sexy Rabbi"[12] articulate the challenges of female rabbis today. Both of these rabbis address the perceived 'problem' of not looking, being, or acting like the picture of a rabbi that most Jews still entertain in their subconscious. Even today, these women rabbis surprise their constituents by not physically embodying the image of a God on high. These contemporary works show the reader that even though much progress has been made to change the way that rabbis are perceived, the misconceptions of the rabbi looking like God – and of God looking like a man with a beard, still exist. When women rabbis perform the same functions as male rabbis, the God projection changes. This research was important in order to determine the outdated nature of *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*. Women on the pulpit challenge the way that Jews imagine God's physical representation, and therefore problematize the rabbi as a symbol of God. Rabbi Laura Geller comments on this specifically in "Reactions to a Woman Rabbi."[13]

Section Four: Voices from the Field

I wanted to get a sense of the ways in which rabbis in the field see themselves as Jewish role models, the ways that they build relationships in their congregations, the frameworks that they use to set boundaries in these relationships, and the impacts of feminism on these frameworks. My goal was to determine the ways in which gender and length of

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11. Ruth Andrew Ellenson ed. *The Modern Jewish Girl's Guide to Guilt.* (New York: Penguin Group, 2005).

12. Danya Ruttenberg ed. *Yentl's Revenge: The Next Wave of Jewish Feminism.* (New York: Seal Press, 2001).

13. Susannah Heschel ed. *On Being a Jewish Feminist.* (New York: Schocken Books,1983).

time in the field would affect a rabbi's approach to boundaries and relationships. I spent approximately forty-five minutes with eleven different rabbis, recorded our conversations, and later transcribed them. The transcripts of the interviews are included as an appendix to this paper. I spoke with four male and four female rabbis who had been out of school between 4-35 years. Each of these rabbis works either as senior, associate, or assistant rabbi in a mid-size or large congregation. I also spoke with one male and one female rabbi who serve solo pulpits. I spoke with one male rabbi on the verge of retirement, who was ordained in 1973, at the very beginning of this turning point in history. Once I completed all of the interviews, I compared the rabbi's responses and looked for themes related to length of time in the field and gender of the rabbis. The results are analyzed in section four of this paper.

Section Five: A Vision for the Future

My final step was to use the information and research that I collected throughout the course of this study to define a vision for the rabbinate that both upholds a Jewish moral standard, and also recognizes and realizes the humanity of the rabbi who makes his or her own authentic Jewish choices. My starting point was Hayim Herring's "The Rabbi as *Moreh Derech* Chayim: Reconceptualizing Today's Rabbinate." He breaks down the terms rav and mara d'atra, offering reasons why they might be considered outdated today. Instead, he presents the modern rabbi as moreh derech chayim, a guide to a [Jewish] way of life.[14] While this does designate the rabbi as a role model, the rabbi is not a symbol in this model. Instead, the rabbi is a teacher, using the text as the authority – not the self. From his reconceptualization, I formulated my own vision for the future based on the whole of

14. Hayim Herring, "The Rabbi as *Moreh Derech Chayim*: Reconceptualizing Today's Rabbinate," in *CCAR Journal: A Reform Jewish Quarterly* (Winter, 2006) 49-58.

this research. My vision includes elements of feminist thought, conclusions from my own field research, and the passion of my own lived experience as part of a rabbinic family.

In Summation

The work that follows is intended to present a modern perspective on the rabbinate, based on research, scholarship, and narrative. It is critical that rabbis and congregants not accept loneliness, burn-out, and abuse of power as 'part of the territory' when it comes to the rabbinic role. Pirke Avot 1:6 reminds us that when we "*aseh lecha rav, k'neh lecha chaver.*" A midrashic translation of this verse might be that "when we make for ourselves a rabbi, we find ourselves a friend." The model of symbolic exemplarhood does not allow modern rabbis to live up to this teaching, as it suggests that rabbis build walls so high, that they may never let their students in. What follows is an exploration of ways to break down those walls so that both rabbis and congregants can make the most out of their relationships in useful, healthy, appropriate and meaningful ways.

Section Two: Changing Symbols

Definition of a Religious Symbol

Symbols in religion keep abstract concepts and constructs within reach of the human mind. As religion serves to provide guidance in the quest for life's greatest questions, symbols break down the complexity into tangible and relatable elements. Therefore, "it is through symbols that religions survive in our midst."[15] As religion seeks to give meaning and purpose to the unknowable, symbols give a tangible dimension to life's greatest questions. Catherine Bell writes, "Religion is essentially a human project to formulate stable and meaningful dimensions behind the accidental, chaotic, and shifting realities of human existence."[16] A ritual, like a myth or a symbol, fills a very distinct role in the religious mind: it "simultaneously imposes an order, accounts for the origin and nature of that order, and shapes people's dispositions to experience that order in the world around them."[17] The symbolic systems of religion, like rituals, myths, and symbols are access points for followers. Symbols put a face to that which is unseen, allowing those grappling with life's challenges to touch and feel and participate in activities that will potentially lead to answers.

Religious symbols are as multi-layered and multi-vocal as the questions and experiences that they represent. A *sukkah* built during the festival of Sukkot represents the search for structure in the midst of vulnerability, and it symbolizes the tenacity of the Israelite

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15. James W. Helsig, "Symbolism" in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed Lindsey Jones (New York: Macmillian Library Reference, 2005), 198.

16. Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 12.

17. Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, 21.

journey across the desert, from slavery to redemption.

The gourds hung inside the *sukkah* bring to mind the harvest and hope for plenty, the call to distribute our bounty to those in need, and the gourd that grew over Jonah's sukkah, which we read about on Yom Kippur. The modern act of building these structures touches on the layered experience of Jewish life over generations. Meaning is accumulated and expanded over time, thus giving the symbol a variety of meanings, all of which relate to the questions, challenges, and experience of those who interact with the symbol. Victor Turner identifies this multi-vocality in his exploration of Ndembu society, by pointing to a ritual in which a pubescent girl laid beneath the *mudyi*, or milk tree. The tree itself dispenses a milky substance reminiscent of breast milk, but the symbolism of the tree and the ritual go well beyond the obvious similarities inherent in the tree itself.[18] Turner calls this multi-vocality of the symbol 'condensation,' meaning that inherent in one object or structure is a representation of many aspects of the society.[19] In the case of *N'kang'a*, the puberty ritual, "the milk tree stands for, *inter alia*, women's breasts, motherhood, a novice at *N'kang'a*, the principle of matriliny, a specific matrilineage, learning, and the unity and persistence of Ndembu society."[20] This ritual of the Ndeumbu society is complex because the life moment that it accompanies is complex. The emotions that accompany transition from pre-pubescent to pubescence range the gamut of universal experience, and this is reflected in the symbol itself.[21] The same is true for the symbols of Jewish life. The *sukkah*,

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18. Mari Womack, *Symbols and Meaning: A Concise Introduction* (Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press, 2005), 3-4.

19. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, 28.

20. Ibid.

21. Turner calls this 'polarization of meaning.' The symbol takes on meaning that ranges from the basest instincts of feeling and emotion (physiological pole), to the principles of society and organization (ideological pole). The symbol bears the weight of it all. See: Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, 28.

and the dwelling in the *midbar* that it represents speak for a universal human experience of liminality, and a search for comfort in moments of in-between. The symbolic meanings of the fragile huts are as varied as the individuals who dwell within them.

The Rabbi as a Symbol

Jack H Bloom describes the rabbi as "a walking, talking, living symbol." He writes,

> "...though 'only' human, each rabbi is a Symbolic exemplar of the divine *and* of a people who encountered the divine. Vertically, rabbis are Symbolic exemplars of God and are expected to emulate and 'stand in' for God. Horizontally, rabbis are Symbolic exemplars of the Jewish people, enjoined to love and care for every last one.[22]

Bloom's depiction of the rabbi does fit the definition of a religious symbol in its simplest terms. Bloom's rabbi is multi-vocal. The rabbi is a single individual who is expected to be a symbol of God to the people, and a symbol of the perfect Jewish person to the people *and* to God. The rabbi speaks on God's behalf, and acts as God prescribes. To Jewish laypeople, the rabbi is everything that they 'ought' to be, embodying the unattainable ideal of the average layperson. However, the rabbi as a symbol is not nearly as complex as the Ndembu ritual or even most comment Jewish symbols, like the *sukkah*. Bloom's symbolic exemplar is a weak version of a religious symbol, bearing limited significance. The rabbi that Bloom describes fits into Bell's understanding of religious symbols as tangible reminders of that that is unseen. When the rabbi is considered a symbolic exemplar, he or she is expected to represent a physical embodiment of God at life's crossroads. According to Bloom, the rabbi facilitates the rituals that bring people from one point in their lives to another by speaking for God at transitional moments. For example, the rabbi names

22. Bloom, *Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*, 153.

the man and woman as husband and wife, and announces the baby as a member of the covenant. [23] The rabbi forgives the dying man's transgressions, and establishes blessing for those in need.[24] According to Bloom, the rabbi is a transmitter of sanctity: acting in God's name, and allowing him or herself to be seen and used in this symbolic capacity. However, using the rabbi as a symbol in this way also confines the understanding of God for the people, for people are in no way as multi-faceted and complex as God. Using the rabbi as a God symbol oversimplifies God for the congregation, limiting attempts to understand divine complexity. The rabbi is a weak example of a symbol.

The assumed symbolic nature of the rabbi is further complicated when one attempts to fit the rabbi into categories that are not meant for humans to permanently occupy. This is when the rabbi as a symbol transitions from being a weak parallel, to a problematic model. The expectation that the rabbi must be a symbol for God on earth informs Bloom's belief that "...rabbi means being set apart."[25] As a symbol for God, Bloom's Symbolic Exemplar falls into God's 'category,' set apart as God sets apart Shabbat,[26] and as God sets apart *Am Yisrael* as *Am Ha-Kadosh.*[27] The rabbi is somehow holier than average

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23. JL Austin coins the term "performative utterance" for a statement that names a situation, or makes it so. Austin describes the utterance, a statement like "I now pronounce you man and wife," as one which 'performs an action,' it does not just describe an action. However, he acknowledges in his work *How To Do Things With Words* that the utterence is not the entirety of the act, rather, it accompanies an act wherein the circumstances are appropriate.

This means that the rabbi does not have singular power to change people's status without the people taking action themselves, too. A marriage does not occur *only* because the rabbi speaks the performative utterance. The marriage occurs because of the series of circumstances organized by the couple and their family. The job of the rabbi is to name the transition as it happens. See Austin, JL. *How To Do Things With Words.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 6-8.

24. Bloom, *Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar,* 177-178.

25. Bloom, *Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar,*135.

26. Genesis 2:3.

27. Isaiah 62:12.

Jews, different from them, forbidden to mix and mingle without the understanding that the rabbi's mixing and mingling is of a different ilk.

Sociologist Emile Durkheim maintains that every religion has symbols that help people to define the differences between the holy and the ordinary.[28] Durkheim calls this the sacred and profane, or, in Jewish terms, the *kodesh* and the *chol.* In ancient Israel, the *Kohein* facilitated the transition from one status to the other, allowing ordinary people to come closer holiness by their actions. Maureen Bloom, using Durkheimian theory explains:

> Durkheim, using a Greek phrase – *homotosis to theo* describes the state of *being made the same as the god.* By doing what the god/totem does – in this instance, being *qadosh,* you become like the god... Priests (*Kohanim*) ... were the facilitators of purification rites and their role in the Tent of Meeting enabled people to become 'pure' and therefore 'qadosh...' above all, holiness is equated with *separateness* from profane, everyday life."[29]

Jack Bloom endows the rabbi with the same kind of *homotosis to theo* that Maureen Bloom ascribes to the *Kohanim* in ancient Israel. However, for Bloom the rabbi is always attempting to give the perception of being God's representative. For the *kohen* there is a boundary between when he is in a state of *homotosis to theo* and when he is not, with very specific rules as to when he is holy and when he is impure, and therefore temporarily not holy. When he is unwashed, or defiled by some cause of impurity he may not enter the temple or approach the altar.[30] At times like these when he is impure, he is not at the level of holiness entitles him to fulfill his priestly function. Though the ability to fulfill these

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28. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.* W Swain, Trans. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1971), 299.

29. Maureen Bloom, "The Legacy of 'Sacred' and 'Profane' in Ancient Israel: Interpretations of Durkheim's Classifications" in *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 5:2 (1998), 116-117.

30. Cecil Roth ed. "Priests and Preisthood" in *Encyclopedia Judaica.* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), 1069-1090.

functions will return to him, he is not in a constant state of holiness.[31] Like the priest, the rabbi facilitates the ordinary person taking a step towards holiness. However, in Bloom's definition the boundaries between when one is God's representative and when one is not are less clearly defined. In the model of symbolic exemplarhood, the rabbi must constantly uphold the impression of his or her own differentiated status as 'separate from' the people. The rabbi "is expected to be special and different and to act that way,"[32] and that the rabbi is experienced as "different in her morality."[33] The rabbi as a Symbolic Exemplar is set apart, abiding by a higher moral standard, believing or believed to be holy in God's perspective and in the peoples: enabling the voices of ordinary people to rise to sacred levels, imbued with the power to sanctify and bless.

For the rabbi to accept the responsibility of being a 'walking, talking, living symbol' is not a casual assignment. As described above, symbols speak volumes about the religious experience of an entire people: their expectations, their challenges, their histories, their God concepts, and their lives. In order for a rabbi to do his or her best work, the rabbi must have a complete understanding of how he or she is viewed by society – however, this does not mean that he or she must embody all of the expectations placed upon him or her. The following is an explanation of the ways that Jewish leaders have been put in symbolic situations, and the ways in which this assignment is detrimental to the rabbi, the rabbi's family, and the Jewish people. If we are to determine that the rabbi is *not* a symbol, then it is critical to understand what the rabbi *is*, and the way that the rabbi can realistically and honestly touch the lives of the people with whom she or he works.

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31. Roth, "Priests and Preisthood," 1080.

32. Bloom, *Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*,137.

33. Bloom, *Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*, 140.

Leaders as Exemplars, Intermediaries, and Symbols in Jewish Tradition

There is existing precedent in our tradition for the leader of the people to be viewed as a symbolic means of connection to God. For the Israelites who are newly freed from the bonds of Egypt, allegiance to God is still unclear and uncertain. They need Moses to trust, to translate, and to lead. Aaron Wildavsky writes, "in the revolt against Egypt, the people obey Moses and not God. The Supreme Being, who is far away, cannot capture their allegiance – at least not yet... their leader in the desert is not the transcendent God but the ascendant Moses."[34] Even as the Israelites continue on their journey, they are awed by and apprehensive of God's power. In Exodus 20, Verses 16-18, they say to Moses,

> (16) "You speak to us," they said to Moses, "and we will obey; but let not God speak to us, lest we die." (17) Moses answered the people, "Be not afraid; for God has come only in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may be ever with you, so that you do not go astray." (18) So the people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.[35]

The people count on Moses to intercede between God and themselves. They are overwhelmed by the intensity of God's presence, and they are fearful of direct contact. To the Israelites, Moses is like a bridge between heaven and earth.[36] Moses is not their God, but Moses is an intermediary to God for them, facilitating their contact and speaking

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34. Aaron B. Wildavsky, *Moses as Political Leader* (Jerusalem: Shalem Center, 2008), 203.

35. *TaNaKH* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985), 116.

36. "With the exception of rare individuals, human beings cannot endure direct contact with God. Thus every religion strives to mediate God's Presence. Through ritual, through study, through the perfomance of *mitzvot* and through our encounters with people who embody what God stands for, we are able to 'meet' God." See: David Leiber ed. *Eitz Hayim: Torah and Commentary.* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001), 449.

God's words through his mouth. Wildavsky goes on to say that as the Israelites and Moses continue towards the promised land, Moses works towards helping the Israelites to be attentive to God's voice on their own, as he "transforms the collective consciousness of a people so that they can live on without him."[37] Moses recognizes that the Israelites must be taught to form their own connections with God, and that he cannot be a symbol to the people for all time.

Bernard M. Zlotowitz points out in his article "*Kvod HaRav*: Honor Due a Rabbi" that the rabbis in the Talmudic era were very aware of their roles as moral exemplars, and how their behavior ought to befit one who teaches God's word.[38] For this reason, rabbis were forbidden to go out alone at night, appear poorly dressed in public, be seen with a person of poor reputation, or interact with a woman who is not a relative.[39] This mindset also affected the way that they expected others to relate to them. The Rabbis took seriously the teaching that "the fear of your rabbi shall be like the fear of Heaven."[40] While the Talmudic rabbis were strict in acknowledging the difference between God and people, the fear of God was used to help describe how one ought to interact with a rabbi. Zlotowitz illustrates with this excerpt from Exodus Rabbah (31:8):

> The rabbis held their honor very dear, even reinterpreting the word "God" in a biblical verse to mean judge [rabbi]. 'You shall not revile God' (Exodus 22:27) ...say our rabbis. It once happened that a man came before a judge who pronounced the verdict in his favor. He then went about saying: 'There is no judge like this one in the whole world.' Later he again came before the same judge, but this time the ruling went

37. Wildavsky, *Moses as Political Leader*, 203.

38. Pirke Avot 4:15.

39. B. Brachot 43b.

40. Bernard M. Zlotowitz, "Kvod HaRav: Honor Due a Rabbi" in *Rabbinic-Lay Relations in Jewish Law*, eds. Moshe Zemer and Walter Jacob (Pittsburgh: Rodef Shalom Press,1993) 13-26.

> against him. So he went about saying: 'There is no greater idiot of a judge than this one.' People then said to him – how yesterday the judge could be splendid and today an idiot? The rabbinical response: On this account the Bible exhorts you: 'You shall not revile God (ie. The judges/ rabbis).'[41]

In this case, Exodus Rabbah uses this verse from the Torah text, which is, according to Zlotowitz, very clearly referring to God, in order to identify the way that one ought to talk about a rabbi and a decision made by the rabbi. The midrash is playing on the dual meanings of the word *Elohim*: meaning both God, and ruler or judge.[42] But it goes further in this scenario equating insulting the rabbi, a teacher of divine law, to insulting God directly. Zlotowitz explains further, "The honor of the rabbi is connected to fear of God. We, who teach Torah, are the vehicle for our people to come to God." In this example, the Midrash does use the rabbi symbolically, to show how one who is a purveyor of God's work ought to act, and conversely, how one ought to relate to a teacher of Torah.

Beginning primarily in the 18th century, Hasidism emerged in Eastern Europe with a focus on "joy, humility, gratitude, [and] spontaneity"[43] after an era of fear and persecution.[44] Hasidism was further defined by a particular relationship to the rabbi, called either 'rebbe' or 'tzaddik,' who was commonly understood to be a mediator between God and the people. The rebbe would pray on behalf of the people, with the expectation that he would be able to garner positive results through his prayer because of his elevated status and close relationship to God. The following Hasidic story illustrates the expectation of

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41. Exodus Rabbah 31:8 as qtd. in Zlotowitz, "Kvod HaRav: Honor Due a Rabbi," 22.

42. Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, eds. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (BDB), (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1907) 43.

43. Robert M Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall Inc.,1980) 491.

44. Seltzer, *Jewish People Jewish Thought*, 487-492.

the rebbe and the role that he filled in the Hasidic community as an intermediary who could communicate with God on the people's behalf:

> After the Rimanover was disclosed as a Holy Rabbi, a Polish noblewoman came to him and entreated him to pray for the life of her son who was dangerously ill. The Rabbi said: "Do you come to me as a worker of miracles?"
>
> "Nay," replied the mother, "I come to you as a man who is nearer to God than any other living person."
>
> The Rabbi prayed for three hours and sweat covered his entire body. At noon he said to the noblewoman: "I hope that my prayer has been heard. Return home."
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> When she arrived at her home, she was told that the child had opened its eyes and had asked for a drink. In 1883 when the boy had become a man of eighty years, he came to Rimanov accompanied by his own son, the Cardinal of Lemberg, to visit the grave of his early benefactor.[45]

In Hasidic tradition, stories like are meant to "redefine basic concepts or themes in Jewish religious life and thought."[46] This shows that the rebbe's role as an intermediary to God for the people was commonly held belief of Hasidism at this time, and stories like these served to illustrate this concept to the listener.

This mentality of the Hasidic rebbe as an intermediary is still prevalent in contemporary Hasidic communities. In *New World Hasidism,* Louis I. Newman spoke with many members of Hasidic communities who expressed the understanding that "Hasidic Jews view their rebbe as a visionary, as a man to whom God appears, as a man who is attached

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45. Louis I. Newman, *The Hasidic Anthology: Tales and Teachings of the Hasidim* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company), 342-343.

46. Aryeh Wineman, *The Hasidic Parable: An Anthology with Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001), xxiii.

to God..."[47] This model of the rabbi as an intermediary between God and people has influenced more than just Hasidic Jewish sects. "Even as late as classical Reform Judaism, there is an echo of the intercessor-rabbi, functioning as a personal link with the Divine for his whole congregation."[48] The legacy of the rabbi as a symbolic exemplar is wrapped up in the developing role of rabbis from times past, and the expectations of the modern day.

Jewish By Proxy: Rabbi as a Symbol in Modern Judaism

The notion of the rabbi as an intercessor, as one who has a closer, more direct connection to God and a more complete understanding of Jewish living has been historically prevalent in American Judaism. In 1961, S. Michael Gelber called for a revitalization of the American rabbinate, after observing that "the people who came to synagogue used to be a congregation. Now they have become an audience, an audience watching a performance of religious functionaries... We are fast becoming spectators at a religious ritual."[49] Gelber laments the transformation of religion into a 'spectator sport.' Though he denies the likelihood that Orthodox Judaism will thrive in America, he wishes for the emotional connection to prayer that he imagines his Orthodox brethren experience. In 1978, Jacob Nuesner wrote about another perspective of the issue. He notices that American lay people are not only unlikely to participate in Jewish life, but that they are educationally

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47. Solomon Poll, "The Charismatic Leader of the Hasidic Community: The Zaddiq, the Rebbe" in *New World Hasidism: Ethnographic Studies of Hasidic Jews in America.* Belcove-Shalin, Janet S ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 258.

48. Arnold Jacob Wolf, "On The Authority of the Rabbi" in *Rabbinic Lay Relations in Jewish Law.* eds. Moshe Zemer and Walter Jacob (Pittsburgh: Rodef Shalom Press,1993), 2.

49. Michael S. Gelber, *The Failure of the American Rabbi: A Program for the Revitalization of the Rabbinate* (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc.,1961).

unequipped to do so themselves. He writes,

> ...they are under the spell of the rabbi as a holy man... in respect to the knowledge of Judaism, standards of literacy have so fallen that the rabbi now predominates in precisely the one area appropriate to his calling. So far as people remain Jews, they depend more than ever upon rabbis to explain to them why and what that should mean.[50]

With the rabbi acting as the one set apart, the one who holds the knowledge and the access, Gelber and Neusner describe models in which the congregant is disempowered and unengaged in the actions of Jewish life. Daniel B. Kohn observes a deepening of the problem in 1994 in his article "Modern Congregants: Jewish by Proxy?" He describes conversations he has had in which "congregational rabbis express their secret suspicions that they are actually being paid to observe Shabbat, kashrut, and daven regularly in the synagogue *instead* of their congregants."[51] He goes on to say that "many American Jews don't *know enough* to be actively Jewish on their own."[52]

In the situation that Kohn describes, the rabbi becomes more than a symbol of the ideal. Here, the rabbi not only *symbolizes* the ideal in Jewish life, but also acts as Jew by proxy to uninvolved congregants, who may believe that paying dues and thereby contributing to the rabbi's salary is their ideal method of *living* a Jewish life. The rabbi engages in prayer on their behalf, the rabbi learns Jewish text on their behalf, and the rabbi exemplifies the ultimate in ritual and ethical behavior on their behalf. To extend Kohn's argument, the congregants he describes can live essentially secular lives with the comfort

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50. Jacob Neusner, *American Judaism: Adventure in Modernity* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1978), 47-48.

51. Daniel B. Kohn, "Modern Congregants: Jewish by Proxy?" in *Jewish Spectator* 59:1 (Summer, 1994), 26.

52. Ibid.

of knowing that the *avodah* of Judaism is 'getting done.' This leads the rabbi to be set further and further apart from the Jewish people in the rabbi's Symbolic Exemplarhood. The rabbi is alone as a symbolic holy *person*: the sole symbolic representative of holiness in what was supposed to be a holy *people*.

The Consequences: For the Rabbi

As both Bloom and his critics would acknowledge, this expectation that the rabbi will be a Symbolic Exemplar, walking and talking for God has serious effects on the rabbi's life. The pressure of being the walking, talking, living symbol is enormous, particularly when the rabbi truly is an ordinary person who has taken on an extraordinary career. The rabbi, who has been 'set apart' by expectations of the congregations, the seminaries, and the texts finds him or herself wishing for the relationships and experiences of a person, not a symbol. In his exploration of a synagogue in transition, Stephen Fried relays a conversation he had with Rabbi Gerald Wolpe, as Rabbi Wolpe reflected back on his own rabbinate. Rabbi Wolpe explained to Fried, "It's not easy being a man without a first name."[53] He continues,

> 'The older rabbis saw themselves as *cley kodesh*, the holy vessel,' he explains. 'They didn't walk on the same paths as other people. I think some young clergy become too much like their own congregants, too familiar. And when the time comes for them to be used as clergy, the feeling isn't always there. Can you go to somebody you've shared dirty jokes with? Still, I'm not too sure what I'd do if I had it to do over again.'
>
> He shrugs and looks out the window. 'I've paid a price for not being Jerry,' he says."[54]

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53. Fried, *The New Rabbi*, 39-40.

54. Ibid.

Rabbi Wolpe, who fully committed himself to embodying the symbolic identity throughout his career finds himself feeling empty when he enters his retirement. After moving out of the synagogue house and into a new apartment, he finds himself wondering if he has pulled *too* far away. Though he is surrounded by gifts of housewarming plants and cards, he feels alone and disconnected from the community that has been his home for the last thirty years.[55] It seems that the congregation is unsure of how to care for its 'symbol' when it enters retirement. To be a symbol can leave one feeling vulnerable and alone as he or she attempts to navigate the lines between symbol, and self. Similarly, when congregants are taught to regard their rabbi as larger than life, they are unsure of how to relate to that rabbi when he or she encounters life's ordinary transitions. While they might know how to treat a friend in a similar situation, they are under the impression that the rabbi is not 'regular.' The rabbi's needs must be somehow different. The Symbolic Exemplar, then, remains 'set apart.' At the time when the rabbi most needs to be a ordinary person, cared for by a community, the community continues to see the rabbi as all they have ever known the rabbi to be: a symbol of God, a symbol of that which is holier than they, a symbol of one who is alone on high. Even after retirement, the rabbi remains *kadosh* – set apart - in the eyes of the community. When the community is not able to connect with the rabbi as a fellow person, symbolic exemplarhood begins to bear a dangerously striking resemblance to idolatry.

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55. Fried, *The New Rabbi*, 274-275.

The Consequences: For the Rabbi's Family

By extension, the rabbi's family also ends up in this differentiated category due to their proximity and relationship to the Symbolic Exemplar. Congregants project their expectations of the rabbi's moral and religious behavior and attitudes on to the rabbi's spouse and children. "In real life, children of rabbis... find that they are treated differently simply because their parent is a clergyperson... Like it or not... the rabbi's child is often judged differently than his or her peers."[56] It is often assumed that the children of rabbis are genetically pre-disposed to be well educated in Jewish subjects, better behaved in synagogue, and immune to the natural inclinations of teenage rebellion.[57] The rabbi's children and spouse, who are by all counts 'regular people' are held to their own symbolic standard. Yet the rabbi's family made no choice to go to seminary, and they received no 'calling.' Because one member of their family is 'set apart,' they too become symbols in Bloom's model. The rabbi's children become symbols of the perfect Jewish children, learned and obedient. The rabbi's spouse becomes a symbol of the perfect Jewish spouse (*Rebbitzen,* or *Rebbitz,* a term that has jokingly been adopted by some male spouses of rabbis). As Eileen Button, a pastor's wife wrote "I am a symbol – a projected fantasy of what it means to live a life of faith – not an actual person."[58] Because of the projection of divinity that is placed on the Symbolic Exemplar, the rabbi's family becomes a source of fascination to those who wonder what it means to be truly close to the one who is, by definition, set apart. Eileen Button continues: "what they seem to be looking for – and what they'll never find

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56. Zucker, *American Rabbis*, 180.

57. Zucker, *American Rabbis*, 179-180.

58. Eileen Button, "Thou Shalt Not Turn Me Into a False Idol" in *Newsweek*. http://www.eileenbutton.com/Newsweek/MyTurn.htm

in me – is perfection."[59] For this reason, Bloom writes that "the rabbi's family *never really belongs*."[60] There is an assumption that laypeople do not want to find out that the rabbi's family (or pastor's family) isn't perfect, so therefore, there is hesitancy on the part of both the rabbi and the congregation to get too close. One can imagine the detrimental effect that this mindset can have, particularly for children who very much *need* to belong in order to foster healthy and happy development. If the rabbi is *not* a symbol, if we are going to reconceive what a rabbi really *is*, it is important to consider the role of the rabbi's family and how the rabbi can make sure that they are part of a community that will welcome them warmly, and without abnormal curiosity.

The Consequences: For the Community

To be a Symbolic Exemplar, however, is not only problematic because of the ways in which it makes the rabbi and the rabbi's family vulnerable. Bloom also attributes symbolic power to the rabbi as one who is able to bless, heal, name, and absolve guilt.[61] However, "Jewish law does not demand that communal worship or life-cycle ceremonies be performed by ordained rabbis."[62] There is a misconception that a rabbi is necessary for each of these moments. The truth is that while the rabbi is the authority in a community on Jewish law and practice, and it has become the custom in the Reform Jewish community to have a rabbi present at these transitional life moments, "we do not find in Reform tradition an explicit requirement for a rabbi's participation."[63] This misinterpreta-

59. Button, "Thou Shalt Not Turn Me Into A False Idol."

60. Bloom, *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*, 148.

61. Bloom, *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*, 177-178.

62. Mark Washofsky, *Jewish Living: A Guide to Contemporary Reform Practice* (New York: UAHC Press, 2001), 69.

63. Mark Washofsky, *Jewish Living: A Guide to Contemporary Reform Practice*, 70.

tion of the symbolic power of the rabbinic role can be confounding to a layperson who is projecting divine power on to the rabbi. This is why the rabbi is ultimately responsible for remaining ever conscious of the human limitations of the rabbinic role.

The rabbi who has been through all of his or her training does have a mastery of Jewish text and an ability to use these teachings to guide others through vulnerable times. However, the rabbi's power is not mystical or divine, nor is it automatically commanded by the position. The conflation and confusion of these kinds of powers can have dangerous effects. Ann Underwood acknowledges the temptation of a rabbi or other clergy person to use their power in inappropriate ways – particularly when very vulnerable people come to the rabbi seeking help. She explains that the rabbi is responsible for a serious power he or she holds when viewed as God's representative, when he or she comes to realize their own perceived numinosity,[64] or ability to help connect others to the numinous.[65]

"Historically, sex and power often intertwine,"[66] and the power of perceived numinosity does not shield one from being blinded by this power. It is possible that when perceived numinosity is paired with the perceived set apart-ness of the rabbinic status, a rabbi may seek relationship and connection in inappropriate ways. It has become far too frequent to hear stories of rabbis who engage in sexual activity with congregants who come to them looking for the guidance of tradition. Clergy ethics codes are unanimous in stating that when one comes to the clergyperson seeking pastoral care, "there can never be

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64. Anne Underwood, "Clergy Sexual Misconduct: An Issue of Ethics and Justice" in *The Reconstructionist* (Spring, 2005), 27.

65. Rudolf Otto uses the Latin word *numen* to translate the Hebrew word *Kadosh* and represent a 'higher' form of holiness than the English word 'holy.' The Latin word refers to the felt presence of the divine. See: Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*. Harvey, John W. Trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 5-7.

66. Underwood, "Clergy Sexual Misconduct: An Issue of Ethics and Justice," 25.

an assumption of meaningful consent to a sexual relationship."[67] [68]

The imbalance of power in a rabbi/congregant situation is such that legitimate consent is not possible. Dr. Rachel Adler explains that the potential for this scenario, where a rabbi will exploit the perceived power of the position is due in part to the conception of the rabbi as a symbol. Rabbis who push the boundaries of sexual ethics are likely to believe the grandiosity suggested by the model of symbolic exemplarhood, when the rabbi allows him or herself to be placed on a pedestal above the congregation, Adler writes

> ...they create identities which are grandiose and all-giving, equipped with trapdoors leading to smaller, more primitive selves which are inadequate, and insatiably hungry. When they fall through their trapdoors, some rabbis sexually exploit their clients.[69]

Though the rabbi accepts (or even welcomes) the perception of symbolic exemplarhood, the symbol does not protect the rabbi from his or her human impulses. Instead, the pressure to live up to the perfect image which the rabbi symbolizes can make the rabbi painfully aware of his or her own imperfections. The rabbi who believes in the grandiosity of symbolic exemplarhood, and then denies his or her own humanity in favor of that which she or he is thought to symbolize, may begin to believe that rules meant for ordinary people no longer apply. Symbolic exemplarhood makes fuzzy a line which ought to

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67. Underwood. "Clergy Sexual Misconduct: An Issue of Ethics and Justice," 27.

68. The Code of Ethics put forward by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, is clear, saying: "We have the responsibility to recognize the vulnerability of those whom we teach, counsel and serve. It is our obligation to maintain appropriate boundaries in all situations and settings. Unacceptable behavior includes all forms of sexual harassment and intimidation, requests for sexual favors, and any unwelcome verbal, physical or visual conduct of a sexual nature. Any such act or behavior, even if it appears to be consensual, which exploits the vulnerability of another, compromises the moral integrity of the rabbi and is an ethical violation." see Central Conference of American Rabbis, Code of Ethics, http://ccarnet.org/documentsandpositions/ethics/.

69. Rachel Adler. "A Stumbling Block Before the Blind: Sexual Exploitation in Pastoral Counseling" in *CCAR Journal* 40 (Spring 1993), 23.

be very clear: people are not God, only God is God. Jewish people, even powerful Jewish people, are expected to follow the rules of ethical Jewish living.

Martin E. Marty writes about the importance of relationships for clergy, explaining that, "Friends say to people who acquire power and position – and even the pastor of the humblest parish has some of that – 'Watch it, buddy,' or 'we knew you when...'"[70] When the rabbi embraces the charge to be completely 'separate from' his or congregation, the realism of true human relationship is lost. While the rabbi has to fill symbolic functions for the congregation, everyone is at a disadvantage when they forget the rabbi's true status as human being. Though Bloom argues that this is not possible, that congregants do not *want* to hear that their rabbis are human, just like them. "For if the congregations were to treat the rabbi as simply human, as the rabbi might sometimes like them to, there would be no need to have a rabbi."[71] However, I want to argue that if rabbis are constantly operating among the pressures of symbolic exemplarhood, they will be unable to be *good* rabbis. Rabbis need to teach their congregants how to care for them and their families. Congregants need to keep their rabbi's power in perspective. A new model for the rabbinate is necessary: one from which congregants can learn, and rabbis can function to their best capacities.

If Not Symbolic Exemplar, Then What?

As our social structures change and our congregations change, our symbols change as well. The problems inherent in Bloom's description of the model of a Symbolic Exemplar urgently require the Jewish community to redefine the expectation of the rabbi. This

70. Martin E Marty, "What Friends are For" in *Christian Century* (November 1992), 988.

71. Bloom, *Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*, 136.

does not mean that the rabbi is no longer obligated to live a Jewish life, it simply means that the rabbi is not *differently* obligated than the rest of the Jewish population. The rabbi should not live Jewishly *for* congregants, but rather, work with congregants to recreate a conception of *Am Kadosh* in the American Jewish consciousness. Wh WhWheen we remove the rabbi's yoke of separation, and welcome the rabbi back to earth as one who is on equal footing with the rest of us, we will be able to see changes for the better in the burdens of the rabbi's life, the rabbi's family, and the reality of congregational expectations. When the rabbi is no longer a symbol, but rather a teacher, a preacher, and a fellow human, the gift of Jewish living is given to all who care to learn.

Section Three: Lessons from Feminist Theory

Changing the Paradigm

The notion of 'separation' is recurrent in Bloom's work. He presumes a paradigm in which a hierarchical difference between the rabbi and the congregation is indisputable, because in his description of the rabbinic role, the symbolic nature of the rabbinate is inevitable. In suggesting a method for educating future rabbis, he offers that seminaries ought to do a better job of teaching rabbis how they ought to 'respond to the tremendous change' of living behind a 'glass wall.'[72] Implicit in his suggestion is the necessity of the glass wall's existence. He acknowledges that young rabbis hope to express to their congregants that they are only human, and yet, Bloom reminds his reader that the more rabbis attempt to argue how "normal" they are, the more they become 'increasingly set-apart.' He perceives the Jewish community as desiring to maintain the symbol, above and beyond the person behind the symbol.[73]

As we established in chapter two, the rabbi's role as a symbol is not as inevitable as Bloom suggests. It is true that the rabbi ought to be an exemplar, or a role model to the congregation. Congregants do need someone learned and trained to facilitate life cycle events, someone who can strive alongside them to always be living an authentically Jewish life as they define it, someone in whom they can confide when they are in need of pastoral care, and someone with knowledge of Jewish tradition who can help them to grapple with the age-old questions of divinity. Bloom argues that the average layperson does not

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72. Bloom, *Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*, 195.

73. Bloom, *Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*, 191.

believe that these are functions that could be done by someone 'just like them.' Bloom argues that these functions make the rabbi a symbolic representation of God, and for this reason the rabbi needs to maintain the image of the symbolic exemplar who is separate from the people. However, we have seen that this model where the rabbi must represent God to the people, or be God's intermediary for the people has a negative impact on the rabbi's life. Perhaps more importantly, this model has a negative impact on the Jewish people, as it has the potential to disempower them from finding their own personal ways to connect with God.

Perhaps what the rabbi needs is not to argue his or her "ordinariness," but rather, to let people into the ways in which he or she understands Judaism and God as a fellow human being. This would require the rabbi to be honest and authentic and aware of how she or he struggles to find meaning in texts, searches for ways to bring *simcha* to Jewish ritual even in busy times, and reaches to notice the *kodesh* in the everyday. The rabbi can do this by sharing personal stories from the bima when appropriate, meeting in coffee shops and at community gatherings for conversations that might venture into the realm of Jewish living, and by opening up in classes and sermons about the struggles he or she faces to reconcile theology with modern life. It is impossible to change what the people expect the rabbi to be; but it is possible for the rabbi to change the way that she or he fulfills social expectations. Instead of seeing oneself as separate from the people, living the holy life in a fishbowl on display for the people, the rabbi can enter into relationship with congregants, teaching and preaching from her or his perspective as one who dwells among them.

How Feminist Theory Can Be Helpful in Redefining the Rabbinate

Rabbi Jack H Bloom, ordained in 1959 by the Jewish Theological Seminary, developed his conception of the "Rabbi as Symbolic Exemplar" as his doctoral dissertation in 1972. Throughout Bloom's career all ordained rabbis were men. The first woman rabbi was ordained by the Reform Movement in the same year that Rabbi Bloom completed his doctoral work. Therefore, the model that Bloom proposes is a typically *male* model of what it means to be a rabbi, simply by virtue of the fact that it did not, and could not take into account the changes that women and the effects of feminist thought have brought to the rabbinic role. Now that women are an active part of the rabbinate, and have succeeded in bringing new elements and characteristics to the role, it is necessary to include the changes that have come about since both men and women have been rabbis. The paradigm that I have begun to describe above is influenced by feminist theories, which emphasize relationship rather than hierarchy, in particular ethicist and psychologist Carol Gilligan's *In A Different Voice.*[74]

Gilligan suggests that the Western social and cultural climate leads to differences in the way that men and women's personalities develop.[75] Nancy Chodorow concludes that because most primary early childhood caregivers are women, females develop *in relation* to those around them, identifying with their caregivers. "Girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and related to the external object-world..."[76] These differences can be seen in the decision making processes of males

74. Gilligan, *In A Different Voice.*

75. Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*, 6.

76. Nancy Choderow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978),

and females of all ages, and they are particularly striking in the realm of moral and ethical reasoning.

According to Bloom, a primary role of the rabbi as Symbolic Exemplar is to be a model of moral Jewish living for the people. However, if men and women come to their moral stances from different paths, then the male and female rabbi are likely to approach their moral exemplarhood from these separate paths. In describing the rabbi as a moral exemplar, Bloom explains that the rabbi is expected to be above and beyond the ordinary expectations of morality at all times, and in all situations.[77] This is part of the hierarchical obsession with separation that is consistent throughout *The Rabbi As Symbolic Exemplar.* I would posit that if one uses a relational framework to discern morality, such as the one that Gilligan suggests, which reflects the differences in the ways that men and women interpret morality, the rabbi would no longer be stuck in a never ending series of frustration because of an inability to measure up to an unachievable expectation. When the rabbi is permitted simply to live a moral life, and is no longer set apart as *more* moral than other people, morality becomes achievable for both the rabbi, and the congregant.

Gilligan's understanding of how men and women arrive at moral decision making is understood most simply by an example she gives of a dilemma given to two eleven year old children, one male, one female.[78] Mr. Heinz, the children are told, needs some medicine for his sick wife. If she does not have the medicine, she will die. Mr. Heinz cannot afford the medicine, and the druggist will not let him have it without appropriate compensation. Should he steal the medicine?

Qtd. in Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*, 8.

77. Bloom, *Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*, 149.

78. Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*, 31.

In assessing the children's responses, Gilligan writes:

> In Heinz's dilemma these two children see two very different moral problems – Jake a conflict between life and property that can be resolved by logical deduction, Amy a fracture of human relationship that must be mended with its own thread.[79]

Jake's formative experiences as "separate from" his caregiver, and Amy's formative experiences being "in relationship with" her caregiver, Jake has developed a logical system of looking at the world whereby problems can be solved by imposing a hierarchical system of justice on the problem. Amy sees the world through a web of interconnected relationships, and prioritizes the relationships involved in the problem over the problem itself. While Jake opines that stealing is wrong, he thinks that Mr. Heinz still ought to steal it because 'life is worth more than money.' However, he also hopes that the judge will give Mr. Heinz 'the lightest possible sentence.' He states that this dilemma is like 'a math problem with humans.' Gilligan notes that he "sets it up as an equation, and proceeds to work out the solution."[80] Amy, however, imagines the projection of each relationship as it would play out in different scenarios: for example, what would happen to Mr. Heinz's sick wife if he were to go to jail for stealing? Amy, ultimately, trusts in the power of communication. "Amy is confident that, 'if Heinz and the druggist could have talked it out long enough, they could reach something besides stealing.'"[81]

In the end, "Both children recognize the need for agreement but see it as mediated in different ways – he impersonally through systems of logic and law, she personally through

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79. Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*, 31.

80. Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*, 26.

81. Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*, 29.

communication in relationship."[82]

Both of these systems reach a moral conclusion. However, each of these systems would represent a *different* model of exemplarhood. If one of these systems is typically female, and the other is typically male, then the typically male moral exemplar would exhibit a model of morality that is different from that of the typically female moral exemplar. The typically male model lines up more precisely with Bloom's hierarchical logic – that the rabbi is, by rule, separate from the community.

Gilligan's conception of morality is not without its critiques.[83] It is possible that a purely relational model (in Gilligan's terms, operating exclusively in an ethic of care rather than an ethic of justice) is not possible for the rabbi who is guided by a logically set system of laws and values. Similarly, the rabbi who is unfailing in her or his empathy will burn out as quickly as the rabbi who is stringent in his or her adherence to logic and problem solving. In other words, the rabbi has to exhibit a balance of both *hesed* and *din* in daily interactions, and be able to decipher which is appropriate at which time. In other words, there may be times when the rabbi needs to work from an ethic of justice, even when it hurts a relationship – for example, the beloved administrative assistant who must be dismissed and reported to authorities after being found to have embezzled funds from

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82. Ibid.

83. In addition to the critiques mentioned above, other critiques of Gilligan's work include questions about the methodology she used in her research (whether or not they conformed to commonly practiced research standards). See: Christina Hoff Sommers, *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Feminism is Harming our Young Men* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 107.

Feminist scholars also critique the theory of 'Difference Feminism,' born out of Gilligan's work. Scholars question whether or not difference, the idea that men and women are inherently different from one another, has created an impasse for feminist thought by claiming that the differences are essential, and not related to culture. See: Diana Fuss, "The 'Risk' of Essence," *Feminist Theory: A Reader.* Frances Bartkowsky and Wendy Kolmar eds. (Mountain View: Mayfield Publishing, 2000), 423-432.

the synagogue. Similarly, there may be times when a rabbi may choose to violate his or her own set rules in order to prioritize a relationship: for example, the rabbi who chooses to miss dinner at home because a congregant has just tragically lost a child. This kind of balance is suggested by Katheryn Tanner, as she presents a model for fusing an ethic of justice with an ethic of care, in a way that pulls the best parts of each without relying solely on one or the other.

> The reconstruction of an ethic of justice demonstrates that one can assume an ethic of care's sense of self and community while retaining the values typical of an ethic of justice – for example, autonomy, critical reflection, and universality of moral concern.[84]

To operate exclusively in a relational ethic of care, one might find oneself relying solely on empathy, without the guiding principles that the ethic of justice uses in order to assert fairness and uphold appropriate relationships. It does not work for a rabbi to be singularly motivated by only justice or only care: a finely honed sense of balance is critical for being effective. Torah gives a clear set of guiding principles, but as autonomous individuals we use Torah to guide our empathetic hearts. In this way the rabbi is able to uphold the primacy of relationship, so long as he or she is always turning an eye towards the values and ethics of tradition.

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84. Kathryn Tanner, "The Care That Does Justice: Recent Writings in Feminist Ethics and Theology." *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 24:1 (Spring 1996),183.

Models of a Relational Rabbinate Based on Carol Gilligan's *Different Voice*

Pamela Nadell describes the research that she has done on the different approaches of men and women in the rabbinate. Based on thirty-five in depth interviews, she explains that:

> ...women describe themselves as less formal, more approachable, more egalitarian, more likely to reach out to touch and hug, less likely to intrude their egos, and less likely to seek center stage. They asserted that they perform rites of passage ceremonies differently. Some used the phrase 'own the ritual,' by which they meant they wanted those involved in a rite of passage to center themselves in the ceremony and to take charge of fulfilling its ritualistic components.[85]

What Nadell describes here is a relational approach to some of the aspects of the rabbinate in which the rabbi might ordinarily order the self as 'separate from' rather than in 'relation to.' For example, rather than the rabbi performing life-cycle rituals *for* the congregant, using the same liturgy and text from one family to another as some might be inclined to do, the rabbi described here is able to tailor her approach based on the needs of the particular relationship. The family here takes the central role, and the rabbi guides the family through the traditional liturgies and rituals of the life cycle ceremonies, allowing them to become involved and make the moment relevant and meaningful in a unique way. In this way, the rabbi is the facilitator of the experience – not the focus. Similarly, rather than asserting a 'no-hugging' policy, the relational rabbi weighs the individual characteristics of relationships, and acts in a way that the rabbi deems appropriate. Some of the female rabbis in Nadell's study mention the effects of Gilligan's work on them, and

85. Pamela Nadell, "In the Same Voice or is It Different?: Gender and the Clergy." *Sociology of Religion*, 56:1 (1995), 63-64.

how they have created a relational rabbinate for themselves.[86] The women that Nadell interviewed also mentioned that they preach differently than their male colleagues. These rabbis said that they "emphasized 'inclusivity,' and the use of less abstract, more concrete, and more vivid language." Rather than pontificating or exhorting their audiences,[87] the female rabbis tend towards presenting Jewish belief and ritual in a way that emphasizes accessibility rather than exclusivity.[88] While Bloom's hierarchical model focuses on a rabbi building a bridge to Jewish connection *for* congregants by being a symbol of Jewish living on their behalf, a relational model describes a rabbi who assists the congregants in building the bridge themselves. According to Nadell's work, female rabbis feel that they naturally fall into a more relational approach to the rabbinate, viewing their tasks not as isolated problems to work through and solve, but as the challenges that emerge from being in the center of a network of relationships.

Models of a Relational Rabbinate Based on Feminist Therapy

Critics of the relational rabbinate argue that because of the multiple roles that a rabbi must occupy, it is impossible to enter into an authentically intimate relationship with congregants. Because the rabbi is in the position to not only counsel and advise congregants, but also to 'schmooze' at an oneg with them or negotiate a contract with them, it is in the rabbi's best interest to protect the way that he or she is "separate" from them. In

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86. Nadell, "In the Same Voice or is It Different?: Gender and the Clergy," 67.

87. Ibid.

88. In her article, "Donahue Talked, Oprah Listened" Deborah Tannen relates Oprah's television success to the relational model of her show. Unlike the previous model of talk shows, Oprah didn't say much or try to solve her guests problems, but rather, encouraged her guests to look at and listen to one another. Tannen writes that with Oprah, "...the transformation of daytime TV from report-talk to rapport-talk began." Deborah Tannen, "Donahue Talked, Oprah Listened." *New York Times* (November 28th 2009).

other words, the rabbi has an "on" persona, whether it is on the bima or at the supermarket, and an "off" persona that is seen only in the home, or with other rabbinic colleagues. The rabbi needs to maintain strict boundaries in order to protect the mystique and the authority of the position. If the rabbi is to enter into *true* relationship – not a hierarchical relationship, but one where rabbi and congregant can sit face to face and truly see one another as people, the rabbi would be needlessly exposed as human, and he or she would lose the *kavod* that is demanded by the position. In order to make a relational rabbinate work, one would have to introduce a framework in which respect for the position is enhanced by, not negated by the way in which the rabbi approaches his or her position with an appropriate level of humanity that serves the rabbi/congregant relationship in a helpful way.

Feminist therapy introduces a non-hierarchical understanding of the therapist-client relationship, offering a model (which is perhaps adaptable to the rabbinate) whereby patient and therapist work together to address the challenges that the client is facing.

> "Feminist therapy has... re-examined the role of the therapist and the nature of the therapeutic relationship. It has questioned the notions of professionalism which many of us have inherited from our traditional training. We have seen this to be an eminently masculine model of therapy in which the therapist is yet another patriarchal figure, the Expert whose superior knowledge cures the passive, powerless and unknowing patient. In feminist therapy, the ideal of an all-powerful, distant, patriarchal expert has given way to an ideal of two women working together in a much more egalitarian, empathic, and responsive way."[89]

To transpose this model of feminist therapy to the situation of pastoral care could be

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89. Miriam Greenspan, "Should Therapists Be Personal? Self Disclosure and Therapeutic Distance in Feminist Therapy." *Dynamic of Feminist Therapy*, Doris Howard ed. (New York: Hayworth Press Inc, 1986), 6. 5-18.

more relationship-based than the current ideal suggests. In a hierarchical model of therapy, the patient puts his or her complete trust in the therapist to do the healing – as the rabbi is expected to facilitate Jewish life, and pastoral work, on behalf of his or her congregants. The feminist therapist works *with* the patient to facilitate solutions, rather than the patronizing or directing relationships that feminist critics see in 'traditional' therapy. An onlooker might see two women sitting side by side: one with a problem, and one who is an expert, assigned to help solve it. While there are boundaries, they do not define a hierarchy as the boundaries that traditional therapeutic models infer.

In a hierarchical relationship, it is shocking for the congregant to see the rabbi about town, engaging in ordinary tasks. To see the one who is supposed to heal the congregant in some kind of mysterious and ethereal way doing the ordinary things that humans do could be confusing to the relationship. Proponents of feminist therapy address similar, though not identical scenarios, and suggest ways to transfer a relational perspective the clergy.

> A matter of central concern for feminist therapists has been how to practice ethically when they and/or their clients are members of physically or socio- logically small communities. These communities may be literally small, as in rural or small town settings, or small in the sense of certain networks of individuals committed to common causes. Geographical smallness and common commitments give rise to considerable overlap of personal and professional roles and identities.[90]

The author suggests that the feminist therapist may find herself in a similar mulitple-role situation as the rabbi, particularly if the therapist practices in a small community. The therapist, too, may encounter the moment when she runs into a client at the drug

90. Katherine M. Clarke, "Lessons from Feminist Therapy for Ministerial Ethics." *Journal of Pastoral Care* 49:3 (Fall 1994).

store, and has to transition from a personal mentality to one that is professional. Feminist therapy offers a view on these scenarios, whereby the transition from professional to personal is downplayed by the relational nature of their association. Katherine M. Clarke writes: "Feminist therapists have adopted a conceptual framework in which boundary maintenance and the therapist's self-care are synergistic rather than competing principles of ethical action."[91] By beginning from a basis of one-to-one relationship, rather than a power differential, feminist therapy encourages both the patient and the therapist to enter the relationship from a human level from the very beginning, so that when the two women encounter one another outside the context of therapy, there is synergy rather than conflict. This does not assume an automatic mutual closeness, nor does it automatically mean that therapist and client are friends. There is a power difference that exists because one is the client paying for a therapeutic service, and the other is the expert who is entrusted with the client's vulnerability. What it does do is allow for the two people in question to determine the boundaries as they deem appropriate within the boundaries of established professional ethics – rather than boundaries that are assumed by the power differential. When the two see one another in public, there does not have to be excessive sharing, but there can be a warm hello and smile – or even conversation if it is comfortable, and the situation allows without detriment to the therapeutic relationship. In this case, the interaction is guided by the relationship, rather than the relationship guided by hierarchical boundaries.

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91. Clarke, "Lessons from Feminist Therapy for Ministerial Ethics," 240.

Redefining Boundaries

To transition from a hierarchical to a relational model of the rabbinate requires a redefinition of the boundaries that Jack Bloom delineates so concretely. For Bloom, there is never to be any question about who the rabbi is to the congregation. The boundary is clear. He writes, "no matter how long you've been in the community, you and your family are never really part of that community in the same way that other Jews are."[92] Bloom takes a logical, problem solving approach to the boundaries between rabbis and congregants. In his experience, the relationships between rabbinic families and congregants can be complicated. Rather than navigate them individually, he makes a blanket policy that the rabbi and his family are *separate from* the community, that the community belongs with one another, and the rabbi does not belong among them. With the influence of Gilligan, feminist therapy offers the ministry a more nuanced model, whereby deeper relationship is possible. This is not to say that the power dynamic goes out the window; rather, by being thoughtful, responsible, and transparent, the power differential can be acknowledged and then the two participants in the relationship can move beyond it. Katherine M. Clarke suggests the following:

> Another strategy emerging from the acknowledgement of overlapping relationships is intentional preplanning of how to manage overlaps when they occur. In this way, behavior can be guided by principles of effective ministry rather than grandiose and misguided notions of unlimited availability...The guiding principle would be one of not engaging in such different forms of relationship with parishioners at the same time. At a minimum, this removes from the parishioner and the minister the burden of 'changing gears' with one another. Rather than being passive victims of multiple roles and conflicting demands, ministers can accept

92. Bloom, *Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*, 148.

responsibility for acting to protect themselves and their parishioners.[93]

Clarke's suggestion requires a great deal of awareness on the part of the pastor (or, in our case, rabbi), and a deep understanding on the part of the congregant of the rabbi's perception of boundaries. Clarke suggests that the pastor not "double up" on the types of relationships he or she engages in with one person at one time. However, this might not be possible if the person seeking council is a regular at services, or on the board. (While an outside observer of this situation might suggest referring this sort of person to an outside therapist, this is often impossible in a synagogue situation when a congregant comes to a rabbi seeking not just mental help, but deeply spiritual counsel. There are also those who come to the rabbi seeking counsel because they cannot afford a professional therapist's opinion.) In these cases, Clarke's lessons in transparency can inform a more realistic method. The rabbi must define the relationship for the congregant as the rabbi understands it, perhaps to say out loud in the first pastoral counseling session something like, "since you have come to me with this situation, please know that we have now entered into a counseling relationship. I will never bring up the things that we talk about here at the *oneg*, or in the context of a board meeting. We don't need to pretend to be beginning from a blank slate, because we do know each other. However, we do need to be conscious of the way that these roles overlap." It seems that acknowledging the 'elephant in the room' would decrease the discomfort that comes with the unexpected public encounter for the rabbi and the congregant who are engaged in multiple roles with one another. This model also requires a clearly honed and defined understanding of ethics. The safety and well being of both the rabbi and the congregant must be the primary point of con-

93. Clarke, "Lessons from Feminist Therapy for Ministerial Ethics," 240-241.

cern at all times, and the rabbi – as the one who holds the power – must keep his or her own motivations in check at all times. As ethicist Marie Fortune said, "Boundaries are a means to attend to our relative power and vulnerability in any relationship without doing harm."[94]

Modern Jewish thinkers give us ways to set up boundaries that allow the rabbi to move more fluidly between roles of pastor, peer, employee, and *shaliach tzibur*. Dr. Rachel Adler suggests that, rather than the Western concept of boundaries that are oppositional[95] (in other words, boundaries that make sense of the world by understanding the ways in which people and things are separate and different from one another), Judaism offers us a less hierarchical way to define relationships. She argues that "as Jews we have available to us a different way to define the relation between self and other... to understand a subject as a self with permeable boundaries contiguous with the boundaries of neighbor-selves."[96] These permeable boundaries are what leads to an understanding of *tzedek*, a justice "that allows all human beings to flourish."[97] By breaking down traditional boundaries of class, race, gender or religion, we are better able to serve the needs of society. When one sets up boundaries that are walls, no one is permitted to thrive in the ways that they might if they were permitted to see one another as whole beings, rather than the roles that they fill in each particular relationship. Dr. Adler's definition, based on an understanding of *tzedek*, still maintains Marie Fortune's ethical construct, which ultimately calls for harnessing power in such a way that all parties go unharmed. Bloom's boundaries however, do cause

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94. Underwood, "Clergy Sexual Misconduct: An Issue of Ethics and Justice," 27.

95. Rachel Adler, "A Question of Boundaries: Toward a Jewish Feminist Theology of Self and Others." *Tikkun* 6:3 (May/June 1991) 43.

96. Adler, "A Question of Boundaries," 44.

97. Ibid.

harm. In an effort to uphold his concept of the Symbolic Exemplar, Bloom prevented himself from flourishing in his own rabbinic career. He writes,

> What got to me was the isolation. That's what got to me. And I, in terms of my own life, couldn't live that way. That became the straw that broke my rabbinic back. I could not live that way. For me it was just personally impossible.[98]

At this point, Jack H. Bloom left the rabbinate. He was unable to imagine a rabbinate wherein isolation was not inevitable. Perhaps if he was able to construct permeable boundaries, whereby he was able to encounter people as a fellow human being with a particular expertise in Jewish life and tradition, as a real person who lived morally and ethically and was able and willing to help others do the same, perhaps he would not have felt that his solitude was to be expected. Perhaps he could have been a *chaver* to those for whom he was also a *rav.*[99]

Relational models of care, as expressed by Carol Gilligan and demonstrated by practices of feminist therapy are helpful for conceiving a new model for the rabbi, whereby he or she is better able to be authentically himself or herself. By approaching relationships with an understanding of the rabbinic role, but without holding up the glass wall which separates the rabbi from the community rabbis may be better able to function as part of the communities that they lead. Similarly, by better knowing their rabbis, communities will begin to develop a realistic view of what it means to be a committed, involved, morally and spiritually fulfilled Jew. When rabbis and congregants enter into relationships, both parties learn that it is possible to be both fully Jewish *and* fully human.

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98. Bloom, *Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*, 151.

99. See Avot d'Rabbi Natan 8.

Section Four: Voices From the Field

As I began to posit this new model for the rabbinate, within which the rabbi does not have to be a symbolic exemplar but can rather be his or her best self in relationship with congregants, it became clear to me that I ought to speak with rabbis in the field in order to discover whether they see themselves as symbolic exemplars. Specifically, I was interested in hearing from rabbis about they ways that they see themselves as role models of Jewish life and the ways that they engage in relationships with their congregants. I was curious to know in what ways most rabbis are conscious of presenting themselves 'in role' as rabbi, and the ways that they decide intentionally (or unintentionally) to let their congregants into their lives. Under the guidance of Dr. Rachel Adler and Dr. Bruce Phillips, I chose eleven rabbis to interview who are of varying ages, varying congregational sizes, and who have been in the rabbinate for a varying number of years. All of these rabbis were ordained at Hebrew Union College, and they all are employed as pulpit rabbis at congregations affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism.

I chose length of time in the field and gender as the factors to examine. Based on my research of feminism's effects described in chapter three, I hypothesized that these factors would determine the way that rabbis believe and act as though they are symbolic exemplars. My assumption was that female rabbis and younger rabbis would be more likely to have closer, less 'boundaried' relationships with congregants, as the impacts of feminism described in chapter three would have had a greater influence on them. My hypothesis was that those whose rabbinates have developed under the influences of feminism described in section three of this paper would be less likely to uphold the expectations of symbolic exemplarhood that Jack H Bloom describes, and they would, instead strive to

be authentic and genuine role models of Jewish life, who are in relationship with those whom they serve.

The questions that I asked in the interview are as follows, however, in many interviews the line of questioning deviated in order to learn more about a specific topic brought up by the rabbi.

> 1) Tell me a little bit about who you are as a rabbi, and the values that drive you.
>
> 2) How would you describe your leadership style?
>
> 3) When are the times that you feel you have power, and when are the times that you feel you do not have power?
>
> 4) In what ways do you consider yourself a model of Jewish life to your congregation?
>
> 5) Are there ways in which you feel that your rabbinate is different than your colleagues who are of the opposite gender? Do you feel that you approach tasks differently, or that people have different expectations of you as a woman/man?
>
> 6) How well do you think your congregants know you?
>
> 7a) Are there times where you consciously present yourself as (rabbi's first name) the Rabbi, as opposed to just (rabbi's first name)?
>
> 7b) In what ways do you 'edit' your behavior or actions when you are in among congregants or in a public place where you could run into congregants?
>
> 8a) Are there people in your congregation with whom you would go out to dinner socially?
>
> 8b) Are there people in your congregation with whom you could leave your children if you had to leave town on short notice?
>
> 8c) Are there people in your congregation (other than staff or Board) in

whom you would confide if you were struggling with a family crisis?

9) Where else do you find socially fulfilling relationships?

10) Do you feel that the way you approach relationships in your congregation is different from your colleagues who are of the opposite gender?

11) Anything else I should have asked you about these topics?

The rabbis that I interviewed will be represented by pseudonym and by schema (a code which allows the reader to see the rabbi's gender, length of their rabbinate, and the size of their congregation at a glance) throughout this paper, so as to enable their candid commentary with respect to their privacy. Their schema as well as their pseudonyms are as follows.

Schema: (Gender, Length of Rabbinate, Congregation Size[100])

Gender	
male	**M**
female	**F**

Length of Rabbinate	
1-5 years	**1**
5-10 years	**2**
10-15 years	**3**
15-20 years	**4**
20-25 years	**5**
25-30 years	**6**
30-35 years	**7**
35-40 years	**8**

Congregation Size	
Up to 300 Family Units	**A**
301-599 family units	**B**
600-999 family units	**C**
1000+ family units	**D**

Ex. A female rabbi who has been in the field for 3 years in a 400 family congregation would be: **F1B**.

100. According to CCAR Rabbinical Placement Commission, http://ccarnet.org/placement/

The Rabbis

Pseudonym	Title	Schema			Notes
Rabbi Lana Korngold	Assistant Rabbi	F	1	D	
Rabbi Michael Shabbat	Assistant Rabbi	M	1	D	
Rabbi Leah Twersky	Associate Rabbi	F	2	C	Recently designated to become senior rabbi of the congregation. Currently works as associate to Rabbi Jack Goldman, listed below.
Rabbi Seth Berkowitz	Associate Rabbi	M	2	C	
Rabbi Nicole Adut	Associate Rabbi	F	3	D	
Rabbi Joseph David	Rabbi/Director of Education	M	3	C	Works as associate to Rabbi Anna Roth, listed below.
Rabbi Peter Harkess	Solo Rabbi	M	4	A	
Rabbi Leslie Agan	Solo Rabbi	F	5	A	Primarily LGBT congregation
Rabbi Anna Roth	Senior Rabbi	F	7	C	Senior to Rabbi Joseph David, listed above.
Rabbi Alexander Kliner	Senior Rabbi	M	7	D	
Rabbi Jack Goldman	Senior Rabbi	M	8	C	Will be succeeded as senior rabbi by Rabbi Leah Twersky, listed above.

↑ Gender ↑ Length of rabbinate ↑ Congregation size

Rabbis as Exemplars

Nearly all of the rabbis I spoke with were able to identify themselves as exemplars of Jewish life to their congregants in at least one way. Rabbi Peter Harkess (M4A) and Rabbi Jack Goldman (M8C) both said that they see themselves as role models primarily when it comes to the way that they value ethical living. Harkess said,

> Teacher is what I preach. Exemplar is what I practice. I think that in my role... it's easier for me actually to be the practice-er than the preacher. Because I've come to conclude that in part, what Judaism is, is the way that when I live my best, I live my life ethically... That's one of the primary values for me, as rabbi.

To value ethical living is not only a standard expectation of Jewish life, but to rabbis who understand this as part of the way in which they are role models, it is an acknowledgement that not only is living an ethical life an important part of being Jewish, but also that others are looking to them to see how one puts Jewish ethical living into action. In this way, these rabbis are conscious of themselves not only as teachers of ethical living, but also as role models of ethical living to their congregants.

Other rabbis are conscious of the way that they choose to Jewishly educate their children, and how this sets an example for the rest of the community. Both Rabbi Leah Twersky (F2C) and Rabbi Joseph David (M3C) work in congregations that have not only supplementary schools, but also day schools. Both of these rabbis mentioned the way that their choice to send their children to the synagogue day school is a way of role modeling their commitment to integrated Jewish life to their congregation. Rabbi David (M3C) remarked that

> Judaism is a natural part of who I am, who my wife is, and who my kids

> are, and I don't think they have a sense of having to go somewhere to be Jewish, or of having to go out of our way to be Jewish, it's just a natural part of our existence in the every day.

Rabbi David (M3C), who bases his rabbinate on a commitment to helping others "live as a 21st Century person and bring Judaism into it," sees Jewish day school as a concrete way of enacting this vision. By living in this way for himself and his family, he 'practices what he preaches,' and models for others how to live a modern Jewish life in a way that is accessible to those for whom choosing a Jewish day school is a realistic option. Rabbi Harkess (M4A) echoes this sentiment when he expresses the reasons why he chose a local Jewish High School (unaffiliated with his synagogue) for his eldest child. When asked why it is important, he says simply, "people know it." In other words, his congregants are aware of his choice to send his child to a Jewish day school. These rabbis are all conscious of the way that the choices that they make with their families are seen by others as authentic ways to live a Jewish life.

According to the rabbis I interviewed, part of being an exemplar is an awareness of the ways that they are seen by their congregants, and the ways that their Jewish choices are noted by the public. Two female rabbis described to me the ways that they consciously tell stories about their families, specifically as it relates to the ways that they practice Jewish life in a non-traditional way and share it with their congregations. Rabbi Leah Twersky (F2C) makes sure to tell her congregants about the times that she and her family remember to light Shabbat candles, but is honest that her family will sometimes have pizza delivery for Shabbat dinner. Rabbi Nicole Adut (F3D) relays a similar sentiment. She told me that she recently shared with her congregation a story about her upbringing:

> I grew up in a home that didn't have a lot of money, and so my parents

> only gave one gift on Hanukkah. But they used that as an opportunity to actually do lots of rituals during the other nights. And I spoke about how it was the rituals that were the things that stayed with me, not the presents. And that now in my home with my husband and three children, we choose to continue that tradition. Not because we don't have enough money to buy eight gifts, but we choose not to. And instead, we choose to play dreidel, sing songs, play hot and cold with gelt, ask Hanukkah questions from a Hanukkah box... so I share with my congregants how I struggle to make it through those things.

Rabbi Twersky (F2C) says that by sharing examples like these, "we're open in dialogue, we invite people to participate, and they know we're not perfect. Which is great – because then they know its real." For these two rabbis who are also working mothers married to working fathers, it becomes a priority to show other busy families that shabbat does not have to be something pristine and flawless, and Hanukkah does not have to be a materialistic extravaganza in order to be meaningful. Rather, these rabbis try to model ways that the modern family can make Jewish ritual and tradition their own, in a way that works for them and meets their unique needs. As role models, they try not to show congregants the 'right' way to live Jewishly, but rather, to share the multiplicity of 'right' ways to live Jewishly.

Do rabbis feel a disconnect between who they are as 'people' and who they are as rabbis?

The two rabbis who had been in the field the longest, Rabbi Jack Goldman (M8C) and Rabbi Anna Roth (F7C) were the most reluctant to label themselves as role models. While I mentioned earlier that Rabbi Goldman saw himself as a model of ethical Jewish living, it is important to note that Rabbi Goldman does not hold himself to a higher moral and ethical standard because he is a rabbi, but because he is a Jew. He charges

himself with the task of teaching Jews about the mitzvot and the values behind them, and then refraining from judging their choices. "Modeling," he says, "implies a judgment of some kind. It's me saying, 'I'm your model.'" Rabbi Roth expresses a similar disconcert with others viewing her as a model. She sees herself on a Jewish journey, much like that of her constituents. "When I invite people to my home it isn't to see me do Sukkot, it's to do Sukkot with them," she says. She continues, explaining "I just think that my Jewishness ... is not about being a model, its just about the way I am a Jew."

These two responses are noteworthy, particularly because these same two respondents were the ones who had the most difficult time thinking about the times that they "edit" their behavior when they are out in public or among congregants. Many of the other rabbis – particularly the male rabbis – expressed a difference in the way that they carry themselves in public, and the way that they might act if they were with family or friends who 'knew them when.' When asked about the ways that he might edit his behavior when he is with congregants, Rabbi Michael Shabbat (M1D) explained he would edit in some ways, "perhaps my language... And even the foods sometimes that I'll eat that I won't necessarily have a problem with if I'm with friends or family." Rabbi Seth Berkowitz (M2C) remembered a recent meal out with congregants, when "in a normal circumstance I might have ordered a cheeseburger, but in this case I didn't. I'm trying to project an image that may not be me, but one that they could aspire to. One that I aspire to." One male rabbi expressed that he would drink alcohol with a congregant, while yet another said that he has to be particularly careful not to engage in crude or otherwise inappropriate jokes at which he might otherwise be tempted to laugh. (One of the female rabbis mentioned that, in this vein, her congregants would be surprised to find out how 'bawdy'

she can sometimes be.)

There is a shared expectation among both rabbis and congregants of how the rabbi ought to behave – however, these findings show that the way the rabbi ought to behave is not necessarily the rabbi's first inclination as a person. Rabbi Michael Shabbat (M1D) commented on the implications of projecting an image that is not necessarily an authentic image of the self. He wonders: "I'm not sure if that's a lie. I mean, it kind of is, but it's also not – when you're living a role as well." Rabbi Alexander Kliner (M7D) commented,

> ...they [congregants] need to have that kind ... of relationship. Because if we are just one of the guys, then who are we and what are we? And I know all too well my shortcomings and failings, and they know that I have them, but it's better for them if they don't see them.

This mentality is fairly consistent with the Bloomian idea that the rabbi ought to symbolize the perfect Jewish person, projecting an image of living to a particular moral and ritual standard for the benefit of the people, but not necessarily for the benefit of the self.

The younger, female rabbis gave different kinds of answers when asked how they might edit or otherwise change their behavior in public. These three rabbis, all ordained in the last fifteen years tended to edit themselves in a way that was more protective of self and family, and less worried about projecting an image of perfection. Rabbi Lana Korngold (F1D), the only rabbi with whom I spoke who does not have a spouse or children, said that the only part of her life that she would be unlikely to share with a congregant might be the specifics of her dating life. She has chosen to share some of this with one member of her congregation, and while the choice has not had any ramifications, she does carry a hint of worry that

> ...she would take one of the stories I've shared with her in confidence

> and make a decision to tell a bunch of other preschool parents, and then that story would spread. None of which is ...awful, it's just human stories of dating and heartbreak and good choices and bad choices. But the community does not need to know those details.

In this rabbi's case, she is not worried about exposing herself as a different kind of Jew that others might expect her to be. Rather, she withholds information that most would consider private, in other words, information that one would only share with friends. The women rabbis who are also mothers use a similar paradigm for deciding what information about the family stays private, and what information about the family is open for public consumption. In these cases however, the rabbis specified cases that were less about the self and more often about the family. Rabbi Nicole Adut (F3D) clarifies her choices to share personal information, explaining that when she chooses to share, she considers first who will be affected by her choice, and whether or not the reason she is sharing is for the benefit of herself, or the person she is hoping to guide or counsel.

> I'll share when it's relevant. I was taught that it's fine to share your own personal stories and struggles, if it's for the sake of them. But if it's for your own sake, then that's not appropriate. So that's what I ask myself all the time. Am I sharing... because I want to vent or connect or whatever, or am I sharing... because I somehow can help them.

Rabbi Leah Twersky (F2C) expressed a similar mentality to Rabbi Nicole Adut's. Rabbi Twersky chooses not to have congregants over to her house often, as this is a "sacred space" for her and her family.

It is difficult to make a conclusive statement about whether or not the tone of these conversations and the differences between the majority of the men and the majority of the women was coincidental or if it is a true function of a gender or societal expectations.

While some of the male rabbis did also eventually discuss the way in which they make decisions about sharing aspects of their personal lives with the congregation, the majority spoke first about the ways that they adapt their outer, observable behavior. Overall, the male rabbis seemed to have a greater sense of disconnect between the activities that they might want to participate in as people, and the activities that they ought to participate in as rabbis.

The women who are mothers seemed less conscious of a distinction between who they are as people and who they are as rabbis, and more concerned with the tension between being rabbis and being mothers. This came up more frequently with the rabbis who have young children at home than it did with the rabbis whose children are older. Rabbi Leah Twersky (F2C) mentioned the way that congregants will comment when she comes to a meeting of the parent-teacher association at the day school that she is there with her 'mommy-hat' on. Whether or not the rabbi sees a distinction is, in some ways, irrelevant. Her congregants organize her interactions with them as the times that she is like them (wearing her 'mommy-hat'), and the times that she is not like them (wearing her 'rabbi-hat'). For Rabbi Adut (F3D), the tension grows even deeper when her own son draws attention to his mother's different roles. She relayed to me a story about a time when her three year old son expressed frustration at her presence on the pulpit.

> He says, 'No Mommy, I don't want you to be a rabbi.' And I said, 'Do you want me to be your mommy?' He said, 'Yes.' So I said, 'Okay, Mommy's not going to be a rabbi near you. Mommy's just going to be a mommy.' But he doesn't really get that. When I take him on Tot Shabbat and I'm the rabbi, he's learning that Mommy is the rabbi, then when Mommy is done, then Mommy is the mommy.

No matter how integrated the rabbi's own identity is, others may have the need to

separate out the different roles that the rabbi plays. In this rabbi's experience, when she is the mother, then she cannot be the rabbi, and vice versa. My research has led me to question whether or not this same tension over multiple roles exists for men who are rabbis. Rabbi Seth Berkowitz (M2C) allows his three year old son to sit on the bima with him during services. His son will quietly sit on his lap throughout the service, sucking his thumb and enjoying this special time with his dad – most likely unaware of the way that the congregation is noticing him. In this case, Rabbi Berkowitz says that the congregation finds it endearing. Many approach him after services, applauding his son's good behavior and joking that his son might decide to become a rabbi like his dad.

The distinction between Rabbi Nicole Adut's (F3D) clearly drawn lines between being Mommy and being Rabbi, or Rabbi Leah Twersky's (F2C) congregants noticing her different 'hats' are notable in contrast with Rabbi Seth Berkowitz's (M2C) public blending of roles. While society has come a long way in terms of accepting female professionals, there is more tension for women who are full-time moms, and full-time rabbis than for men who are both fathers and rabbis. Based on my interviews, the blending of roles came less easily to female parents than male parents.

Are rabbis who are women more relational?

It is difficult to say conclusively whether or not women are normally more relational than men when it comes to interactions in the synagogue, as a narrative interview did not allow for a measurable analysis. There were some statements made by the rabbis I interviewed that did indicate a change over the last thirty years in the way that rabbis are encouraged to build relationships in the synagogue. Rabbi Leslie Agan (F5A) challenged

me to think of the question not as gender based, but as generation based.

> I think male rabbis of a certain generation, many of whom are just retiring did do it differently. They were always the rabbi no matter where they are or where they were. And their wives were different. Because their wives most likely came to shul every Friday night ... and they really played the 'rebbitzen' role... But I think ...the new cohort of forty-somethings who ascended to senior positions, I think they're very open. I think they've been influenced by their female colleagues and classmates.

According to this rabbi, both men and women who have been ordained in the last thirty years value relationship as the primary way to gain influence and trust in the congregation. This is consistent with the answers I received from rabbis regarding their preferred leadership style. Nearly all of the rabbis, both male and female used words like "collaborative" and "consensus" when describing the way that they facilitate decisions in their congregation. Many, both male and female also indicated that making decisions in a non-hierarchical way is harder and more time consuming – therefore they tend to save the collaboration for the congregational issues that they deem most important. They use their own judgment to know when it is best to make a decision without consultation: in one rabbi's words, to "just handle it."

It was more common in these conversations for men to identify an aspect of their personality as a leadership style, in addition to a technique like 'collaboration.' For example, words like "enthusiasm," "inspiring," "being me," and "creative" came more frequently when men described their leadership style, whereas women were more likely to first identify leadership techniques of relational network-building, like "collaboration," "grassroots," and "creating a team environment." This trend was not across the board, (one

woman rabbi identified her primary leadership style as "being Nachshon,"[101] meaning that she jumps right in and others tend to follow) however, it was notable that there does still seem to be a cultural tendency for men to rely more heavily on charismatic elements of their personality than relationship. That being said, all of the men did acknowledge the importance of relationship and did not discount relationship in favor of charisma.

While Rabbi Agan (F5A) encouraged me to think about the question of relationship as generational rather than gender based, it is important to note that women have had a significant impact on the generation in question, so one cannot discount gender from the discussion. Two of the male rabbis, Rabbi Jack Goldman (M8C) and Rabbi Peter Harkess (M4A) acknowledged that women have opened doors in the rabbinate for men to be more relational. Harkess explained the ways that feminism has impacted male rabbis:

> I would say that because of women rabbis I get to be the kind of rabbi I am. I am about consulting, partnership. I am about healing and caring. I am about non power politics and non dysfunctional stuff. Those are traits that aren't the traditional male leader. And I can really be that because women in the rabbinate have made it more possible.

Nearly all of the rabbis, both male and female spoke about the importance of connecting, reaching out, and being accessible to their congregants. It is impossible to say definitively whether or not this is an absolute result of women's influence, however there are certainly those who feel the effects of an egalitarian society – and those claim to observe a noticeable change in rabbi's efforts to build relationships with congregants in the last thirty years.

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101. See Sotah 37a.

Does a more relational rabbinate mean that rabbis can be friends with their congregants?

One of the primary purposes of these interviews was to find out whether or not a greater focus on accessibility and relationship has broken down the barrier between rabbi and congregant that Jack H Bloom describes in the *Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar.* I asked all of the rabbis about three levels of relationship: whether or not they would have dinner with a congregant with no pretense, whether or not they would leave their children with a congregant on short notice, and whether or not they would confide in a congregant if they were struggling with some kind of family crisis. Then, we discussed why and how they came to these decisions, and whether or not this meant that they might consider these congregants friends.

Five out of the eleven rabbis stated that there are people in their congregations that they would consider friends.

- Rabbi Anna Roth (F7C)
- Rabbi Leslie Agan (F5A)
- Rabbi Nicole Adut (F3D)
- Rabbi Joseph David (M3C)
- Rabbi Leah Twersky (F2C)

Six out of the eleven rabbis stated that rabbis and congregants cannot be friends.

- Rabbi Jack Goldman (M8C)
- Rabbi Alexander Kliner (M7D)

- Rabbi Peter Harkess (M4A)
- Rabbi Seth Berkowitz (M2C)
- Rabbi Michael Shabbat (M1D)
- Rabbi Lana Korngold (F1D)

While it is possible to separate these rabbis into categories of "yes" and "no," the factors that each rabbi considered was nearly as informative as the answer itself. Of the rabbis who do have people that they consider friends in the congregation, most of them would not count more than a handful of people in that category. Two of the rabbis who do have friends in the congregation include among that group old friends who chose to join the congregation after the rabbi became employed there (one of these rabbi's *only* considers these pre-existing relationships in her count of friends in the congregation). None of the rabbis who do have friends in the congregation view these relationships lightly. Some have encountered criticism from congregants in maintaining these relationships, being called "cliquey," or accused of favoritism. One rabbi who does not consider herself friends with congregants described an ability to be extraordinarily candid, and sometimes personal with congregants – however, she does not consider this friendship. She elaborated, saying:

> It looks like friendship, in that when we go out or when I come over for a potluck or when we go camping together, it looks like friendship. That's what friends do. They hang out, they're informal, they're wearing the same clothing, they talk the same, act the same, eat the same.... The line is... if I'm going to go on a hike, I'm not going to call congregants. Or... I'm feeling really depressed and I just need a pick me up. That's friendship... But I think that's the confusing part that they never explained to me in rabbinical school.

This rabbi seems to be saying that it is not friendship because there is not reciprocity. She does not regularly expose neediness to congregants or accept emotional support from them.

Defining friendship is challenging, as the topic is subjective. For a person who naturally is drawn to a large friendship circle that has within it varying degrees of intimacy, it might be easier to envision a rabbinate that includes an element of friendship. For those who tend to have a smaller, more intimate group of friends, it might be more difficult to imagine bringing a congregant into that inner circle.

It is worth noting that all of the rabbis who are mothers fall into the category of those who would consider it possible to be friends with congregants. Motherhood is a part of the female rabbinic experience that Jack Bloom was unable to consider when he conducted his research. While it is impossible to conclude that the presence of friendship relationships in the congregation are the norm for all rabbis who are mothers, I did find that all of the rabbis whom I surveyed who are mothers do each have at least one friend in the congregation. (It may or may not be noteworthy that the male rabbi who falls into this category is the one male rabbi in this survey who works with a female senior rabbi.) Two of the male rabbis did note that they enjoy the opportunity to be near their children when they attend the synagogue nursery school or parenting center, but that they both do feel a disconnect from the other parents who are present, as they are mostly women. One explained as follows:

> [My wife] is in the parenting center. She is there with other moms... [if] I was a woman, and I was doing Mommy and Me here at the temple as an hour off, or I scheduled it into my day... I would become friends with these people. It's different... My gut says that its different.

[Interviewer: So you are saying that if (your wife) was the rabbi, the relationships would be very different.]

Yes.

While it would be essentialist to assume that the women who bring their children to nursery school all have a shared experience, and that the male rabbi is automatically excluded from this experience because of his gender, the male rabbis with whom I spoke with did note a feeling of isolation from the women's experience, even when the class is open to men. One explained that he simply does not feel comfortable socializing with women (who still tend to be the majority of attendees in the class, even when it is open to men and women). He said, "I have a wife, and she is the one who gets all of that attention." While he does feel comfortable working with women who come to him in a rabbinic capacity, he feels uncomfortable socializing without a specific purpose, even in a 'parent and me' setting. For one of the female rabbis who did form friendships in the congregation, she explains that her "immediate friends, they really came from my Parent and Me group with my oldest kid. That's just how it really happened." These rabbis encountered very different experiences as parents of children in the congregation, which allowed some of them to make the choice to pursue friendships, and prevented others from doing so. It is possible that gender is one of the factors that led to the variance in experience for these rabbis.

It is also possible that the factors used by men and women to determine friendship what constitutes a 'friendship' are different. Returning to the conversation about the elements of self that rabbis might edit, the male rabbis I spoke with tended first to mention ways that they might not be the perfect Jew: in other words, food and language choices,

or crude or crass jokes. For women, the editing tended to include sharing of a more personal nature: for our single rabbi it was the details of her dating life, for women rabbis who are parents it was the details of their marriages or their children's lives. The women tended to be less concerned about damaging their own careers than they were about protecting their loved ones. It is possible that this could also play a role in the way that some women rabbis were more able to consider friendship with congregants. The kind of sharing that would define a friendship for women might be less likely to damage the 'appropriate' rabbinic image.

In what ways does this research break down the image of Jack Bloom's *Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar?*

Generally throughout my interviews the rabbis agreed that it is easier for men to fit into the Bloomian image of what a rabbi is. Rabbi Joseph David (M3C) suspected that this is due in part to the physical differences between men and women. In comparing myself (young, petite and female) to him (tall, middle aged, and male) he noticed that

> I'm a big guy, and I have a pretty commanding voice and presence so I don't have to worry about coming across as if I know what I'm doing, even if I don't. But I think you know, you're 5 feet tall, young woman, more frail than I, your voice isn't as powerful, all of that stuff would be the hardest thing for a woman, I imagine.

For a man who fits easily into the stereotype of what a man should look like, there are certain aspects of the rabbinate that might make projecting a stereotypical rabbinic image easier. It is likely that for congregants this is wrapped up in Jack Bloom's explanation that the rabbi ought to be a symbol for God, and look, in some way, like they imagine God might look. Rabbi Leah Twersky (F2C) commented on the challenge some of her congre-

gants have had in accepting her new position as senior rabbi of her congregation:

> A few people have been brave enough to put a label on it, and to say, you know, 'oh, Rabbi Leah, we love you and you were there for us, during our financial issues... and our marriage issues... but... I never thought my senior rabbi would be the same age as me or a female...
>
> ...You've gotta be old, you've gotta have a beard, and you've gotta be on high.

Rabbi Peter Harkess (M4A) commented further on the disconnect that some congregants might feel when they expect their rabbi to be a symbol for God:

> I don't think that rabbis are God or that rabbis look like God, but in the eyes of my congregants I look a lot more like God and a lot closer to God than you... Very few people are going to look at me and struggle with me as a man... I don't have to fight. You do.

Women on the pulpit challenge congregants who find themselves responding to the rabbi as a God-figure to do two things: a) women on the pulpit challenge these Jews to think more deeply about their God concept, and b) women on the pulpit challenge these Jews to think about whether or not the rabbi truly does symbolize God on earth. While thinking deeply about the God concept is important, what will better serve both the rabbi and congregant is to re-order the thinking about the rabbi, and what she or he represents. While Rabbi Harkess (M4A) suggests that it is the woman rabbi who has to struggle in order to fit the congregants projections, my research has led me to consider whether or not it is *both* the rabbi and the congregant who have to struggle: struggle to redefine rabbinic leadership, and rabbinic expectations. Rabbi Anna Roth (F7C) suggests that women on the pulpit shatter Bloom's thesis about what the rabbi ought to be the congregation:

> ...The difference between the symbolic exemplar of Bloom and of us, is when you make that projection ... that God is a tall man with a deep beautiful voice, you don't notice that you're making that projection. When you do it to me or to you, you notice that you're making that projection, and you have to stop and think about who is the God that you're praying to. So by definition, women in the story challenge these male metaphors and then the whole Symbolic Exemplar thing begins to fall apart in a way... it is structured in this male model with a male God. So once we're not operating in that universe, it begins to change.

One way in which my research has been conclusive is that the rabbinic universe *is* changing. Rabbis who are mothers change the rules for rabbis who are fathers. Rabbis who are single change the rules for rabbis who are married. Rabbis who are gay and lesbian change the rules for rabbis who are straight. And rabbis who are female change the rules for rabbis who are male. And all of these rabbis, in their varying ages and stages change the face of Judaism for the congregants with whom they live, teach and preach.

One expectation of the rabbinate however, remains the same: The rabbi *is* a <u>human</u> model of what it means to be a Jew. The rabbi *is* an exemplar of morality and ethics and conscientious decision-making. The rabbi, with all of his or her flaws, and all of her or his mistakes, is, first and foremost, a Jew. Therefore, as the rabbi continues to strive for goodness in his or her life, she or he has the potential to show people *their* potential: their moral potential, their ethical potential, and their Jewish potential.

Section 5: Conclusion

Suggested Follow up Research

In my final research, I have seen that while some remnants of Bloom's paradigm still hold true for some rabbis, the clear-cut line that Bloom draws between rabbis and congregants no longer exists in the way that he envisioned it. Today, the line between rabbis and congregants is more porous, allowing the rabbi to use his or her own best judgment to determine the ways that he or she will observe boundaries between the self and the congregation. Today's rabbis no longer hold themselves to Bloom's ideal of always being "separate from" the congregation, having learned that there are times where approaching others authentically from a personal, relational perspective is actually more effective. The rabbis with whom I spoke showed me that while opening up honestly to congregants can sometimes be more complicated than holding up a wall of separation, both rabbi and congregant benefit from the transparency.

I had hoped to see a clear delineation of age and gender that upheld my hypothesis: that the experienced male rabbis would be more hierarchical and less relational than the more recently ordained rabbis and female rabbis. I assumed that feminism would have had a greater impact on these groups of rabbis. While I did see trends away from Bloom's model of the rabbinate, I was not able to separate it out distinctly by age or gender. Many of the rabbis expressed sentiments that resonate with *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar.* For example, many rabbis did express a reluctance to befriend congregants or a feeling of living *among* the community, but not always being a *part of* the community. However, nearly all of the rabbis also mentioned situations and behaviors that Bloom would likely

find problematic for a symbolic exemplar. For example, many of the rabbis maintain hopes that their children will be truly accepted by the community. Others also do consider a few congregants to be real friends.

While it is clear that the image of the symbolic exemplar is not as pervasive today as it might have been throughout Bloom's rabbinate, it is difficult to know conclusively whether or not feminism is the driving force behind the change. There are however, many reasons to suggest that feminism and women in the rabbinate have been a major influence on the observable changes in Reform Judaism in the last several decades. It is indisputable that more and more rabbis are using and developing rituals that are egalitarian, like a *simchat bat* ceremony that welcomes a baby girl into the Jewish covenant,[102] or the introduction of a *Kos Miryam* at the seder in addition to a *Kos Eliyahu.*[103] However, not all of the changes that the Reform movement has adapted are a direct correlation to the relational teachings of feminism or the presence of women. Many Reform congregations now prefer the rabbi leading *t'fillot* to be on the same level as the *kahal* instead of on a raised *bima*, because that structure suggests a hierarchical schema. Many of these congregations also prefer chairs in circles on the floor where the *kahal* can see one another to pews, and a more conversational style of teaching than an emphasis on preaching. While these changes to the prayer setting suggest a feminist influence, most of them began in the *Havurah* movement of the 1970's. The Jews of the *Havurah* movement were looking to depart from "mainstream American Jewish institutions... which they regarded as ster-

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102. Debra Ruth Kolodny, "Mystery of the Covenant: A New Ceremony of Simchat Bat." http://www.ritualwell.org/lifecycles/babieschildren/babynamingsimchatbat/primaryobject.2007-12-12.8212176456

103. Tamara Cohen, "Filling Miriam's Cup." http://www.ritualwell.org/holidays/passover/partsoftheseder/honoringmiriam/primaryobject.2005-06-15.1790437435/view?searchterm=kos%20miryam

ile, hierarchical, divorced from Jewish tradition, and lacking in spirituality,"[104] criticisms which suggest a feminist mentality. While these changes in Reform communities are more closely linked to the *Havurah* movement than they are to feminism, the *Havurah* movement itself is linked to by its egalitarian priorities to feminist ideology.[105] While feminism is not singularly responsible for the changing face of American Reform Judaism, it has been significantly influential, and cannot be discounted.

Questions for Future Study

I suspect that there may also be other factors that could affect the way in which a rabbi constructs his or her boundaries with congregants that were not covered in this study. As I mentioned earlier, rabbis who identified themselves as extroverts were generally more open with congregants about their lives than rabbis who identified as introverts. In some cases, this identification led those rabbis to consider some congregants as friends. In a future study, I would include two more questions in the interviews: I would ask the interviewees whether or not they considered themselves to be generally introverted or extroverted, and I would also ask the rabbis how they define friendship. It is possible that those rabbis who naturally are inclined to have more people around them will be more likely to include congregants among those in their friendship circle. It might be easier for these extroverted rabbis who enjoy surrounding themselves with people to transition in a relationship from congregant to friend.

When asked about social fulfillment, many of the rabbis I interviewed said that they

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104. Chava Weissman, "Worship in the Havura Movement." *The Life of Judaism,* Harvey E. Goldberg ed. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 81-82.

105. Ibid.

find fulfilling social relationships with other rabbis or Jewish professionals. In a future study it would be important to speak with rabbis who are not in urban settings. All of the rabbis with whom I spoke are in cities or close to cities with large Jewish populations, and are able to see other rabbis with relative frequency. Many work with colleagues in their synagogue, and others actively participate in the Board of Rabbis or regional rabbinic networks. However, in a more isolated location where there is a smaller Jewish population, rabbis might be more likely to build relationships that look like friendship with their congregants. In these situations, the opportunities for socializing with other rabbis come less frequently. My hypothesis is that these rabbis would be differently boundaried in some ways than rabbis in urban areas, in order to fulfill the need for social interaction.

A Vision for the Future

While I expected changes in boundaries and relationships to be the primary ways in which rabbis today break the mold of symbolic exemplarhood, my research unearthed another important factor. The rabbis who are most transparent about their own Jewish practice exhibited the least dissonance between who they are, and how they present themselves to their congregations. The rabbis who make the same food choices out in public and at home, or drink wine with congregants if they would drink wine at home, or openly share their own personal narratives in an appropriate way are the ones who are most likely to say that they believe their congregants really "know" them. These are the rabbis who I believe are showing the greatest shift away from the model that Bloom sets forth, and towards a vision for the future in which boundaries between rabbis and congregants are permeable rather than concrete. These rabbis allow their congregants to see

their humanity, living a life that is both Jewish and ordinary. When the rabbi lives in a way that an ordinary congregant could emulate, then congregants will have a harder time seeing their rabbi as a symbol for God. This paradigm shift will take some adjustment. American Jews have been taught to revere their rabbis in a certain way. However, in the long run both Jews and Judaism will be better off for understanding the ways that regular people can be good Jews and only God can be revered – and the rabbi is present to facilitate the congregant's learning. In this vision, there is no need for a rabbi to be on a separate level, working as a Jew by proxy for people who fear that they themselves cannot be in communication with the Divine.

The rabbi can never truly belong to a community if the rabbi continuously makes an effort to show a face to the community that is not authentic to his or her truest self. The platforms of Reform Judaism allow every person to evaluate her or his own spiritual and religious needs, and then find a way of Jewish living as part of a Jewish community that is integrated and honest to the individual.[106] In striving for all Jews to make educated choices about their own observance, the rabbi ought to be model of personal religious choice and Jewish communal involvement as well. This means that the rabbi cannot be a proxy for anyone else because the rabbi's observance might not look like anyone else's. The rabbi might choose not to keep kosher or not to observe Shabbat in a traditional way – so long as the rabbi has come to this decision through experimentation and serious thought. The rabbi cannot live a Jewish life on behalf of anyone else, but rather, can only help others to

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106. The notion of observance of mitzvot as personal choice in Reform Judaism is articulated and expounded upon in the Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism, developed in 1999 at the Pittsburgh Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. The Platform states that, "We are committed to the ongoing study of the whole array of [*mitzvot*] and to the fulfillment of those that address us as individuals and as a community." See: A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism, CCAR. http://ccarnet.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=44&pge_id=1606

identify the method of Jewish living that is personally meaningful them. The rabbi cannot be a part of a Jewish community for anyone else, for a Reform Jewish community needs members whose observance is varied in order to be vibrant and educational. Similarly, the rabbi cannot symbolize God, but rather, must help congregants facilitate their own meaningful Jewish connections to God that are not dependent on projecting a God-image onto another human being.

In 2006, Rabbi Hayim Herring wrote a reconceptualization of today's rabbinate. His goal was to articulate the role of the contemporary rabbi in all of its complexities. The phrase that he suggests encapsulates the multi-faceted, limited, and important role of today's rabbi. He calls the modern rabbi *moreh/ah derech chayim,* or a 'guide to a [Jewish] way of life.' He explains, saying:

> *Moreh* – many of us live to teach (through text, self, and experience); *derech* – we experience fulfillment from helping people along a Jewish path; and *chayim* – our tradition directs us to affirm life in all of its awe, mystery, and wonder. For some, *derech* also alludes to the concept of *halachah*, of helping people find their Jewish path specifically through the practice of *mitzvot*. Each individual word in this phrase suggests a valuable reason for thinking of ourselves as *morei derech chayim*.[107]

I am drawn to Herring's definition because it is at once complex, and honest. Today's rabbi is able to take others by the hand in a metaphoric way, and show them the multiplicity of options that exist for living an authentic Jewish life. While the rabbi's personal choices are one way, the rabbi's personal choices are not the *only* way. Just as a guidebook offers many options for travelers with different kinds of agendas, the rabbi as a guide to Jewish life makes an effort to show the many Jewish paths that exist. The guide does not

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107. Herring, "The Rabbi as *Moreh Derech Chayim*: Reconceptualizing Today's Rabbinate," 51.

take the trip on *behalf* of the traveler, but rather, accompanies, reflects, and educates along the way.

Carol Gilligan's notion of a web of relationships is the first step in succeeding as a *moreh/ah derech chayim*. In order to be trusted as a guide, to make meaningful recommendations to others, and to be welcomed along as a part of another's religious journey the rabbi needs to know his or her constituents in a deep way. This works best when the rabbi is able to genuinely approach others with interest, openness, and without judgment. When one is able to build relationships in the congregation based on whom one *authentically* is, rather than whom one is pretending to be, those relationships are able to develop in a real and natural way. Once this has been accomplished, the rabbi is able to build circles of connectedness between others who are in similar places on their religious journeys, who might be able to learn from one another in addition to the guidance that they receive from the rabbi. This is what brings a group of Jews seeking their own Jewish practice from individuals, to a community.

In order for the rabbi to expect others to be open and honest about their own challenges with Jewish life, I believe that the rabbi needs to be open and honest about his or her own Jewish choices and Jewish struggles. When the congregants see themselves reflected in the rabbi, he or she realizes that "I, too, can be an authentic Jewish person in the modern world." When congregants see in their rabbi an image of someone that they could never be, and have no interest in being – this is when Judaism becomes unattainable, and Jewish life something that is hired out for professionals to do. When the rabbi has permission to be his or her authentic self, the pressure of Bloom's symbolic exemplar is lifted.

While the rabbi might choose not to socialize with congregants, he or she will still be able to maintain authentic relationships that are based on *knowing* one another, rather than one providing a service on behalf of the other. To be able to "let loose" or "be friends" is not necessary with all congregants – not all congregants have to be friends. But it is not necessary to build an artificial wall. It is not necessary for the rabbi to be "on high" or "separate from" the *kahal*. When the rabbi is allowed to be on a Jewish journey much like that of his or her congregants, instead of at the finish line of the race towards Jewish perfection, the rabbi no longer has to worry about being 'found out.' In order for this vision to come to fruition, both rabbi and congregant need to operate within a mode of transparency, abstaining from judgment. Both rabbi and congregant need to recognize one another's choices as *Jewish* choices – even if they are not traditional.

While the rabbi is no longer a symbol for God or a symbol of a perfect Jew, the rabbi *is* still a role model, whether it comes to authentic struggle with ritual and tradition, or upholding a high standard of moral and ethical behavior. In this feminist re-visioning, the rabbi is not held to a *different* moral standard than a fellow Jew, but the rabbi is expected to focus deeply on maintaining a Jewish moral standard of living. While the rabbi will still struggle in a human way with moral decision making, and there may be times where it is effective to share that struggle with congregants in an appropriate way, the rabbi also needs to be conscious about the decision to share public information. Personal sharing is never an obligation, but rather a choice that the rabbi should make for his or herself – and a choice that should be made when it benefits the congregation, not in the rabbi's own self interest, particularly in the context of pastoral counseling. While Bloom would say that the rabbi ought to keep private any struggle that exposes the rabbi as not "serving

as... the best that is in human kind,"[108] this vision of the rabbinate recognizes that others can learn from wisely chosen moments in which the rabbi shares his or her personal challenges. Additionally, as a role model the rabbi ought to understand the consequences for poor moral and ethical decision-making. When the rabbi causes pain, that pain is significant: and it is as real in the eyes of God and the community as the pain caused by any person, whether that person is anonymous, or that person is a leader in the community. This model does not expect the rabbi to be perfect, but it does assume that the rabbi is always striving towards living Jewishly: ritually, morally, and ethically.

This is not to say that the rabbi and congregant are the same in every way. When the rabbi chooses to become a rabbi, he or she is committing to embarking on a Jewish journey. While struggles within the journey come and go, the journey itself is not an option. A congregant may have to work harder to discover why and how their Jewish journey is a part of their life journey. This is why the rabbi must always be aware that she or he is striving towards a high moral and ethical standard, whereas fewer will notice whether or not the congregant is in constant pursuit of this moral and ethical standard. While both the congregant and the rabbi are the same in the eyes of God, there is always an expectation of the Jewish community that the rabbi is on the Jewish journey. This differs from Bloom's model because in this vision no one expects the rabbi to have completed the journey. In this model, the rabbi is expected to be in process, not done processing.

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108. Bloom, *The Rabbi As A Symbolic Exemplar*, 175.

Conclusion

According to Bloom, the friendship that I experienced in my youth was never real friendship – not for my parents, and not for me. According to Bloom, these relationships were not reciprocal, and they ought to have ended when my family moved away to a new city to be a part of a new congregation. According to Bloom these relationships were not based in love, but rather in service, and perhaps curiosity. According to Bloom, these people never really *knew* my family. Perhaps they observed my family, or revered my family – but true reciprocal relationship was not possible.

In a feminist revisioning, where the whole community is simply striving for authenticity rather than perfection, the rabbi's spouse and the rabbi's children can come down from the pedestals that they have been placed upon alongside their rabbinic family member. When the rabbi is just a Jew on the path to realizing her or his own potential, the rabbi's family can just be Jews on the path as well. Then rabbis and their families can celebrate together with their communities and weddings, grieve together with their communities at funerals, learn from one another and participate in the rhythm of Jewish life together without pretense.

Though it seems simple, the move away from symbolic exemplarhood is more drastic than it sounds. Perhaps this because it requires a re-education for the congregation about who and what the rabbi really is. It requires the rabbi to open up in a way that he or she has likely been taught not to do. It requires the rabbi to be a little bit vulnerable and a little bit exposed. It requires the seminaries to re-think the ways that they teach rabbinical students to understand their role – for all rabbinical students are first observers of rabbis.

Some rabbinical students might enter rabbinical school thinking of themselves as 'separate from,' expecting to undergo a transitional moment in their education when they go from being ordinary, to being a symbol. Rabbinical students might feel that they deserve a position 'on high.' The goal of seminaries ought not be to raise up rabbinical students to this falsely elevated position, but rather to bring rabbinical students to understand their roles as teachers and as guides, on the ground and in relationship with laypeople.

Last, this vision for the rabbinate requires some sacrifice on the part of the rabbi. While Bloom's depiction of the symbolic exemplar is ultimately lonely and unfulfilled in day to day life, some of that emptiness may be filled by the power and prestige and that the rabbi gains by being a symbol for God. When one is 'separate from' the community, one may find he or she is regarded with an element of celebrity. When one stands in for God, she or he will be revered and honored. There are ways that symbolic exemplarhood is seductive. However, to be a symbol is as dangerous as it is attractive. In order to be fulfilled by this feminist revisioning of the rabbinate, the rabbi must relinquish any desire that he or she might have to be seen in this way, as a symbol on high.

When the rabbi is not expected to be a symbol, but rather a guide and a role model the rabbi can enable other Jews to be comfortable with their own Jewish lives as well. When rabbis are no longer pretending to be the Jews that they are not, congregants can realize that they are able to realistically live authentic Jewish lives, too. This allows the whole community to see that the ideal Jew does not have to be like God: the ideal Jew simply has to be oneself, already made in God's image, striving for meaning in a thoughtful and purposeful way.

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Appendix: Full Text of Narrative Interviews

Rabbi Michael Shabbat

Who is Michael Shabbat as a Rabbi?

Who is he now? Who does he want to become? Where does he want to go? Or where did he start?

If someone was to look at you and say, "Rabbi Michael Shabbat is this kind of rabbi...," what would they say?

He is... what I get is... out of the normal expectation, or what one is assumed to be. I don't know what that means because I didn't grow up with it. But it's always funny when people first meet me if I'm wearing my hat backwards, and shorts and a t shirt, or I'm playing basketball, they're like, really? Because of humor, or they way I interact with people or whatnot, at first it's a shock. But what's interesting is if people get to know me in a certain capacity, or if they see me, in a different role during the High Holy days and I'm in a suit or a robe, they're like wait, that's not who you are! But it is, it's just not what you see. What I also get is that people think I'm very approachable, not what they grew up with. Those who say that are the gamut from teenagers, first time parents, young adult congregants... the first time parents also say it because of the way I work with the children. I'll go out into the yard, and they'll come give me hugs, saying "Rabbi Shabbat, Rabbi Shabbat!" Their parents say, this is amazing. This is never how it was growing up for us. It was always that symbolic exemplar, you know, *he's* over there. *He* is over there. *He* is on the *bima*. *He* doesn't have time for me. I am only just being myself and I have this title 'rabbi.' I love playing with the kids and I love being with the parents, my door is always open and people are surprised that I have time for them. I see myself as being the one who is there to guide and be open to our community. I am here for them.

Is that the primary value that drives you in your rabbinate? Being approachable?

That's a great question. Yes. The driving motivation is that I want to be there to help people find meaning in their life. I want it to be positive, thoughtful, and community based. Meaning, that they find something and they are part of something greater than themselves. And I do that through personal connection, and the only way that I can make those connections is by being open and available and approachable. Is that conscious? Sometimes. But it's also something that comes out of my personality and who I am. Do I have to turn it on and off sometimes? Yes, as we all do. But the answer to the question is yes. To be open, approachable, with warmth and kindness so people

will feel more comfortable going on that journey.

How would you describe your leadership style?

The empowerment of others through inspiration. What do I mean by that? I'm going to think of camp specifically, when I'm up in front of a group of people. To be dynamic, energy, warmth, with some humor – but also being able to switch it into seriousness, to be able to walk that fine balance. But at the same time, to show my desire to engage and support. When I ask questions, I'm always trying to support the answer – even if the answer isn't exact, I always try to weave it in so that people feel supported to take chances. Positive reinforcement. I'm working on the critique, but doing it in a positive way. So my leadership style is as one who has a vision, one who can articulate the vision with enthusiasm and dynamism, but at the same time be of the people. How do you get people to buy into *limmud* at camp? It's not just about leading *limmud* at camp. It happens in the dining hall, in arts and crafts, on the basketball courts. It happens from being with them. And by being genuine. Because people see through your bull. It's a full time job. And it's not even a job. It's a lifestyle. You have this vision, you know where you want to go, and you have to bring people with you.

What about feeling powerful? When are the times you feel most powerful?

Interesting question. There are 2 things that pop into mind. *Siyum* at camp. When I'm talking and you can hear a pin drop, and I know that people are hanging on my every word. There is a lot of power in that. Or that people will come back and quote me to me. There's a lot of responsibility in that. So it's in those times, when you're talking and you can feel that they're listening to your words, and you can see the emotions and you know that you have them. You are going to take them somewhere, and they are ready and willing and able to go with you.

But also... power, but in a humbling way. Like when families invite you in to the most intimate details of their lives. Like doing a funeral intake, and leading someone through that process, officiating at the funeral and knowing that you have this family. It's a lot of power. Same thing for weddings, baby naming, bar mitzvah. You can't take these things lightly. And it drives me crazy – people pulling these things out of their back pockets. Sometimes its really strange when they thank you. You know *thank you so much, it's like you knew him.* I didn't do anything. I took your words and put them together and I was there for a smile or comfort. It's always so amazing to me. It's the people who do all the work, I just help guide them. Yet they assume that I've done something, that I've made some magical thing happen, when I haven't done anything. They have. So there is a lot of power in that. Whether it's real or not. Or justified or not. It's the perception.

When are the times that you do not feel powerful?

When we have 2000 people show up to High Holy Days, and yet we've got fifteen or twenty people coming to Shabbat services. It just kills me. Its tough, and you're like, well what can I do? Or when we have 2 or 3 bar mitzvahs *every Shabbat*, for a year, yet we have 30 kids in 8th grade. It's like, oh, man. You totally feel powerless. You just feel like, 'what am I not doing right?'

And, when you feel powerless is towards some of the end of life, why is this happening to me? Why is God doing this to me? Nothing I can do. I can't heal you, I can't bring your loved one back. Ugh. The worst, the worst is with children who are sick, or when children have died. When you're in the hospital and you just want to save them, or something. What can you do? You can't do anything. That's the ultimate experience of feeling powerless.

In those moments, have you ever found people projecting anger or frustration at you because you can't make that happen?

Oh yeah. People get angry. Like, say something! Come on! Fix this! Fix me! I just lost a child who was born deformed and all these genetic things that I had no idea about, and my baby just died. Now say something. Fix me. Be rabbinic. Be the rabbi. Be God! And when that happened, just a year ago – we just revisited because we did the unveiling for this child. And most unveilings are not like this, but this was like another funeral, it just ripped it open. It was like, come on, Shabbat. It's been a year now. Fix it. And we can't fix it. As much as we want to, because that's one of the things we like to do. we are fixers. We want to be, and we can't. And I got really worked into it, when I was spending a lot of time with these people, until my Senior was like, 'Dude, you can't fix this. They're going to suck you dry.' It's a harsh thing for somebody to say, cause its true.

Do you find that in approaching these scenarios that your approach to the rabbinate is different from your colleagues who are female?

I don't know if that's the right question. Ask it again...

Do you find that in approaching these scenarios that your approach to the rabbinate is different from your colleagues who are female?

I don't think it has anything to do with them being female. I think my approach is different from most people I know.

How so?

The majority of the people I know in this world grew up in this world. I did not. So I'm not basing it on anything. It's kind of like my approach is based on me, and I'm kind of learning as I go. Truly, a couple of the people who I would call 'the peeps' who

are awesome, who I would want to model myself after, is a mix of male and female. It's less about their gender, but more about the way they are with people.

And what are those qualities?

Again: approachability, warmth, humor, kindness. They can teach, and they listen. And when they teach, they don't teach down. You never feel that this person thinks that they're above you. And that's not male or female, cause I've experienced that with men and I've experienced that with women. And whether it comes from a place of true ego, or fear on their parts, I think it's the same across the board. At least for that, if I'm talking about myself, it has nothing to do with gender. When I think about who I would want to model myself after, it's both [men and women].

In what ways do you model Jewish life?

Overtly and implied, perhaps. Again, the kindness. The openness, the warmth, education, music, culture.

My last name is a big thing for me. My last name is Shabbat... So its almost like I wear that on my sleeve. That's what like to do. That's what I do. By doing those things, that foundation, everything else can come from that. It's running to the people to welcome them, to break bread with them, to cook, to drink, rest, to be together. And then, celebrating Shabbat with my family. Having a family, and wanting them to be involved and around and visible. Hebrew is very important. The music, the culture. Overtly and in my home. Smelling the smells and seeing the artwork and hearing the laughter and hearing the discussions, hearing Hebrew, Hebrew music. And study. Encouraging people to study. And Israel. People who know me, they know.

Are there times when you are presenting yourself as Rabbi Michael Shabbat, as opposed to Michael Shabbat?

This is interesting, because none of these are names that I chose for myself.

But rabbi you chose for yourself.

That's a very interesting question, because for the first year after rabbinical school every time someone called me rabbi I would cringe. I would cringe!

But earlier quoting a congregant talking to you, you referred to yourself as Rabbi Shabbat.

Yes, because here at the temple, in the schools, that is how we're introduced. Set by the schools. It's very formal. Everything is very formal. It's Rabbi Shabbat, it's Mrs. [So-and-So]. Same in the religious school, less so, but still, it's Rabbi Shabbat. Not Rabbi Michael. It's very formal. So yes, sometimes, when I know people are looking to me to be 'the rabbi' then that's what... again, life cycles. Then I'm not just being Michael. I'm being Rabbi Shabbat. When I meet people at the movies or something like that,

and they say Rabbi Shabbat, I say, it's Michael. I don't introduce myself as Rabbi Shabbat. It's Michael. It's my name.

I don't know if there ever is, especially moments where you are working with people... just like I don't want ceremonies for them to be cookie cutter, I don't think they want me to be cookie cutter. I think people will choose me, except when they're assigned, because of the relationship that I've already built. Easy example – the Bar Mitzvah blessings, standing at the ark. I've been told I go into a mode, that I have a voice. That I cross my hands and I have the mic and I go into this deep voice, serious, looking at them. And then there's the standard kind of blessing for the kids that you don't have that deep of a relationship with - versus the kid that you do [have a relationship with], and you throw the more personal in and that warms it up and it removes a layer of separation if you will.

There are those times when I know that I am being the rabbi because its what's expected, and that's where I need to be in those moments.

Where in your relationships with congregants do you see a boundary- or do you see a boundary – between relationship and friendship?

Oh, it's huge! It's huge! Especially now in this point in my life, having a 2 year old and another child on the way and my wife and daughter here at the temple, where you're going to meet people that you're kids are going to grow up with. But I'm also the rabbi here at the temple. There are boundaries. When we go out with people I am still very conscious that I am not Michael, *just* Michael with them. Their kids call me Rabbi Shabbat but here I'm coming over to their house as friends. Absolutely. I am so blessed that I grew up here in Los Angeles, and I have friends from high school and college who I am still super close with, who knew me before. Those are the people that I am most myself with, because I know that I am not just myself when I am out with congregants, I am representing the Temple and I am representing the word. I'm representing you! When I'm out with other people I'm representing you. Because when I'm out with other people, and they have an experience with me, they're going to transfer it onto you. Because, you know, regardless of that initial meeting, they will transfer their experience with me onto you.

In what ways do you edit?

Perhaps my language. I'm conscious of it anyway. You know what, even the foods sometimes that I'll eat that I won't necessarily have a problem with if I'm with friends or family. You know, whether it's really or not food that I'll eat. And I'm not sure if that's a lie. I mean, it kind of is, but it's also not – where you're living a role as well.

What would happen if they found out?

Probably nothing. Not that I would eat this anyway – but I went to – a congregant

of mine, we've gone through some stuff with their family, and we've become friendly. But anyways, he invited me to his birthday party. Ninety percent of the people there were congregants, and it was weird. So it goes both ways. Here, he's my friend – but I walk in the room and his wife had rented this semi truck, filled with video games. But they're like, 'oh, the rabbis coming, we can't cuss, we can't do this, we can't eat that pepperoni pizza,' so it's just as much them as it is...

Do you think they wanted you there?

Yes. Because they were excited that I was coming. But it did throw them off a little bit.

People change they're language, etc. for the better.

Yes. And, when it's not for the better, or when there's *lashon hara*, it puts me in a very strange position, and I need to extricate myself. Dude, this one is a crazy one. Because it extends. Its not just about you, its about your family. So this was a really weird, so strange...

There was a couple that was having a baby naming for the daughter. The mother is not Jewish the father is. It just so happens that they were also friends, the mother is friends with my wife. They were talking, and in passing, they said 'we're doing the baby naming, and it will be so nice becuase we did her christening, and now we're going to do the baby naming.' But [my wife] told me this, and I didn't know what to do with this information. So I brought it up theoretically at the clergy meeting. And I said, 'well, how do you know?' cause they don't have to offer that information, and we're in a congregation where we have a lot of mixed marriages, where are you going to draw the line? Are you going to interview every couple and ask them, or are you not? Because we came to this information totally unexpectedly. And the couple assumed I would do the naming, and we didn't know when it was going to be. And the clergy said, well, when they approach you, let us know. Didn't tell them[the other clergy] who it was. So, a few months pass. Haven't talked to me. Then I find out that in the coming day they were doing the naming at a service that I wasn't leading. So I assumed they found out. So they were just going to leave me out of it, so it happened anyway. But it was very strange because this person was my wife's friend, and they told her in passing. So it's extended to your family.

Also, when we go places, you are a public figure, so it's transferred onto your family as well. [My wife] sometimes she doesn't want to go into [the local frozen yogurt shop]. She doesn't want to see people, oh you know, 'I'm not dressed a certain way.' Its different here living in [this big city], and being part of such a large congregation. You can be more anonymous.

There also may be people who know you but you don't know that they know you.

That happens all the time. You have to be careful. Even when you think you're alone,

you're with your friends, you're not. I was in Las Vegas, I ran into congregants. In the valley. Any public place. It's totally real. You always have to be conscious. Be conscious of what you say, absolutely. I play basketball sometimes with friends, out [at a local middle school]. It's also a place where kids play soccer, and sometimes [while playing basketball] language gets really... aah... I remember an incident, @#$%^&*!, all of a sudden a little girl runs up, Rabbi Shabbat! Aaaah.... Language!

In thinking about these relationships that you build with congregants... how close do you get?

Do you ever have a social dinner, with no other agenda.

Yeah, we do it a bunch. Through the parenting center. My wife is involved as a parent. Friends that she's met in class, it turns out they're all women. Then you become friendly with certain ones, and we go out. So yes, we go out socially. Like last night, we had a new member reception at [the senior rabbi's] house. And there are people there who I talk to differently than other people, or certain people I spent less time with because they knew I had to, cause I was working. So yes, I do go out socially.

If you had to leave town on short notice, and you had to leave your daughter, would you call a congregant and leave your daughter there overnight?

Yes... yes... This happened... It was the other way around... another kid came over, and [my wife] watched him... maybe [would leave my daughter] I don't know.

First I would probably go to [my co-worker]. I might go to people from within before I go to people on the outside. That's a really interesting question. What are your perceived ramifications?

In putting myself in this position, I tried to think of how close people get. Maybe your child misbehaves in some way. Maybe there might be other baggage associated with your child being at someone else's house. I used to go play, all my friends were other congregants.

Its gonna happen. Especially if your kids are in the congregation.

Bloom says that 'the rabbi's family never really belongs.' Blanket statement. Those people you think are friends are not your friends. And reading that was totally disturbing to me. Because what were they if they were not my friends?

I don't think it's that black and white. Especially for the children, because they don't know any different. But it's also very true that I don't live in their world. I live among them, but its true. Just think about wealth, and some of the wealthier people in this synagogue. I'm not of them. Maybe our kids are going to be friends because of the school, but I'm not of them.

If you were struggling with a family crisis, like something financial, or illness related, are there people you would confide in other than staff or board?

Other congregants? No. No way. I don't want a congregant being my attorney, therapist, accountant. No. Uh uh. No way. Can't do that. And it's interesting, because we have a professional coach that we [the clergy] share that's been supplied to us. But its also strange becuase this person is also a congregant, but this is what he does for a living. And he's able to separate it, I think, and he wants to coach me, but he's also [the senior's] guy. He's [the senior's] coach and he's [the senior's] friend.

So he might have some different ideas about what those boundaries are.

Do you find that in those relationships and boundaries are in any way different for you than they are for your female colleagues?

I don't know. I think it's less difficult because I'm not single. But I know that there have been issues with the dating of congregants. And it's more difficult for female colleagues than it is for male colleagues. I don't know why that is. Maybe it's the dynamics of men and women, where a man is supposed to ask a woman out. What guy is going to ask a female rabbi out?

There is a power thing there too. A rabbi is a powerful role. To ask that powerful woman out might be different than the woman being asked out by that powerful man.

It's true, it's true.

Yes. And I'm thinking specifically about my situation. I think it would be different. So [my wife] is in the parenting center. She is there with other moms. Most of those moms are not working outside the home. [my wife] is not working outside the home. I have a job. I work. Like the other Dads. I work, so I'm not there. If I was a woman and I was doing Mommy and Me here at the Temple and as an hour off or I scheduled it into my day because I could, and I would become friends with these people. It's different. Here I am, the rabbi trying to spend time with my child, with congregants spending time with their children, I don't know, but it's different. My gut says that it's different.

So if [your wife] was the rabbi, the relationships would be very different.

Yes.

Anything else on these topics that you've want to say?

It does exist, where families will still want to request a male rabbi, who is also not gay for their life cycle events because of their perception of what a rabbi is, even today, even in a reform congregation.

Even when your female rabbi on staff has been a rabbi as long as she has.

Even. So there are people in our congregations, who, for them, not a woman, and not a gay man. And the fact that I'm married and have a child.

Do you have any friends who are in your position, single men who are doing this, and you know about their experience?

Yes. But their experiences are different because they're in smaller congregations and towns.

Anything else?

I've been told – this is not my belief- I've been told I will always have a job, because all things being equal I'll get chosen over a woman or a gay man. Is that real? I don't know. But there is definitely a perception.

Rabbi Lana Korngold

Tell me a little bit about how you would define your rabbinate.

I was on a Limmud LA panel last year, and there was a write up in the Jewish Journal ...and I remember that all of the young women on the panel took a strong community organizing approach. Our rabbinates were primarily about helping people to advance in their Jewish identity and their leadership capacity, and their ability to do for themselves and for their families as a result of their partnerships within the temple and certainly with clergy. So that I am much more of a collaborator, on the same horizontal plane, I am someone who is trying to create conversations, identify leaders, give them tools and say, 'based on what you said, how do you want to enact that?' Not, 'I have these fabulous ideas that I want to preach about, assume that you'll show up to do them,' and in fact never talk about the fact that that model is dated and ineffective. And that was what we noticed, and the journalist as well. It's a different take on the role as rabbi. So I still do that. Community organizing approach 100%. But it is also my sense that, why would I ever want to do Judaism for someone else? I love Judaism, I love it as a language and as a pathway to achieve justice, to pour more love and compassion into the world, to celebrate, to commemorate, but I certainly don't need to be doing it for 1,100 families. That's not why I get paid. And so the idea is, as often as possible, even though the synagogue is designed to be fee for service, 'I'll give you what I think you need,' or 'what you think you paid for,' or deficit based programming- the idea that we identify *lack* of something, like 'not enough teenagers are involved in our synagogue, so we program for teenagers and hope that they come back,' as opposed to saying 'what are the teenagers actually interested in,' 'what are the strengths of the congregation.' For example: If we had a huge number of people who like llamas. Would we be brave enough to say we have llama lovers in the community, and therefore we should figure out how to articulate that in a way that's Jewish? It's a ridiculous example, but we don't do that. We tend to go with doing things the way they've always been done. So I do a lot of inquiry, a lot of relationship building. I've learned to say it's less about the numbers, or the title of the program or the fancy flier, but it's much more about connecting with people. Are they feeling more grounded in their lives, and do they feel that they know other people or at least that they are able to be in a place where they can know more people? Because I think my rabbinate is about creating strong healthy communities that are driven and sustained by the people who are in them. Which is helpful, both as a woman, because people take it for granted that I'm relational, and that I'm young. That I'm not in charge. I mean [senior rabbi] is young, but she's in charge. So I can get away with a lot more. That sense of preaching from the pulpit moment, when I preached on public education this year, it's because of two years of groundwork in public education. Or, none of us really preached on health care. That was a bold move. It's the national issue right now, the URJ tells us to preach

on health care, but my opinion was nobody here is talking about health care. We haven't done a single house meeting to determine who are the leaders that might help us create an agenda or a platform, so why would we take up an entire High Holy Day sermon on something that will go in one ear and out the other, or put a checkmark that says 'I belong to [this temple], they talk about important things. I don't do a thing about it, but they talk about it. That's why I pay them, or that's why I'm a member.' But that's just not what [this temple] is about. My model of the rabbinate also is very well situated at this time for this community. I don't know if I moved over to [another synagogue], what that would look like.

What would you add in talking about your leadership style?

I'm definitely, about being collaborative, grassroots, developing future leaders who can do the work. Not a huge amount of ego, and yet the one thing I have not been able to figure out – I'm very high energy – I hate the word charisma, because of all of its connotations, but for the lack of nuance I feel that I have charisma. And so I worry sometimes that even though I am all about creating shared space and getting the voices that have to be heard to be heard, that the energy and the capacity to communicate in ways that are bright and convincing and inspirational gets in the way of that work. Because when people here say, 'God Lana, your two-minute *divrei Torah* are so awesome, why would we step in? You know, you do it so much better.' So I know that part of my leadership style is also learning how to be a bit more – to hold back a bit more, or to think more carefully about the use of my voice. Because if I'm that committed to collaboration and to shared leadership, and they're not stepping forward then I know it's one of the reasons.

When are the times that you feel powerful, and when do you not feel powerful?

I feel very powerful when I run effective meetings that have clear agendas, start on time, end on time, and have been based on what I know to be true about the group that's meeting. And are very clear about what's to be expected. Because I feel that people have this transformational moment, especially in the synagogue, where for so many years in their secular life, but also in their religious life, where they have sat through God awful meetings. And the language is, 'join us, volunteer, we love you!' and then they suffer through what that love looks like. Which is disorganization, a total waste of their resources, and no real next steps. And so a huge amount of that power comes in simply by redefining the expectations of congregants to do service work. Or to be included.

When you say meetings, you don't mean clergy meetings.

No, I'm all about lay leadership: how do I run the public education core team meetings, how I do membership. If we're going to have a meeting of pre-school teachers, parents and administrators, how does that look? So I think that for me,

there is a lot of power derived in that, and it comes from the people. They are loyal and they are grateful and they are excited to give me more of what they have, which is ultimately people power, not money power.

And I also feel powerful when I'm able to do the musical piece. It's just interesting. I think it's a reform movement thing. People are like, 'I can't believe you play guitar!' It's ridiculous, but power flows in within our movement the minute you are able to sing, cheer in a loud voice, or play the guitar. And I think it has to do somewhat with who's in power right now, and that they've overturned the choir, and the robes and the tradition of formality. But I can't tell you the number of points I've scored that get put into the bank account just because in addition to being articulate and running good meetings and giving good *divrei Torah*, I play the guitar. And using it appropriately, knowing how the music lifts us. The campfire at the Yosemite trip. Going into preschool classrooms, and having the parents say to me, 'My kid loves it when you come to visit.' Again, that's the way I think about power. Rather than 'I give a good sermon.' Or 'I'm 5'8",' which is helpful.

Lack of power... to some extent, the nature of the assistant rabbi position. It's just the model. You know, the buck doesn't stop at my desk. Angry congregants that I can't... both out of my own limitations, I don't do well with people who are angry, so I tend to make it a pastoral moment and I let them scream and yell, and I don't ever push back to redefine the claim, or the territory. And I always feel a little bit disempowered. Like, 'you brought your anger into my space.' Every once in awhile with my peers, I will say, 'I'm not having this conversation with you right now.' But with congregants, it terms of feeling disempowered, there's one. And there is something around sacred cows, the way its always been done – if there is a new way to rethink how we recruit volunteers, you know, if there is something in terms of how we do membership, or how we do after school Jewish education, this is the way its always been done. It's sort of like, well what power do I have? What do I need to do in order to make that change? Clearly it's not going to be, 'I said so,' and it's not going to be because I have one wealthy donor who says, 'I'm going to pull all the money unless Hebrew starts in 2nd grade.' So it just feels like, at least in this system, power comes through your position. But also through who you have on your team, you know, congregants or senior staff.

Are there ways that you feel that these things are different for you as woman than they are for your congregants who are not women?

My personal read, is that every once in awhile I am bothered by a male colleague who will say, 'Oh, I was totally disrespected.' Now, it's true, they may have been, I don't know cause I wasn't there, but the reporting back with the sense of 'can you believe this? Who the hell is this person?' Now, I would never say, except for the situation of once in awhile someone screaming at me, and me being like, 'man, did I just get chewed out,' I don't think that I've ever come into a room with an entitlement of 'I

am a rabbi, therefore, I get respect.' But I sense that with men sometimes. And I'm not saying if that's a societal thing, or a rabbi thing... I'm not saying it as a sweeping generalization, it's just that I've noticed, 'wow, that's not something I would present publically,' which they seem comfortable doing. Like, looking for validation. 'Can you believe it?' I'm kind of like, 'well, what'd you do? Maybe. Did you earn respect?' Which, again, that's that hierarchy. I would never assume that people should just instantly respect me. It's just not the way I operate in the world. My sense sometimes is that I bring a higher level of accommodation and patience because is more important to me that people feel good about what they're doing, and sometimes when I watch men, I just think that they can get away with efficacy in a little bit more permission. And people feel bad. Well, bottom line, or whatever it was. Whereas I feel that if I'm not creating a space where people feel welcome, you know, there's always a chair at the table, there's always more food, there's always more, even if it means we dilute everything we're doing, but at least people feel good.

What do you think about people's expectations of you. Do you think that people have different expectations of you because you're a woman?

I think they expect men to be more demanding for higher salaries. My sense is that they may still say no, but its less shocking to them when a man says 'I need $15,000 more in my next contract.' They never expect that women are going to be that aggressive. And I don't know if that's also a gender bias, like they're assuming that men are married and supporting a family, versus women who are taking more time off, or whatever. I think there's definitely more of a hosting of weird personal comments around hair, clothing, personal life, intimacy. They want it and they expect you to be responsive. Like I just got my hair cut, and everyone talks about it. And it's fine, but I don't know if they would talk to [assistant rabbi] about it if he got his hair cut. And I wonder sometimes about the expectation being, you know... I'm easy to get along with, and I'm approachable, you know... more relatable, therefore, they'll ask me about dating, they'll comment on the latest clothing.

Do you think that they see you as more human, in a way?

There's definitely that possibility. So I take advantage of that. Because of that projection over the years, I'm happy to push that, and be like, 'great, you think I'm human? I'm wearing flip flops today.' Or 'I am so not wearing a suit, ever, unless its at a funeral. Or maybe a bar mitzvah.' You want approachable? This is what it looks like. And they'll make comments about alcohol. Or pot smoking even, and push to see 'how human are you?' and its that playfulness of be being able to, when I choose to be informal, say 'okay I'll have a drink.' That's not an issue. Obviously not the pot. Tequila, yes. That informality then, has, for instance in public education, to say 'okay, what's really going on. What's your story. We've had drinks together already, I've told you about my mother, you know, whatever it is. What's the real issue happening

here?' Versus, 'I'm going to carefully and painfully work my way into the conversation and hope that you open up.' But you know, the reverse of that is then, what if... you know... I imagine there are some of these preschool moms who know a little too much about me, and that might be a topic of conversation. And so, is it better to be walled off and a little bit more private... and, to be honest, I never read the book. They less they know, the more they project.

And when I open up, it seems to say 'I don't know what you think I do better.' Or, 'I'm not the model child. So here, now lets talk about what's really happening.'

In making the choice to open up like that, how well do you think your congregants really know you?

Really well. Well, there's a difference. There are the ones who come twice a year, and I think if they paid attention to my cadence, or the way I wear my hair, I think they might be like, 'she seems a little bit crunchy hippie.' Or, 'she's got like a ton of energy.' But the ones who I am in relationship with, absolutely. And with the exception of possibly the guys I date and what they look like, I think they probably imagine... you know, who do they imagine dating a rabbi. You know, straight laced, in a box... I think they know that I drink, that I have a deep love of food and the kitchen, that I'm extremely generous, that I'll talk to anybody, that I'm very low on the judgment factor, that I would be out parading or protesting, on any various level of progressive issues. And for those that really know me well, they do know about my father's death and friction with my mom, and when my mom's dog died, and why I didn't go home for Thanksgiving. And some of those more personal stories. But that's intentional. Again, that's taking advantage of gender, youth, and position, to say 'while I can get away with this, I am happy to be my most authentic self.'

Do you think there's a time where you won't be able to be open in this way?

I worry if I were to take a senior position. I just ... I mean, [senior rabbi] is a great example of how you don't have to be a typical senior rabbi. But I just don't know. I don't know what I can get away with.

It remains to be seen, our generation hasn't gotten there yet.

Exactly, what kind of hierarchies will we create? Or, if I had to go work in an organization. These preschool families, they cannot get enough of the fact that the rabbi drinks with them, or that they saw the rabbi at Trader Joe's and talked about recipes. They want to have that, they want to break down the barrier. They still want to call me Rabbi Lana, which is fine

Not Rabbi Korngold?

No, I hate Rabbi Korngold. But I prefer Lana. Lana would be totally fine. Second is Rabbi Lana. Or, I've got a preschool cohort who is like 'Rabbi L!' I'm like, 'I'm not

that cool.' So I take advantage of that. And I think the response is a greater sense of why this community is meaningful, and certainly, when a grandparent dies, or when a child is having problems, or they want to know more about Hanukkah, they're in my office, or they're sending me an e mail.

So you don't feel that it affects the pastoral relationship in any way.

I got totally heartbroken a year and half ago, and the morning after the breakup, I came into work. The woman who had an appointment showed up, and I just burst into tears and lost it. I was a mess. It didn't bother her. She immediately was like, 'what do you need, I'm going to take care of you.' She's been there the whole time. And this is where the dual relationship, she's still a congregant, she's still active. She's my age. And there are times where I worry that I'm not going to be a great rabbi for her, because we have shared so much, about heartbreak and dating... and how to express yourself in the world, and she looks after me kind of like a sister, kind of like a friend, but also like a community member, and it's very unclear. It's helpful that nothing terrible has happened as a result of that lack of clarity, if something god forbid did...

What do you think you would do?

Go to [my senior rabbi]. Be as clear as possible with this woman. I can't even imagine what that would mean. My worst fear is that she would take one of the stories I've shared with her in confidence and make a decision to tell a bunch of other preschool parents, and then that story would spread. None of which is God awful, it's just human stories of dating and heartbreak and good choices and bad choices. But the community does not need to know those details. But it is the one example I hold up as... luckily we have many rabbis here.

As far as I've known, she's never said to me, 'There's something I need from you but I can't ask for it.' Or, she's never come in to say, 'I felt compromised.' And I've never had to say to her, 'I'm sorry I can't do that for you.' Or 'I know you're asking for that story, but I don't feel comfortable telling it to you anymore.' So there's never been a boundary drawn, so it's just a sense of 'we never talked about this in rabbinical school.'

Are there times where you present yourself as Lana Korngold the Rabbi, and not just Lana Korngold?

I would say for awhile I got caught up in dating with whether or not I was a rabbi, or just a screw around kid. I remember, in New York, being like, 'I need to represent the Jewish people on this date!' and my friends would be like, 'you need to have a drink.' In the initial stages of rabbinical school, and taking on 'the mantle,' and it was very clearly communicated that I was a symbolic exemplar. It really got in the way of what I am allowed to do. 'Am I allowed to be irresponsible? Am I allowed to make a mistake?' It was a very hard not to get sucked into 'why do I feel like such a bad child.' But I

think a lot of that is baggage about what people expect from their rabbi.

In the world of public activism I am very comfortable credentialing myself as a rabbi, because it opens doors. I can't do that on my own. I can do it once I'm known and I have relationships, but, 'This is Rabbi Lana Korngold from [name of synagogue] 1100 families,' 'Oh, of course we have time, we'll set it up for you.' In this synagogue, which is this middle ground, in California no less - which is the land of informality - I feel like I don't know sometimes when I'm presenting. And I feel very comfortable with the merge. The way I feel about Shabbos in my own life is what I teach here. The way that I feel about God's presence and what God offers us is what I communicate. My sense of the joy that is necessary in order to get through life is absolutely what you'd see in my apartment or out to dinner with my friends, so there's no act. That's the hybrid ground. So, I'm doing better now with the dating, like, you can think I'm a rabbi and project that, but I'm not going to accept that now. And over here in the land of public activism, where it is really important to be a rabbi for my congregants, and to let them have that privilege and to come with me to do that work not as just a member of [this synagogue], which is true, but there's where it calls out the rabbi part. But this area is a big old smoosh.

So these relationships that you have – would you call it friendship?

If the two of us were hanging out over coffee, even swapping recent dating stories, and someone came up to us; I would say 'this is my congregant.' Meaning, I would introduce her that way. I might, if I was feeling nervous, say 'congregant/friend,' but I think that she has always thought of us as rabbi/congregant. She just has this really great access. I am a big believer that these are not friends. That doesn't mean that we are not friend*ly*, or that I won't take advantage of them as surrogate family, or that there won't be opportunities... like I'm thinking of joining a *havurah* of young preschool families, who I adore. They went with me to Yosemite, they're the ones who call me 'Rabbi L.' So it's also very clear. They want me to stay in the rabbi role. They really like to go back to this 'Rabbi L' thing. They like pop quizzing me on Jewish trivia, they like telling me what their kids are singing these days, and if I know more verses to the Jewish songs. I have to put in check my desire to say these are some of the coolest people I've met recently, and I so want to be in that group – but that gets put in check. It's not what I'm there to do. But it looks like friendship, in that when we go out or when I come over for a potluck or when we go camping together, it looks like friendship. That's what friends do. They hang out, they're informal, they're wearing different clothing, they talk the same, act the same, eat the same.

Where is the line?

The line is, I'm not thinking, 'oh I'm going to go on a hike, I'm going to call congregants.' Or, 'I'm having a birthday party.' Or, 'I'm feeling really depressed and I

just need a pick me up.' That's friendship. I will let them set me up. I won't tell them necessarily how it went. But I think that's the confusing part that they never explained to me in rabbinical school. That when you take a camping trip, to Yosemite, and you're off site – or when you are visiting someone's home for a *havurah* event and the alcohol is free flowing, and people are just so comfortable with you being there, that its not like 'the rabbi has just come in to teach.' And its, 'sit down rabbi, what can we get you?' Its literally, like, 'come hang out with us, tell us more about you.' I never got that image, and that's where I find myself now.

Where do you find your friends?

When you're a Jewish professional you're never alone. I was never friends with Jews until I went to rabbinical school. So I find friends through the connection of who else is my age and working in the Jewish community, HUC students, Ikar was really helpful. PJA. Friends of friends. I'm very open to friend dates. Networks. Like the Wexner network. The AJWS alumni network. The organizing rabbi network. Hazon.

How do you consider yourself a model of Jewish life for your congregants?

Some of it has to do with constantly putting out effort in order to have a Jewish life. I try to model my own struggles with keeping kosher, with vegetarianism, with Jonathan Safran Foer's latest book. Or that you have to show up in order to get or receive something. You have to take risks. So I try to do that as often as possible. Both in terms of going up to complete strangers, or by risk taking on the pulpit, or by being very clear in teaching about what's behind the process – that the goal is actually to wrestle with this text. And so I'll wrestle with it as well. To say 'I don't know' on a regular basis. The joy factor is huge. It just comes naturally to me. People really – this suburban, boring, uninspired, 'this is how its been' Judaism, I don't care what movement, it's just not interesting. It's not compelling. And to be joyful and to be provocative and to be wondering out loud, and to offer that space for "*I don't know, what do* ***you*** *think?*" With a real sincerity. I feel like is a big part of what I try to teach them. Like, 'you can bring this for yourself, you can bring this for your family,' and I think the last part that I drive home, especially as a result of organizing, is... we're living two lives. The life that says you can do it on your own, if you're really smart and really good and you plan ahead, you don't need anyone else. Your 501 retirement plant, your house, your privatized community – and America seems to totally reinforce that. And then we believe it, which is such a lie. And then there are all the things we do that reinforce community. I try to reinforce as often as possible 'remember why you joined this synagogue.' Yes, I know you think it's because of the preschool education, or for the Bar Mitzvah that you think you want someday, or because its just what Jews do... but you did it because you don't want to do this work alone. Of life. And what does that mean? If you remember it and call it out loud, how does your behavior change? What is your intention when you come into this synagogue? And ultimately,

when you come in for a program, are you really just here to receive, or are you here to connect with someone else?

How much of this openness to be yourself and be as authentic as possible, how much do you feel is a gender thing, and are your male colleagues doing the same thing?

I would like to think that my colleagues... I'm thinking about some of my colleagues with big personalities, I don't think they've ever held back. So, like Rabbi Michael Shabbat is a good example. That boy can't be contained. I wonder what he holds back. The biggest thing I might actually notice is that women, for whatever reason, might hold back – that they're hesitant to wear what they really want to wear, or they're nervous about revealing too much, because it might be held against them. Again, I work for a female senior rabbi. This congregation has had female rabbis before. It's California. For good reason there's a level of confidence that I have that allows that, but I wonder if there are other women in my age cohort... I'm just thinking of some of the shyer ones, or not as bold... or in stuffier congregations. It's amazing that I don't have to wear a suit on the *bima*. And I've always said, if your track record is really good you don't have to worry so much about the things that people worry about. You have to build your base.

Anything you've been dying to say that I haven't asked you about?

No. You have to remember I'm single. It's totally different. I don't have anyone to protect. It's really all on me.

Rabbi Seth Berkowitz

How would you define your rabbinate, and the values that drive you?

I'm a warm and fuzzy rabbi. I like to think that I'm *haimish*. I'm practically intellectual. I'm not a text-based rabbi, but insightful, I guess would be the way that I would describe myself. I like to think that I own the living room. I do well in small settings. I play well in big settings too, but I'm really good in intimate settings, either one on one, or in a *havurah* in somebody's living room. Or a funeral intake, or a funeral service. Thoughtful, I would hope. I 'm not going to break any records for my Talmudic scholarship though.

Values... that Judaism is about finding meaning in life. All of our rituals and traditions are so that we can wring the most meaning out of life and not miss a moment of it, and make deep and lasting connections and relationships. That's true for me to my congregants, and for them to each other, and to all of us to the world that we live in, and that's what drives me in my rabbinate.

How would you describe your leadership style?

It's evolving. I'm a perfectionist with regard to others, and flexible with regard to myself. I expect those people who work for me to do it right, and to exceed expectations. And to have polish to what they do. Not only should we get it done, but it should look like it was done professionally, and well. They represent me, and that's how I want to project myself. With regard to my own work, I'm very creative and I'm comfortable using different forms of medium and materials and stuff like that, but I'm willing to change course in the midst of things. I'm not locked in to having to do it this way. My colleagues say that I'm the one who is most likely to say 'yes' about things. So it's not that I don't have boundaries, or values that I apply, or standards, let me say it that way, but I find them to be less important than the relationships that could develop if I were able ever to set that standard aside. For example, allowing a Non-Jew to participate in a bar mitzvah at a level that we don't normally do. If it's an act of *keruv*, and they do it out of a real desire to participate as opposed to some other agenda or whatever that is, then I'll bend over backwards to make it work. By the same token, I can be a stickler with people who are disrespectful, either to me, or to others, or to the tradition, or who use their children as pawns at a bar mitzvah thing. And I can be punitive.

How does that play out?

Well I've had parents who will use their children as a pawn, divorce situations; they use their kid as a pawn. And I will sit back and decide who's wrong, and I'll punish the one who's wrong. I won't be as friendly to them, I may curtail what they are able to do, I will not speak as glowingly about them as I do of their other spouse. Or parents who

are doing it together, I have been known to use my talk to the child as either a lens or a venue to speak to them. Usually chip it in some biblical context. You know, 'Isaac and Rebecca weren't so great to their kids, either.'

When are the time that you feel most powerful, and when are the times that you feel you don't have a grasp on your power.

I guess I feel most powerful during funerals. And during that whole funeral process. Because a family is really lost there, and they're looking for direction and guidance. And they want somebody to tell them what they need to do, and whether what they want to do is right or wrong. Sometimes in counseling situations. I don't pretend to be a therapist at all, I approach counseling as a rabbi. And to me, part of that is *din*. Part of that is making judgments. And so, where a counselor might wait for you to come to your own conclusion, with empathy and with compassion, I'll tell you what I think you should or shouldn't do, or what's right or what's wrong. Not based on my own experience, but really hopefully based on the values that are at play. You know, I don't have a crystal ball – I can't say you should or shouldn't marry this person. But if there is something glaring there, I'm not going to wait for you to come to it naturally.

In terms of powerless, as associate rabbi I don't have a final say in many things. I have a final say in some things. With a large staff, trying to get them to do things the way that I want them done, I feel powerless in that way sometimes. I'll give you an example. So, we're in the midst of this demolition... and they've been tearing down buildings, and the playground is covered in debris. And we anticipated that would happen, but we never really planned to replace the sand. So, [the senior rabbi] and our maintenance person walked through yesterday and determined, you know, 'we really have to do something here, this is disgusting.' And so the parents who are in our ECC, those who have stayed and those that left, one of their main concerns was some sort of environmental hazard caused by this. And so I sent an e mail yesterday to our lay person and to [the senior rabbi] and to our executive director saying, 'It is critical that we replace the sand, which we all agree on, and that we do this before we're back, before the kids come back in the building.' But if they come back and the sand is still there, even if it's cordoned off with yellow tape, it would be a huge public relations disaster and not the image that we want to project. We want to project that the children are our first thought, not an afterthought. That's as much as I can do. I send a strong e-mail, and I followed up with a phone call, but I can't make it happen. If I was the senior rabbi, I would be able to happen a little bit more, but still there are lay people in the way. So in that way I feel powerless, at times I'm at the mercy of our lay people. Because the lay people aren't going to get blamed for it. First of all, I have a kid there too. But second of all, it's going to come to me, and I'm going to be embarrassed by it. And I find it hard sometimes to defend either ineptitude or inaction of our laypeople and chalk it up to, 'well, they're all volunteers.'

In what ways do you consider yourself as a model ,and possibly your family as a model of Jewish life to your congregants?

Well I think about it all the time. I think that's part of my job to be a model of Jewish life to my congregants. So, we live a very open Jewish life. We live a private home life, but our Jewish life is very open. We invite the congregation to our home for *Sukkot* in a variety of different fashions, we celebrate some holidays with congregants, though its hard because I'm usually working then. My kids come to services whenever we're able to, and that has more to do with their bedtime than anything else. I don't work on Shabbos in the sense that I don't respond to e-mails or phone calls, and I answer the phone saying '*Shabbat Shalom*' if someone calls me on my cell or whatever. My kids are in the preschool and it's important to me that they demonstrate their Jewishness. I should say that that's important to me just that they do that as my children, but I also am trying to model for my congregation, that my kid does the full *Kiddush* on Friday nights, for example. He's three years old, he leads the full *Kiddush*. And when they do a *Kiddush* in the class, [my son] says 'why aren't we doing the long one?' And I like that he asks. And I explain to him, well it's not Friday night, it's a Friday morning. So those kinds of things come with the job for me. I feel like I'm always on. And my wife does too. We keep a kosher home and so if we go out with someone I order kosher style.

If you were out of town and you weren't going to run into anyone, would you order kosher style?

Not at all. No, we went out to dinner with two congregant couples a couple weeks ago, and we went to [a hamburger restaurant], and where in a normal circumstance I might have ordered a cheeseburger, I didn't. I'm trying to project an image that may not be me, but on that they could aspire to. One that I aspire to.

Is that because you're the rabbi?

Those are all teachable moments. I know that when I go out to dinner with them, look, these are people that we are friendly with, but they are congregants. They are not my friends. They won't be. I wish that they could be. I like them. But I know that they can't be. One day they may be my boss. So I want them to go home and say, 'yeah, we went out and the rabbi didn't order a cheeseburger.' Or it comes up, 'why don't you get cheese on it?' 'Oh, I don't mix milk and meat.'

Do you feel that the way that you approach relationships in your congregation is different than your colleagues who are female?

Yes, I don't know if it has to do with being a rabbi. But when I was on paternity leave for three months [my son] was in the transition class at the school. So I took him to Transition twice a week. So I was in his class every day, with all these moms. There's a gender thing there that I'm just self-conscious about. I'm not particularly comfortable around women in that setting. I've never been one of those guys who is friendly with

women. I feel that the only person I should... you know, I have a wife, and that's who gets all of that attention. So I don't flirt or any of that stuff. So I was a little bit of a fish out of water, and they're all having their mom talk, or whatever it is, but they commented on it, as they were talking about nail polish or something one day and I'm sitting in the corner, and they're like, 'oh, Seth is so bored.' And I'm like... well, maybe I want to get it for [my wife], what is it.

The two colleagues I have of the opposite gender are [associate] and [cantor]. [Associate] is in a unique situation. She's a single parent, she's in a dating relationship now, it's a whole different thing. So I'm never really able to make a good comparison there. With [cantor] its... I'll say this. And this may go more to being a parent than a rabbi. My wife is the primary caregiver of our children. So though I may take off in the middle of the day to take [my son] home from school, or I take him to school most days, if he's at home sick, she stays home. If I've got a late meeting, she covers it. I expect her to be the liaison with the temple with regard to school stuff, even though I'm there all the time, like if there's a notice in his box, she takes them. They'll end up on my desk, I'll never get to them. So I'm very much 'the Dad.' I do a men's group in my home, which I've been doing or six years, which I started before I met [my wife], so maybe its seven years now. I did that at the time in my life before I was married, when I was divorced. I was married before, I don't know if you knew that... I was looking for what it meant to be a Jewish man. And for some male bonding. I found that I got an answer to the question of what it means to be a Jewish man, in terms of responsibility, ethics, whatnot. I didn't really get the male bonding because I was the rabbi. But I continue to try to create positive Jewish male experiences. So I'll do movie nights with guys from the temple were we'll all go see the Terminator movie, or a really guy... you know, hamburgers and a movie. And there were just guys from the temple it'd be fun to go out with. I'd go to the brotherhood poker tournament; I'll host a poker game at my house. You know, with dads from the kids in my class. So I'm trying to relate to them on a very guy level, a dad level. But I'm still the rabbi in those situations.

In what ways do you edit? We talked about food. What other ways might you edit?

I don't talk about sex. I am very careful with the language that I'll use. I'll use language that I'll consider like 'parve' swearing. I won't 'drop f-bombs.' Certainly never talk about anything that would be revealing of confidence. You know, I talk about stuff in the synagogue always in a positive light. Or even the challenges we're facing, you know, like, 'We're not going to raise enough money for this building, we've got to get out there.' In my men's group for example, we all go around and share. It's a 12-step kind of model. I don't share the stuff that's going on in my life. I share stuff that I'm comfortable with being public consumption, even though it's supposed to be highly

confidential and the whole thing. I was sharing the other day about trying to figure out between public school and private school. I didn't really want their advice about it, and you know for us it's a financial situation and I kind of hinted at that, you know, like I'd really like to send my kid to a Jewish day school but you know its $20,000 a year. And you know, I invited them into my world in a way that I didn't really want them there.

And how did that feel?

I knew where to stop and when to stop. They're in my home and I can't really share openly, but I accept that. That's why they're there. It's a class.

How well do you think that you're congregants know you?

They don't really know me. I'm very familiar to them. They recognize me, they see me around, I'm approachable, they can say 'hi' to me, they know I'm raising two boys, they know I live in the neighborhood... that's pretty much all that they know about me, other than

[former secretary/congregant approaches and chats briefly]

I hope that they know my Jewishly. I hope that they know my kids know Hebrew and Jewish songs, I hope that they know we're observant in a Reform context. And I guess I want them to know that part of me better. They don't really know anything else.

When are the times that you consciously present yourself as just Seth, and when are the times that you are Rabbi Seth, or Rabbi Berkowitz.

I'm never just Seth, ever. I'm not even sure I know who just Seth is, to be honest. I don't think that they're too far away from each other, its not like I'm living a double life. But if I'm on the phone with [my wife] at the office, other than just a quick hello I close the door so I can have a conversation with her. Some of the challenging times, like if I have to discipline my son at a tot Shabbat or something, you know he's lucky 'cause at home I'm harsher with him.

I'm playing a role. I think the only times I'm really just Seth are when I'm at home with my wife and kids, and when I'm out of town, and then with a very small group of friends who also happen to be rabbis. With them I can be totally uncut.

Have your kids figured out a difference?

Not yet, they're too young. It's tough, when I take [my son] to services. And there's a few times when I've taken him just me and him. He's 3 ½, almost 4. And I have to go up on the *bima*, and he doesn't like to see me up there without him. He's used to coming up there with me, which is fine, except for if I'm leading *Kaddish* or something. So my older son happens to like being in front of the congregation. He plays guitar with [our songleader], he'll sit on my lap during services. So we had this

big Friday night service... and he was there, it was very late for him, and he sat on my lap on the *bima* for almost the whole service. You know, sucking his thumb. He started talking, getting 'utzy,' whatever. So everyone saw him in the congregation, they commented on how well behaved he was, 'Oh he's going be a rabbi..' I don't know how long that'll last.

You mean how long he'll want to do that.

Yeah.

You mentioned that you feel that congregants are not friends. Would you ever go out to dinner socially with congregants?

Yeah.

How does that come up do you invite? Do they invite?

The initial invitation is always from me. People will say things in passing, 'oh, we'd love to have you over,' and sometimes they do it, but I would say 85% of the time the invitation is from us. People talk about it, 'we'd like to get together with you sometime,' but they wait for me to give them a date. And then subsequent invitations... you know, it's regular relationships either we invite or they invite. We have some that we've had over to our home but they've never had us to theirs, and we're waiting for them to invite us to theirs. Otherwise they don't get another invitation. And there's a couple of couples who have invited us to their home kind of serial... You know, 'oh man, we still have to do this another time?' They're not who we would choose to be friends with, but we have to be friendly with. If we can't get out of it, we'll go. There's one couple that, I like them, I can't really imagine spending more than an hour with them at a time, and they invited us to the Hollywood Bowl. You know, they have season tickets. We put it off for one year, and then finally the second time around we had to do it. And [my wife] had to come. We had a nice time, but it was like... oh when are we going to get together again! And we're like... we just saw you.

Do you think they think that you're friends?

I think they think they have access. You know, I'm familiar to them, I'm their rabbi. I was there as their rabbi. They introduced me as their rabbi.

Would you leave your children with congregants if you had to leave town on short notice

Not yet, but my kids are pretty young. Our babysitter used to be my TYG president. She just watched our kids for the weekend. She's a college graduate now. I mean, she knows our family life more than anybody else, but I don't think of her as a congregant. Her parents are long time members, but they're not that involved and she knows where

we keep all the stuff in the house. But right now I couldn't think of everyone I would leave them with, but if they were friends... you know, my kid's friends, I would.

Your kids will have friends in the congregation.

That's interesting. He does, because they're in preschool... Yes, he has friends, and we've done play dates with them and we've had them over to our house.

If you had a crisis in your family, are there congregants with whom you would share that struggle?

I think if it was a medical thing, you know, my dentist is a congregant and he's a really good guy. If I were going to be friends with anybody, I'd be friends with him. I'm as close to friends with him I guess as one could be. God forbid one of the kids had an illness or a disease and there was an expert in the temple, I would absolutely go to them. My mechanic is a temple member. He doesn't give me a deal, but I feel like he doesn't rip me off, either. But if it was like some marital discord or something like that, no. No. Not because they can't see that I have those problems, but it just doesn't.... it's where I work.

Where else do you find socially fulfilling relationships?

I don't know... I don't have a lot of friends. I'm not sure that I ever really did. Growing up I was involved in AZA, I was on the international level so my friends were scattered all over. In rabbinical school I got married very young, to my previous wife... I dropped a lot of my friends for her. When I got divorced I tried to rekindle some of it. But I'm so busy. My best friend is a rabbi. We can never see each other. It's not like, 'Hey, what are you doing today?' You know? My brother. My wife. That's pretty much what I've got. My sister.

Do you think in terms of the tasks you're expected to do its different as a man than it would be as a woman?

Well, I mean... I know that women don't come to me with certain things that they come to [associate rabbi] with or to [cantor] with. I'm usually not the first one to know about breast cancer. Or infidelity. Or divorce, from the women's perspective. So in that case, yeah. On the same token, part of my work with men has been trying to break down the barriers that they feel to synagogue so that they can become comfortable emoting. And particularly in these last couple of years with the economy, a lot of men in the congregation have come to me with feelings of inadequacy about their job, having lost it or financial hardship that they're in. So I guess it swings both ways in that regard. I mean, women come to me too... those that know me better, because I'm a dad whose present in the preschool also, and a rabbi, I've got a fair number of questions about parenting. God issues with kids, death and kids, kids understanding death. And they come to me there because I'm a parent, and in our

particular situation maybe because I'm a bit more of a traditional parent. That I'm heterosexual, I'm still married. Maybe that's why.

Anything else?

I will tell you that relationships with lay leaders are a little different. I have a group of '*Hasidim*' in the congregation who are, for whatever reason, my followers. And they in theory are our next big leadership population. And they're on the board now, and whatnot many of them. I took them to Israel a couple of years ago. And I bend over backwards for them and I'm their rabbi. But when I've needed to ask things of them, they have no problem asking things of me and I do it. But when I need to ask things of them, well... they often deliver. If I ask them to volunteer, because I'm asking they'll do it, to give money to something, if they can they will. In my recent contract negotiations, the head of personnel practices is probably the board member that I'm closest with in the synagogue, and he's closest with me. And it was a tough negotiation, and he took me aside and said 'look, I'm doing this because its you. I'm trying to make this happen, I'm trying to get a good deal for you.' Which was very flattering, but I felt a little beholden to him because of that.

Rabbi Leah Twersky

Who you are as a rabbi, and what are the values that drive you?

Mmmm, that is really hard... because who I started out as continues to evolve and change. I see the rabbinate as a career and not a job. However, it's heavily driven by being in a pulpit position, where I'm currently at. So me as a rabbi is driven to serve people, to open doorways to allow people to connect to their Judaism, you know. Sometimes it's through spiritual moments of ritual and that kind of good stuff, and other times it's working through what most people would call 'politics' but as I would call, as Rabbi Jack says, 'people working with people.' There are no politics in a synagogue. But it is steep and deep because people run the gamut, in personalities and emotions, thoughts, so you know, 'people working with people.' So that drives me, and I'm really driven by social action and I think a good percentage of my rabbinate is spent handling and managing a business, and it isn't what I'm driven to do per say, but it is what I do. So it's not the driving force behind it, but it is a significant chunk.

Tell me a little bit about your leadership style.

I would love to say ... I have an ideal of walking the building, and folding people in, and not being behind my door. I do love consensus. I don't often find that that is the most effective way to get things done, but when possible I like to fold in people and have it be their decision, but driven with a few key ideas or thoughts that it's sort of where I want to go, but they get there on their own, or they get there with me side by side. But. Sometimes things are more timely, and they can't always be that way. So I like to walk the building, talk things through.

For example, we have a storage problem, which I don't always see as a problem, but I've heard now for years 'this group doesn't have enough space, this school has more space than I have' and I can't understand why three senior staff people who are very bright, very well educated, can't work it out. And so I got tired, and I know one of the promises is physically walking the building, spying out spaces, and just handling it and telling people what needs to be moved where, and setting up you know, a cage of storage space, and that is what it is. So you know, I've tried to let them work it out for years, and its not working.

Are there certain kinds of issues that you feel better about taking that kind of definitive stance?

Sometimes I have to build peace amongst the staff and I have to be the heavy, I have to be the top, I have to be the buck stops with me person, if they need that or they want that and they can't work it out amongst themselves, when its matters of safety in an emergency – no problem just saying 'and this is what we're doing now.' Its like running a camp. Staff likes to be included and involved, and they're more active, and they're

better when they make decisions, as long as you give them some general parameters, and let them run their own stuff, but there are moments you have to say 'and now we'll do it this way.' So its like sort of a key of feeling it out, and empowering people. My hardest part is in the lay balance.

When are the times that you feel most powerful, and when are the times you feel you don't have power?

There's a certain amount of respect that comes with the title 'rabbi.' It often washes away when it's not convenient for people. People want you to have the power, take control, be the leadership, and then there's times where personal needs are in conflict and they're going to run you over. I have felt extremely powerless the last six months because my voice was quieted. We were going through a process of transition from one senior rabbi to another. I was in the running for the position. I was the only one in the running, at the time. Remain that way. And there were so many nasty things being said. I didn't appreciate that our leadership tried to respond to the best of their abilities with a full heart, but it wasn't the way I would have done it and I couldn't use my voice, and so I felt powerless and weak and hurt and all those great things, because I couldn't voice anything. I tried from behind the scenes to help encourage them to do things in certain ways, but when a leadership pattern has been set for so many years or the lay leaders don't know any different and it is what it is. So that was not a good place to be. And part of when I feel powerless is in the direct one to one communications, when like you've said 'bla di blu blu,' and I say, 'really, I'm so sorry you heard that, either I didn't mean that,' or 'yeah, that is what I said, and we stand in two different places.' And people are like 'I'll take my money and I'll leave,' or one woman said I told her daughter to move away without telling her, which isn't remotely true, but I can't say that to her, I can't tell her that her daughter's a liar, but her daughter doesn't want be the scapegoat so she's telling her mom, 'well Rabbi Leah told me to do this, so I just listened to the rabbi. You should have a problem with her.' So I feel powerless when there's those moments that confidentiality is in place, you can't use your voice, yet you cant confront whoever, or there's rumors or this or that and you don't where they stem from, that stuff feels bad.

What about the most powerful times?

I don't think I seek power. The good times as a rabbi are when you're with people, doing what you're supposed to be doing. Teaching a class, doing a memorial where you just know you're doing the right thing, those are powerful and those are encouraging and those are why we do what we do. So really, it's the people to people, touching, hands on stuff that's the most effective, sometimes its also the most difficult. But I feel empowered when I get through a day of just... and its good, and I go, 'you know, I did something good today.'

What are the ways that you consider yourself and your family as a model of Jewish life?

I think people look to see what we're doing all the time. They look to see what's in my grocery cart, they look to see what this or that is, they also look to see that I'm real and I can say, 'oh we didn't have a chicken dinner, we had pizza, but we lit the candles.' So I think I empower people by sharing what we do and what works and giving them ideas for new traditions to start. And mostly it's by offering opportunities here, whether its in a class for interfaith families and having open dialogue, or having a *Hanukiah* making contest and saying 'they don't have to light,' but starting a new family tradition. And you're out there. We've also been focused on the environment, and most of the projects are really environmentally friendly, or are recycled products. And I didn't put that in there at all.

And where did that come from?

Because we've been teaching the kids about the environment here, and they've been teaching their parents to do it, and some of them aren't recyclable things, but many of them are, and I thought it's working! So how do we empower people? Or how do we role model? We're open in dialogue, we share examples, we invite people to participate, and we're not perfect – which is great – because people know its real.

The way that you approach these decisions, do you feel that you approach any of these things differently than your male colleagues?

Sure! I don't know if it's always by gender, but I definitely think there are differences between a male approach to the world and a woman's approach to the world. There's a reason why that book *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* exists. So there are different approaches to it, plus, there are personality approaches. So in my particular case I co-lead with a rabbi, he's technically the senior rabbi but we do most things together. He is an introvert by nature and so am I, but he's not as sensitive as I am. I take things, really, very personally and I have to think before I react to something and try to be the rabbi, and say, you know, 'rabbinically, I know what this is what this is stemming from.' But I'm very sensitive, and that effects how I handle certain situations. And the two of us approach things differently because people assume that ones is going to be the mama, and one is going to be the papa. I'm also more sensitive and Rabbi Jack is very caring and warm, but I don't think he's as sensitive.

Do you mean sensitive personally, or sensitive to others?

Personally. And we're both very empathetic to others, so we try to work through things. I am also very direct. I try not to be blunt because that can be hurtful, but I'm very direct. And I don't think people expect that from a woman.

So do you think that people respond differently to you when you are direct, than they would to Rabbi Jack if he said the same thing?

Absolutely. I can ask for something from our maintenance staff and they'll get to it, but if he were to ask for it, they're like, 'why is he screaming or why is yelling,' and he might be the same level of voice as I am, but because, 'Oh Rabbi Jack is screaming,' or 'Oh, Rabbi Jack wants it...' now, if its because he's the senior and he's been here longer, or is it because he's a man? I don't know. And because we've gone through this process recently of looking for a new senior rabbi, there's been a lot of stuff coming out of the woodwork of people's real sense [of what it means] to have a male presence or a female presence in the rabbinate. And people ... it doesn't feel right to voice it, but a few people have been brave enough to put a label on it, and to say, you know, 'oh, rabbi Leah, we love you and you were there for us, during our financial issues, you were there for us, we had some marriage issues, you were there for me, you baby named our children, and I just adore you, you are my rabbi...' and I was like, where's the but... because it was just one of those weird letters... 'but... I never thought my senior rabbi would be the same age as me or a female.' So at least she was honest enough to put a finger on it, and I have other people saying, 'well you're not inspiring,' which may be true, but when I listen to the times that they've been exposed to me, because they're not coming to class, they're not learning with me they're not coming to services, I start going, why are they saying this or that? Someone said, you know, 'you don't know my kids names.' I say, 'that's funny, cause you know after they were in an accident,' I go, you know, 'I called you every day, I offered to do some birkat ha-gomel.' 'Of course I know your two children, they make themselves known.' I can't figure out what it is.

Part of it might be that people don't agree with me, but part of it simply is that they feel it. They feel like the image in their head is a male rabbi. And it's hard to put your finger on it. And it feels very sexist if you're in your 30's. Shouldn't we be past that? But it's real, because you have this image, and its going to take some adjustment. I've been watching it very heightened and I know that some of it is a statement of truly of not connecting with me, and some of it is this desire not to sound sexist or appear sexist, but really a gut feeling.

I was just so happy that she was so direct and sweet. And I had a male say to me, 'I'm not going to a stupid vote, I don't need a vote, I knew when we joined here that you were going to be the next rabbi, you can't see me at no vote, and all this chitter chatter, that just so stupid. I know what this is about... all this chatter is about that you are a woman. You are attractive. This is jealously. This is only women chatting, and its bull****. I'm not coming to your vote. They are all just jealous.' It's all the women. None of the men are doing this. The hardest people to win over for the votes are women.

There are folks who will say, 'we thought we would have a harder time with the older adults. All of the past presidents.' And you know, 90 year old men, they walked in spoke in front of the board, said 'this is the best transition for our congregation, this is the best thing possible.' All the seniors got behind me, for the most part, and they thought that would be the hardest group to win over. It's not, it's my contemporaries. And its all the women who sit in my parking lot, the e-mails that are going around are all female driven. And some with legitimate gripes.

And there's probably some God stuff there, too.

Oh yeah, you've gotta be old, you've gotta have a beard, you've gotta be on high.

And its nice to have a woman around to connect with you personally and embrace your children and to cry with you and to be there for miscarriage or infertility problems, and its right, because you want to have a woman to go to, to have these conversations with, but the image you have, if you listen to your gut is different. And a male is more inspiring; a male speaks differently from the *bima*, its something that they need to believe and to feel it. It's a very interesting time. And Jack is grey and he has a beard. And there's a mourning to happen. So in mourning, it looks like there's some power hungry girl climbing up a ladder. Which is not what I'm about. And I respect him immensely. But he picked me to do this. I don't have to do this. I don't have to be a senior rabbi. All of my male colleagues that I was ordained with have left their positions and moved on, because they have to be a senior rabbi. And it seems like a natural progression. It's a natural progression for my husband, and for me to be a senior rabbi. I had lunch in a *sukkah* with two rabbis, and they said, 'well what does your husband say about this?' I guess he's driven, or he's male, this is the right thing. Of course I would move up. They're like, 'I would have to fight tooth and nail, that's a position that 's too much...' You know... it's fascinating to me. Female colleagues I was ordained with, most of them have moved on because it wasn't a good fit, but most of them are contently... I don't know if there's that power drive business model of going up. And I don't necessarily have it in my heart of hearts that says 'I have to be senior rabbi.' But I feel like it's the right thing for the synagogue and I feel like it's the right thing for me. But if I looked at my core values, it doesn't say 'I must be senior rabbi.' That power part isn't what's going to nurture me or fulfill me. Which is hard for people to understand. Perhaps I'm over estimating, or over guessing, but I believe that most men feel like you move up a ladder, and that's what you do, and you achieve it. But part of the reason why I feel like men have moved out of the rabbinate, is now women have moved up the ladder. But, that power position – I'm doing it because I think I can do it. I think its good for the synagogue and its good for me and I think I'm capable and I think I have the skills – it's not because my ego's being fed by becoming a senior rabbi. Having the buck stop with you completely... oy. I don't really look forward to that.

How well do you think your'e congregants really know you?

Ha! No. They don't know me at all. So, I say that wholeheartedly, because I sent out a bio about me, and it was completely – after I sent out this great stuff to them, it was like nothing, and people have no idea who I am, what I'm about, and what I do. Most people, I think 95% of our congregants don't know what a rabbi does in general, they think you do weddings, and baby naming, and bar mitzvahs, and a couple of services. So I do all the marketing here, all the publicity, I do every newsletter that they read, I have something to do with every pamphlet that goes out I have something to do with, I help with the budget, I do fundraising, I participate in the board of rabbis, I'm very involved with the Board of Rabbis, I'm on PARR board, I do all sorts of things, and people had no idea. I teach, you know, I do lots of fun things, they had no idea. So then I wrote a highlights things about myself, on the idea that it would educate people and let people know. I also was evaluated a few years ago, and the board asked me to write my assessment of myself, and there was a huge shockwave, and they were like, 'why do we ask her to edit all of our flyers, and do all this stuff, she's so busy!' So people a) don't know what I do, at all, as a rabbi, and b) personally, I'm a little more introverted, so it's a little hard to let those walls down – I don't share everything. And there's a lot of suppositions about who I am and what's I'm about. Because of the title, and because people like to have conjecture. So do my congregants know me? No. Do many of them have a sense of who I am, and am I accessible? Absolutely. But do they really know me? No. And they didn't pass out the highlights sheet. But the few people – 'oh, I didn't know you had a degree in communal service.' Or 'I didn't know you ...' So do they know me? No. Is it partly my fault? Sure. But people want you when they want you and they need you when they need you.

When are the times that present yourself as Rabbi Leah Twersky, and when are the times that you are Leah Twersky?

Mmmmm... They're kind of one and the same. I don't think you can ever take your title off. I don't feel like when I go to a grocery store or when I go to a birthday party I take the title off. People know me as Rabbi Leah Twersky. Even my closest friends, whose kids are my kids friends still look to me as a rabbi. I can let my hair down a little bit, but I'm still Rabbi Leah Twersky. I think when you take a title, whether it's Mrs. or Dr. or Professor or whatever it may be, no matter what you do, it's a part of who you are. And I'm a pretty real person. Rabbi Jack is real, it's the only thing he asked for in the interview with me. So he's laid it out that he is who he is, I am who I am. So part of who Leah Twersky is, sarcastic, cynical, whatever, sensitive, caring and all those things... Those things are real, whether I'm here at the grocery store at the mall, on a plane. I traveled to Italy with two congregants. That was really hard. They were like, 'Here, you should have some pork! You're away from home!' And I'm like, well, I don't really like pork, and is not what I do. Right? And then of course, who's

sitting on the train next to me? A couple that I married. In Italy. In this huge thing with multiple cars, this random couple from Los Angeles that I married going on a belated honeymoon.

You present yourself as who you are- when are the times you self edit?

... Do I self-edit? Sure. I don't invite a lot of people to my home. Some rabbis invite people, and they hang out at their home. That is still sort of, because I'm an introverted person by nature, that's sort of a sacred space for me. So in that way I self edit a little bit.

And we have a lot of family traditions that we do, so, ask me what I did on Shavuot. I went strawberry picking. Do I think that it's a really good thing to do? Absolutely. Do I think other people should do it? Sure. So I try to encourage people to try things out. And in my adult education class where things are intimate and we can talk about these things, I'll share. But if I only have sixty people a year participating in adult education, and I have 600 families, 750 families, it's hard. And you're never going to get to know us in the two minutes that we passed each other in the hallway. 'Oh, well, you didn't make eye contact.' Or 'You looked at your cell phone,' or 'you did this and it was so rude,' well I try to give you my attention, but we're talking about a minute and a half of quality time in which you can connect to somebody, but you're not going to get the full stuff. And if you're using this place as a drop off and go and a HHD place, then I'm not going to connect with you. And I only write an article every two months and people have to read it. And I don't blog and I probably should, I need to get there, and I'm not there yet. I do believe part of the forefront is meeting people where there at, so if they're not coming here then we have to go to them. And we do have to connect. Whether it's a blog or whether it's more contact and more touchy feely stuff, its my job to make that happen.

Would you even have a social dinner out with congregants?

Yeah.

If you had to leave town on short notice, are there congregants with whom you would feel comfortable leaving you kids?

Yeah.

If you or your family was going through some sort of crisis, are there congregants that you would tell?

Sure.

Other thoughts on rabbi-congregant relationships?

This has been one of the trickiest things, because I feel like whoever you let in, it can come back and get you later. I chose to participate in a *havurah*, which was a very

difficult decision. When the *havurah* formed, I did not go to the formation times. I spoke to two people, and they were like 'of course you're in it,' but I was like, 'no, there could be people saying things about me, there could be times that my contract is up, times that it's just uncomfortable, you guys want to do something that's kind of on the edge, and you don't want me there! So you really need to think about it. Are you going to pop a beer in front of me and not care?' So I chose to be a part of a *havurah* and they chose to have me. Those are the people who I'm closest to. Rabbi Jack is not a part of any social group, however his wife has a couple friends. He doesn't hang out typically, he doesn't golf with people, he's very, very private. Because of my choice there are many people who have said 'oh you're cliquish,' 'oh, you only hang out with these people.' And that came out in this search, because people were like, 'well Rabbi Leah only hangs out with a few people and she's so cliquey and she has a *havurah* and she won't let anybody in her *havurah*.' Well my *havurah* doesn't let people in, because once you have a *havurah*, you have a *havurah*. This is nothing to do with me, but it's now my fault. And because I have these friends who are closer, I will talk with them more readily, you know, hang out. My issue is that primarily what I do is pick my children up from class, and whoever in the classroom, sees me drop them up I pick them up. They're not all my *havurah*. But there is a perception in the parking lot that I am cliquish. But you can't let too many folks in either, because you are a human being. And if I want to have a beer or a glass of wine, I want to have a beer or a glass of wine. And I went to a birthday party last Friday night, I went, it was the first night of *Hanukkah*, I went after we did *Hanukkah*, and after we did *Shabbos*, my kids were in bed. It was a 40th birthday party for this couple that I traveled with who are in my *havurah*. It was... I don't know how many times people said to me, 'how can you be here? Don't you have responsibilities? Shouldn't you be at temple? You're a rabbi!' And I had to be there. And I said, 'I did what I had to do tonight and I'm really happy to be here to be able to share a glass of wine.' I did! I did everything that I possibly wanted to do and my kids are in bed! All the better! So there are these times of conflict.

And I had this woman come up to me, just ranting and raving about her personal issues with the congregation, and her issues are that she put her kid here in her transition [to Judaism], and to be in our preschool you have to be Jewish, because you have to belong to the congregation, so at least one person in the marriage has to be Jewish. I told her not to send her kid here for preschool yet, and she insisted, and guess what, neither of the people are Jewish. So what am I going to do? But I'm at this party, and the line has now been smashed. So it's a mix. It's really hard to have friends in the congregation, but I have children. And in order for my children to have relationships in this life, they need to be able to hang out with kids who are in their classes, who want to go to gymnastics with them, who want to have carpools with them. That wall is a carefully guarded wall, but in the sense- and there is a wall, there is kind of a level

of who's in and who's out, in terms of... really special family, you know, you hinted at crises and emergency kinds of things, you know you have to let some people in because you have to have friends in your life. At the same time, most people get who Leah is just from being around me. If you take the time, you know. But we're busy, and we move, and we float around, but there is that really difficult hard to describe line. I don't know how you're going to describe it in your thesis, but it... and there are some rabbis who just don't allow for it. But for me, for my family, to be Jewish, to be whole, they've gotta have some friends. And they're friend's parents are my friends. And some are what I would call... I'm friendly with, but I know I can't trust them. They're gossipers, or they're going to turn their back when they want to turn their back. That's typical.

Are there other places that you find fulfilling relationships outside of the congregation?

I thought that I would. But I can't. So I don't think my timeframe allows for me... and, my kids go to school here. So, one's in the day school and one's in the pre-school and ones in the Parent and Me program. There are a few people that I socialize with while the kids are doing gymnastics, but I don't make play dates with them. They've asked for play dates before, but because of the way my schedule is, its not convenient. And taking a kid home after school is one thing. So, I don't really socialize outside of the temple too much. I think that its possible, if you were a scrapbooker, or you played racquetball, or tennis and you would get into leagues, or if your spouse did something... like my spouse is in education. So 90% of the people he works with are female. So he doesn't go and make buddy-buddy relationships with them. He gets along great, but its not like he has a best guy friend where we would find other couple relationships, so that didn't come from him. But I could see that if my spouse was in another career, we might make friends once they got past that term 'rabbi,' which people do as soon as they hang out with you in a non threatening environment, they say, 'ah, gosh, you *are* real!' as soon as they get past that, then you can make that. But it didn't work for us that way.

We didn't make friends in Lamaze class. You know, everybody makes their best friends in Lamaze class! That ain't happening! Didn't happen for me. There are people that do.

And my Parent and Me program is here. So my immediate friends, they really came from my Parent and Me group with my oldest kid. That just how it really happened. And I just don't see where... my friends from HUC have gone this way or that way, they ebb and flow. Life choices have not made it possible for me to have 'friendships' outside of the temple, which makes me happy that I chose to engage that way, but its difficult, and it's been really messy these last few months.

So you're a working mom. When it comes to the Parent and Me stuff you're there as mom. And as rabbi.

Yes. And everyone says, 'oh, Rabbi Leah's here with her mommy hat on!' everyone will say that so it gives people the edge of oh, 'she's a mom right now.'

Do you feel that the way you approach those situations and relationships would be different than your colleagues who are working dads?

Maybe. I think the role of mom and dad is evolving and people are sharing that job responsibility. But I think that moms are always the go-to person. So I have seen some male colleagues who are really excited because their kid comes to Parent and Me. I wonder if... I don't know if their spouse is then.... I wonder if the male colleague is going home picking up the kid, then bringing the kid, or meeting the nanny, or if the mom is bringing the child to the dad, and facilitating that happening. You'd have to ask my male colleagues. And I don't know if people respect it as much. But people are thrilled to have the rabbi's kid in the class, male or female, because they think it means you get the best teacher, and therefore you're kids going to get the best attention. People love it. Part of the reason my kid goes to Day School here is for recruitment. It's important. Because it's a very good school. It is a very good school. But it means everything for me to be able to have that opportunity, so I avail myself of it. Extremely. To have my kids here.

And I would say I'm very friendly with the first child's class, and not as much with the second, and not as much with the third. Because your life is busy, and you have to compartmentalize, and I already have friends who have younger siblings who my kids are friends with, and so its been harder for me to be ... and I'm busier, so I'm not as attentive as I used to be in the classes, just kind of spending time... one is easier. And I spent more time hanging out afterwards, and making those relationships and bonds. But I think that's kind of normative. Cause when you have one, you need that whole, 'oh, what's your kid eating now?' but I'm past that. So that changes too, depending on how many kids you have.

Any other thoughts?

Gender roles are changing in the rabbinate. I think it's an evolving process. I think that when you talk to some of my older colleagues they'll have different things to say. Thank God the paved the way earlier. And you know, I'm the first female rabbi at this congregation. And they thought it was going to be met with difficulty. And that's nothing. A couple utterances at the beginning, until now.

Rabbi Joseph David

Tell me a little bit about who you are as a rabbi and the principles and values that drive you.

I think what drives me is interpersonal experiences and creating Jewish moments for people. I think that's the thing that is like my kind of motivation. It's not social justice. I'm a terrible administrator, I'm terrible at you know, organizing stuff. But create a moment, create a program, create kinds of experiences. That I think is what drives me to do things. Which includes theater and artistic experiences. That's part of my thing.

How would you describe your leadership style?

There's two different kinds of leadership. There's the leadership like supervising people, there's the leadership of working with others, and there's leadership of how you lead as a rabbi. I think in the first one, like our relationship, I'm like a servant leader. I'm there for the person as opposed to the person has to report to me. Whereas there are some that are like, 'you have to do this, you have to do this, you have to do this,' I'm not really about that. Its more like, 'let's come together and figure out what we have to do.' So that's on that side. On the rabbi side, I think that I try to be me, whatever that is, as much as possible, and I believe that my Judaism comes from a place like the everyday person as opposed to, 'I'm more religious than everybody else, I'm more Jewish than everybody else,' I don't think I am. I think my Judaism is like everybody else's, except I happen to be a rabbi. Which kind of brings it up a level, but I'm a reform Jew. I don't keep kosher but I don't eat *traif*. It's not like, 'oh, I have to go to kosher restaurants, and every moment is Jewish…' and I'm not that way. Its like, if I had to come hear a speaker lecture about Jewish people and Islam in the middle ages… I'd rather go to the Laker game. You know what I mean? And there's some people where that's their whole life. Like 'if its Jewish, I have to go to it.' I'm not that way. It goes back to David Ellenson. I guess it's had a huge impact on me, because its eighteen years later and I still quote this quote. In our philosophy class he said, 'answer the question, how do you live as a 20th century person and bring your Judaism into it? And I do believe that's the way I live my life. Although some people answer that question like, well, you really are a Jew and you bring modernity into it, but I really believe that I live the other way. I think I live like I'm just a person that lives in this world in the modern society, and I try to bring Judaism into that part of my life as opposed to the other way around.

And you are an example of that to your congregants.

I believe so, yeah.

When are the times that you feel most powerful, and when are the times that you feel that you are not as powerful?

I rarely feel powerful. Not so powerful. Actually the opposite of powerful is in the opposite of that question. The only time that there really is power is in the middle of those moments, if I'm the one kind of controlling it. But I don't think of it as power.

What do you think of it as?

Engaging. I can't imagine ever when I would say, 'oh, I've got power here.' And I think maybe the times when I don't is usually around really really successful people, like really powerful people, when I don't cower, but I think inside I'm intimidated and I feel lesser. I feel like they're wasting their time because they're with me.

And how are you defining their power? Who are those people? People with money? People with influence?

It could be any of those thing. Society kind of defines what power is. And that's why I don't think I do have it. I don't make the kind of money that people make, that have my same capacity. And I don't know, I feel like I'm more of a servant to people. I'm more like the mailman than I am like the CEO. Here's an example that I've used it's the *akedah* – Anna and I did this as a one on one where she talked about the two *na'arim*, the young guys that go, and then there's Abraham and there is Isaac. And they're all going together and they get to the bottom of the hill. And then Anna's question was – and this is an innocent question – 'which one of these characters are you? Are you Abraham, are you Isaac?' [Cantor] and I did it together, and I said, 'you know what, I'm the servants. I'm the guy who gets to go through the experience with everybody up to a certain point, and then I'm left behind at the bottom of the hill and then they go up and live their lives.' And its like, I'm like... going and saddling up the ass and walking up there for three days. That's like the wedding. And then, 'bye bye!' They go up the hill to have the wedding party, and I'm at the bottom of the hill observing it. Never truly a part of it. And I still feel that way. I really do. I know that I have good relationships with people in these things, that we become very close and everything, but I'm still working for them.

In what ways are you actively a model of Jewish life, you and your family?

Well I think I'm a model of Jewish life because any time they come to the synagogue, they're seeing me. So I think I represent to them Judaism and this is why people don't see a rabbi as any other thing. They're a rabbi. And that's limiting. I guess... so there is a separation. There is what happens here. There's, I invite people over for Shabbat and they see that I do Shabbat on Friday nights. And I hope it's done in a natural way, not like... there's some people who are very formal about it. But it happens as a natural part of our existence as opposed to taking out a sheet, and reading the blessings that way. We have people for *Hanukkah*, we celebrate it the way we celebrate it, I believe

there needs to be joy in that so its fun, its loud, it can be crazy at times or silly. But I would much rather have people do that than be dour about it. So in my personal life, I think if I wasn't a rabbi, I would do Shabbat every Friday night and I'd have people over most of the time – I don't think I would go on Saturday morning, because I grew up going on Friday night I think I would just repeat that same, thing. I'm a Reform Jew, Friday night was always the thing, Saturday morning, whoever went? Its funny, you know I have a *sukkah*. I don't know if I would have a *sukkah* if I hadn't become a rabbi, but I do really like it. And I, if I wasn't a rabbi I would probably continue to do that. I don't know if my Jewish life would be centered around a synagogue or if it would be more home celebrations.

But I like to think that my family and our life is a lot like the day school. One of the things I say in the Day School, is if you go to religious school it says to your family that Judaism is a separate thing and you go out of your way to do it. It doesn't happen in a natural, organic way. And in the day school, there's no difference. You might have math and then Hebrew. Science and then Judaic studies. Its just another kind of natural subject within the realm of their lives. And my daughters come in the car sometimes they're singing English songs, sometimes they're singing Hebrew songs. When they get in my car sometimes I'm listening to Israeli music, sometimes I'm listening to Hank Williams. So its like, Judaism is a natural part of who I am, who my wife is, and who my kids are, and I don't think they have a sense of 'oh, we have to go somewhere to be Jewish,' or 'oh we have to go out of our way to be Jewish,' its just a natural part of our existence in the every day.

Do you feel that the way you approach your leadership style or your relationships is different than your colleagues who are female?

I think it's different than my colleagues who are male as well. I don't necessarily think that me being a man – first of all, I can't really speak for women because I don't know their experience and I can't claim to know their experience, I imagine that there are a lot of different obstacles that they would have to overcome. I'm a big guy, and I have a pretty commanding voice and presence so I don't have to worry about coming across as if I know what I'm doing, even if I don't. But I think you know, you're 5 feet tall, young women, more frail than I, your voice isn't as powerful, all of that stuff I imagine for a woman would be the hardest thing. All that I have to think about is people taking me seriously, but that's because of my goofy personality. But I know that the moment I start turning on to that serious moment that people are with me. And that I imagine would be something that would be on the mind of a woman that would not be on my mind. So I think that's a difference, but that's just a physical thing. I don't think nowadays, I think people have accepted women rabbis nowadays, and depending on who the person is, I think Rabbi Roth might have different issues than you have because of her life experience and where she came from and her struggle, I don't think

women have to struggle as much to gain experience and to have that power in the rabbinate in other people eyes. People see a woman rabbi and they know, yes that is a rabbi. But I think internally its probably difficult for a woman rabbi as opposed to a male rabbi. But I would say the same thing about a short male rabbi who has a squeaky voice, somebody who is extremely overweight, but all of those things are all sort of personal things. You know, if I had a harelip I'm sure id' be worried about that. Nowadays I think it's a much more personal struggle that what people see on the outside. I think people have generally accepted women on the outside much more than they had, you know, 25 years ago.

Do you find that your approach to relationships is different?

Yeah. I'm sure it is. I had a comment the other day, this woman said, she was in my office, we were talking, first time I'd really met with her, really talkative, got along great, she said, 'well, I noticed that you talk to the Dads a lot more.' I never noticed that about myself. What that told me is two things: people are watching who I'm talking to, and if I'm not talking to everybody then that's a problem. I always thought that it was the other way around. Maybe in the Day School it's more that I talk to the Moms, but in the Religious School I'm kind of more buddy-buddy with the Dads, because they're bringing the kids. It's like the propinquity theory, you know, whoever you're around more you start talking to. So I kind of took a look to that to see whether that is true.

I mean, look. I think it's a very strange line between whether they're congregants or friends. That's the hardest thing. I'll give you a good example. I have one very close friend in the congregation. I consider this guy truly, I'm pretty sure the only one that I tell things that would put me in a vulnerable light. Really, the *true* things going on inside. I want to call this guy and ask him for money for the campaign. It's really hard for me to call him. I thought it would be easy. I don't know what it's going to be like when I talk to him. That's one place where it gets a little bit mixed up. But I most people no matter how good a friend I am, there's a label on it. There's definitely a label.

Whats the label?

Rabbi.

Have you thought about the conversation you're going to have?

Yeah. I'm gonna be... 'Listen, we have this campaign, can you give anything? From $100-$10,000.' And I'm giving a lot to it, so it'll be easy in that way. And it'll be uncomfortable to do it, and then once I'm talking to him I'm sure it'll be fine because he is a true friend, but it's the first time that I've really butt up against that. It's kind of interesting. But that's the only one. Everyone else I might be friendly with them, I know them, they know me, but there is always a barrier that's in there.

Are there people in the congregation that you would socially have dinner with?

Most of the time, if I go to dinners with people, [my wife] and I going, there's no pretense. Talk about whatever. Jewish stuff comes up, and the temple comes up because that's how I know them. I mean what else are you going to talk about? I mean we do move to other stuff, like kids, and parents and families. As a matter of fact, you know what's funny? I think we have deeper conversations than other people that I would know from other places. You know people are much more willing to talk about the bad relationship they had with their dad – its like usually, people would like, 'oh you're dads coming into town? What's that going to be like?" and people would be like, 'oh, good,' but people are like ... go through and be honest about it, which is interesting. I think its actually an advantage, brings people closer.

If you were to leave town on short notice, are there congregants that you would feel comfortable leaving your children with?

Yeah, for sure.

If you were struggling with some kind of family crisis, are there congregants that you would share that information with?

Only this one guy.

How many people really know you in the congregation?

Is [name of musician in the congregation] a congregant?

I don't know.

I made music with him, that's stronger.

How well do your congregants really know you.

Wow. 4 people, maybe? 3? I'm not going to count my sister in law. Yeah, maybe 3. Really truly.

When are the times that you are Rabbi Joseph David and when are the times that you are Joseph David?

Unfortunately, I'm always Rabbi Joseph David.

Unfortunately?

Uh huh. Yeah. And its probably those 3 people in the congregation where I'm not, for them. For me, I'm always Rabbi Joseph David.

Are you editing yourself or are they editing you?

They're editing me.

What do you think they edit?

They put it on me. They just put it on me. They can't see past it.

What are the qualities that you think people don't want to see, or the things that they aren't looking for?

I don't think people want to know that I am as fragile, vulnerable, as stupid, as careless, as human as they are. And yet, they do want me to be that way. But they don't. I think people want rabbis to be perfect. I want them to be too, which is ironic. I always look back at you know, how I looked at [a rabbi] who I worked for when I was a student, or [another rabbi], who I knew really well for awhile, I did a lot of songleading for him and stuff. I knew he was a friend, and I knew he was a rabbi, how did I think of him? I remember confiding in some rabbis and them being the only ones I would confide in because I felt that there was something different about them. Yet I don't feel that about me, but I know other people do.

You have maybe 3 or 4 friends in the congregation, where else do you find socially fulfilling relationships?

[My wife's] friends. And I have a best friend in Connecticut. Look, my life is work, And then go home and be with my family. I don't go out a lot. And the problem is the times when I do go out, it's going out with a congregant. Its funny, [names some congregants] I consider them friends, there is a veneer there. I really love that guy, and I do think I could be friends with him, but I'm not going to call him up and say 'hey, do you want to go to a football game.' And one of the reasons is, I don't want people hanging around with me in my house. Cause they're going to see all those things.

And I have one other thing. I smoke cigarettes. And I have a lot of shame around that. So if someone's at my house, if there is any remnant of it, I have to go around and put it all away. And you know, the question is, if you really feel that way, why are you still doing it. But I think even if I wasn't a rabbi I would feel that way. And so that's... it's much more of an internal struggle for me than other stuff. So... I mean... there definitely is for me a difficulty in the exemplar as opposed to the reality.

Are you comfortable with being a symbol?

As long as I don't know I am. It's like, a human being can be a wall of a *sukkah* as long as he doesn't know he's being used as a wall. The second he knows he can't be the wall. You can use an elephant, and you can use a human being but you can't know it. So its like, I don't want to know that I'm being that. I know that I'm used that way, but it's just too much for me.

I think you should ask – how do *you* feel about being an exemplar. You're asking in what ways *are* you an exemplar, but I'd be curious to know do people *want* to be? Is that an ego thing? Is that the power thing? Do people want power?

See I have a personal struggle with it. Here's my biggest struggle. I want to be a regular person. A doctor or a lawyer. People know they have other interests. A doctor and lawyer play golf, and no one says anything. I play golf, 'ooooh, God's on your side!' Or, 'how come you have the time to golf?' Or, 'you mean you're good at that?' There is something wrong that. They'll poke fun at me because I shouldn't be an athlete. I mean, I'm past my athletic time, because of my back stuff, but I used to play basketball six days a week. My life was sports and playing, and doing all that stuff. And also I was 35 before I became a rabbi! What did they think I was doing for the 15 years before? I think to people, we are only rabbis. That's what we are. We have no life. Our whole life is going and doing Jewish things. And that just makes me crazy. It just makes me crazy. And I think to my detriment, this is a job. And sometimes I treat it so much like a job, you know, I go to work, that's my work. I'm home, this is totally different. And I think a lot of rabbis don't do that. And I don't think people want us to do that. I did something for somebody... it was a funeral thing, and they were like, 'thanks for taking so much time,' I met with them for like 2 ½ hours... and I'm like 'well, its my job to do that.' And what I meant is it's my job to make sure you have a good experience, and what she took that as was 'oh, well, its my job ma'am...' and that's why I was doing it. And she didn't like that! She doesn't want me to say it's my job. I used the word job, and she did not like it. And that is one of the hardest things. I leave from doing a wedding, I'm in my suit, I go home and my daughter jumps into my arms. She doesn't care that I was at a wedding. She doesn't care, doesn't know what I'm doing, she just wants her daddy. And I completely leave it behind. The only time I don't is when there are financial stresses here, and when there are really bad issues, that I kind of carry with me, but I really try to stay so separate because I don't' want this to be my everything. And I think that to most rabbis, it is your everything.

And I'm sensing that who you are as a Jew and who you are as a rabbi are not always intertwined.

Like Anna would probably go to the *minyan* if she wasn't the rabbi. And I would say my style of Judaism is no different, I don't get more pious on the pulpit... I don't make different food choices when I'm out with congregants. I say 'I don't keep kosher, but I don't eat *traif*.' And then I have a nice little conversation about what that means... I think the cheeseburger question is funny because I don't know if I'd order a cheeseburger. But that to me is silly. I don't think I would act differently in that way...

I think people do have an expectation that the Jewish stuff at our house is going to be like really different, really religious, but it's just not.

The hugest difference is the way I am with my rabbinical friends. The hugest difference between who are your friends - that's where I find my outlet and where I can tell people everything. My friend Tom, he doesn't see me as a rabbi, he sees me as Joe David who he grew up with. It's not that I consciously put on a veneer, but I'm sure

that I do put on a veneer. Being an introvert also is tough on that, because I have to get really comfortable to be really talkative. See I'm an introvert, but you get that family here on the couch, and I'm not all quiet and mousy. I'm totally out there and doing it. And one of the things that someone said to me, he said something to me and I always want to keep it. He said, 'I like it when you do weddings and things because I never know what you're going to say.' That, to me, is the great compliment – because so many rabbis say the same thing all the time – and I think I do – but maybe my memory is so bad that I don't remember how I said it – but you know, I like to think I have a certain spontaneity, understanding of the moment, all of that. That stuff allows it to be that you don't know what's going to come out. That's the trick to storytelling. The kids can't know what's coming next – they want that anticipation but that was the best thing. And it said it to me like a month ago, which was great because I've been doing this about 15 years... it's a good thing.

Rabbi Nicole Adut

Tell me a little bit about who you are as a rabbi, and the values that drive you.

Who I am as a rabbi is... a team player, a teacher, a pastor, a student, a punching bag, an inspiration hopefully, a role model.

And what about the values?

The values that guide me are to constantly learn and constantly teach and constantly ask everyone, including myself and my congregants, to learn and do for themselves. And so I'm not interested in taking on the position as being surrogate rabbi or surrogate Jew. I should really say, for my congregants, I'm interested in teaching them so they can run with their knowledge. And I think that comes out in how I work with conversion students, how I work with *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* kids, how I work with couples that I'm working with for marriage, yeah. In all aspects. Even how I lead services, it's not to pray for them, it's to help them through that process.

What are some of the things that you do in those scenarios to help them through?

So... lets take conversion students first. I have a pretty high standard of what I make conversion students go through. So, not only do they have to take an intro to Judaism course, but then they have to join my conversion group that meets once a month, and for the first six months we study different Jewish theologians, then at he end of each hour when we study together, we close the book and say, okay so, do you relate? Do you not relate? Does this mean something to you? Is this a way of looking at God that works for you, or not? So even though I teach all the material and I ask them to learn, in the end, its me asking the question of 'does it work for you?' And they have to grapeoplee with that themselves. And then the other six months I do the prayer book and the service, and the goal is for me to teach them what each of the prayers are, so they can then feel comfortable in the prayer service. So those are examples of how I try to teach to give tools for them to then use things. Or for example, I just taught the religious school parents the 'real story of Hanukkah.' And then at the end, once I blew it for them and told them it was really *sukkkot* in the middle of winter, then I said to them: 'Okay, so what do we do with this information?' 'How do we use it?' 'Now that you know it, what do you do with it?' So I don't just give information, I ask, 'How can it be relevant?' 'How can you relate to it?' 'How is this meaningful, or not?' So those are examples of how I do that.

How would you describe your leadership style?

So yeah, I never wanted to be a solo rabbi in a small city. I always wanted to work with a community of people who I respected and wanted to learn from as well as work with.

And so I don't see myself as just sitting in my office all by myself, working or thinking. And I think that the way that I am the best rabbi I can be is in that team environment. So I think that's what I meant.

When are the times that you feel power, and when are the times that you feel the least powerful?

There are so many moments. A couple of moments come to mind... when I feel most powerful is on High Holy Days when I'm leading my own *minyan* service that I've crafted with the music director. And I've crafted ever single intro I do, and how the music flows, and then the moment of being there everyone is singing, everyone is participating, there's a sense of communal unity and going through a landmark moment, meaning, the new year together. I think that that's a real time of power. There are a lot more times when I feel honored, than when I feel power. And those are totally different feelings.

How do you describe the difference?

Power is a sense of feeling in control of the whole flow. So, I might not be at the center of it, but I'm orchestrating it all. So with services that I just said on *Rosh Hashanah* or *Yom Kippur*, obviously everyone is having their own individual prayer experience, but I'm somehow guiding the entire room. To be honored – and I also feel honored or privileged in this situation – but, the feeling of honor is much more of a humbling feeling to me. So for example, when I hold someone whose crying after they're saying *Kaddish*, or when I am the rabbi at a wedding, or when I council someone who is in a lot of pain, or when I call up someone for their conversion in front of the Torah. Many of those are life cycle evens, or personal experience with another person. Then I feel really honored and privileged to be able to be there at that moment.

And what about the times where you don't feel you have that kind of power?

I think when I know it's not in my job description. So for example, I'm not the senior rabbi of this congregation. And there's some... but I don't feel resentful of it. So I can not feel power, but that doesn't mean I feel resentful of not having the power. So there are certain decisions that I just say, [to the senior rabbi], you need to make this decision. And I don't bite my teeth, 'oh I'm angry that I'm not making it,' but I know that that's not my place, and so I don't have the power in that area.

So not having power is not necessarily a negative for you.

No. No. It's not. It's sort of, you know, know your place in the world, and right now that's not my place. And so I'm not... I don't feel angry about that.

In what ways do you consider yourself to be a model of Jewish life to your congregation?

So it's interesting. I was out with a couple who are about five years older than me and my husband. But their kids happen to be like ten years older than our kids, they just had kids earlier. So their kids are going off to college while my kids are in grade school. Or their kids are like, you know, 14 is the youngest. So the husband said, 'you know, you're a really great role model for all of our kids at the synagogue.' I said, 'Really? How so?' He said, 'You know, you just being a full time working woman, and a mother, and a wife.' And I said, 'Even though they don't really know a lot about me or know what I do? Even though I'm not necessarily very close to all of these kids?' He said, 'Oh yes, just your presence. Because they know that you're a mother and they know that you're a wife and they know that you work. And just knowing that is in and of itself a good role model.' I found that interesting. So I don't necessarily need to connect with every single child, and I don't necessarily even, even those children that I know – they don't need to know about my family life and this or that. But the fact that... they don't need to intimately know, but the fact that they intellectually know that, makes a difference.

So that's one way that I'm a model. By showing them that actually it can be done. You can do all of those things. I think I'm also a model of Jewish life because I talk personally, about how I struggle to fulfill some of the *mitzvot* of being a Jew. So for example, at a nursery school parent association meeting I talked about how I grew up in a home that didn't have a lot of money, and so my parents only gave one gift on *Hanukkah*. But they used that as an opportunity to actually do lots of rituals during the other nights. And I spoke about how it was the rituals that were the things that stayed with me, not the presents. And that now in my home with my husband and three children, that we choose to continue that tradition. Not because we don't have enough money to buy eight gifts, but we choose not to, and we choose to play *dreidel*, sing songs, play 'hot and cold' with *gelt*, you know... all those different things. Ask *Hanukkah* questions from a *Hanukkah* box, so I share with my congregants how I struggle to make it through those things. Or, for example, Shabbat. I share how, in my home, we do use electricity, but we choose the electricity we use based on what connects us with each other. So for example, we don't watch TV, and we don't use the computer- because what does that do? It just separates us from each other. Like you sit in front of a TV or you sit in front of a computer. And we don't run errands, because that distracts us from one another. But we will put on music and dance. And we will pick up the phone and call our relatives, because those are things that connect us to one another. So I think I'm a role model of Jewish life because I share those challenges and struggles and triumphs in those areas.

Are there ways that you feel that your approach to the rabbinate, as someone who is not a surrogate Jew, and as someone who wants to enable people to live Jewish lives by sharing your personal experience, are there ways that you feel that is different from your colleagues who are of the opposite gender?

I really can't speak globally about all men. I do know for example that the man that I work with, one of his strengths is that he happens to be a man, but he also has a lot of developed feminine qualities. And I think that that actually makes him a really great rabbi. So he's able to talk about his feelings, he's able to actually have very close relationships with men, that are substantial, not like going to sports games. You know what I'm saying? And when I was pregnant with all three of my kids I had all these people coming up to me and telling me their miscarriage stories. And [the senior rabbi] said, 'oh, nobody every told me that.' So there is something about my gender in general that makes people think that they can approach me on certain, very personal things. And I'm totally fine with that, it's not like I shun that, I welcome that. The other thing is, again its about me. I'm not sure how much of it is about gender, but I'm a very easy cry. And I don't mind crying, not only in counseling sessions, but also when I'm doing a funeral or you know, when I'm talking intimately with a colleague about our feelings about something. And I was actually very concerned about that before I became a rabbi, like when I was a student, like 'oh my, how the heck and I going to handle this?' And I just came to embrace that part of myself. As long as I'm not out of control, I just am comfortable being touched and expressing that. And I think that is more of a female quality. It is more... it's... welcomed, I don't have the right word... its welcomed for women to be that way, so I think that that also is true in the rabbinate. I don't think its welcomed for men to cry all the time, except for this week's portion with Joseph crying all the time. But what Aviva Zornberg is pointing out, is that Joseph crys by himself. And not with others.

Are there other ways that you think people have different expectations of you as a woman?

So when I started here, the sisterhood thought that I was going to go to their board meetings every month. That was an interesting expectation. They'd never had a woman rabbi, so I was like, 'no... not really, that's not my interest.' But when it comes to sisterhood activities, or sisterhood learning events, I'm the rabbi that is assigned to them, in a sense. Which I think makes sense, I can attend all of their events, I can help them, I can connect with them as being a woman and being a Jew, so that's one expectation that part of it I like, and part of it I didn't want to take up.

I think there are expectations of my family, which is that when I'm not a rabbi I'm totally there for them, and that even my three year old is just understanding it. Like just these past five months he's understanding it. He, in black and white, he says, 'no Mommy I don't want you to be a rabbi.' And I said 'do you want me to be your

mommy?' He said 'yes. ' So I said 'okay, Mommy's not going to be a rabbi near you. Mommy's just going to be a mommy.' But he doesn't really get that. When I take him on Tot Shabbat and I'm the rabbi, he's learning that mommy's the rabbi, then when Mommy's done then Mommy's the mommy. So even at that age.

Other expectations... you know, then I think there's also the opposite expectation, which I think I've helped create, which is that even though I'm a mother, and even though I gave birth to three children, and even though I nursed three children, I'm still going to work full power all the time. I think that's an expectation. But it's an expectation I helped to create. Because when I did all those things that I just mentioned, I didn't lower the bar. And so that might be good for the next person, or it might not be good for the next person. Not necessarily the next person in this job, but let;s say for example [our rabbi-educator] has a child. You know, what standards did I set that she will then have to follow, or not? Or have to push to change?

How well do you think that your congregants really know you?

Personally? I think emotionally they definitely know what kind of person I am. I think they do. I think they know that I'm very honest, they know that I say it like it is. So that's sort of my deep personality. They know what type of person I am. In terms of what I'm going through personally, no. No, I don't think so. I think they might get a hint of it if they read between the lines when I gave sermons, because what we choose to talk about for me is absolutely what I struggle with myself. So... that would only be knowing generally what my struggles are, but not specifically my family situation, my personal struggles.

So you aren't likely to open up and share about your personal experiences if you're teaching.

No, I do that sometimes. So for example, there was a congregant who is a psychiatrist, and his parent died, and he was talking to be about how he couldn't focus, and how he is seeing these therapy patients and he couldn't really focus on them. And I talked about how my father in law had recently died, and that my husband is a psychologist and how he went through something similar and you know... so I'll share when its relevant. And I forget who the person was that taught me this, but the person said to me, 'it's fine for you to share your own personal stories and struggles if its for the sake of them. But if its for your own sake, then that's not appropriate.' So that's what I ask myself all the time. 'Am I sharing about my husband because I want to vent or connect or whatever, or am I sharing about my husband and my own loss of my father in law because I somehow can help them.' And so that's when I share. I lead a *Musar* group now, Alan Moranis started this thing called the *Musar* institute, its really fantastic, and so I'm being trained to be a *Musar* leader, and I did my first *Mussar va'ad* and its ending in a couple of weeks. And part of *musar* is very personal introspection about

your own *middot*. Your own qualities. And so I had to think about, 'ok, if I'm going to lead this group but I also need to participate, how do I do that and still feel safe.' And so I found a way. I found a way. But like today, I remember there was something someone shared, and I thought to myself – oh, that's exactly what I do to my husband, or my husband does to me, and I chose not to share that. Because, first of all, I just thought I don't have his permission to share it, cause its about him, and not just me, and you know, if I were in a group outside the synagogue I would have, but not because we're a public couple I chose not to. And that was a very deliberate choice.

In those times, when you're working and your son is noticing the difference between Mommy and Rabbi, when are the times that you are consciously presenting yourself as Rabbi Nicole Adut versus Nicole Adut.

Ok so here's a good example. After we finished tot Shabbat last month and the service was over, I was done being the rabbi, and I was [my son's] mommy. And we went and got our food, cause it was a dinner, you know, like a hot dogs and *havdalah*, so we went and got our hot dogs, and [my son] said he wanted to sit on the rug and so we sat on the rug. And the nursery school director had a meeting with me later in the week, and she said, 'You know I heard that you were sitting on the rug with [your son]. ' I said, 'Yeah.' She said, 'You know it really got back to me that it really didn't look right. Like how come the rabbi wasn't sitting at the table with all the other families and socializing with them.' And I said 'Ok. I thought I was done being the rabbi, and I was just [my son's] mom now.' And she said, 'No.' In other words, all the other families were like, 'how come she's not sitting at the table with us?' And I'm like, 'because my 3 year old feels like sitting on the floor, who cares?!' But I wasn't' reading my role correctly, and I couldn't stop being the rabbi when I was there. So sometimes it's not me deciding when I turn off rabbi and put on rabbi, it's that my community decides it for me. And in this case as long as I was there with my kid, I was still the rabbi even though services were done.

Do you think they're ever able to see you as just Nicole?

Rarely. There are exceptions. A story my husband tells all the time, is that we were having *Pesach seder* two years ago, and we invited these couples from the synagogue that we really liked, that we wanted to cultivate their friendship. And so my husband said to the wife, 'Thank you so much for bringing this amazing vegetable platter,' because we assigned people different things, and she said, 'Oh my gosh, I called up my friends and I said, 'The rabbi invited us over for *seder* and I have to bring a really good vegetable dish!' and so [my husband] said, 'You know, Eve, I hope one day you'll just be able to call her Nicole and not think of her as the rabbi.' And she said point blank, 'But she's the rabbi!' And so we were like, 'Okay, check! They're not our friends.' It was over. That was it.

And then there are other people where I really can be friends with, but what's interesting is that most of those people were people that I was friends with before they became congregants. Through my husband, or in the community, and then later they became congregants. So I'm thinking of like two women in particular that I was friends with outside of temple, and then later they became congregants. And so I've maintained my friendship with them, and I can be totally real with them, and they happen to be congregants.

There are some people that are older than me, and I'm not their contemporary, we really like each other and they see me definitely as rabbi, but also I can be friends with. But because they're not my contemporaries I'm also not going to share everything that's going on with them.

What about the parents of your children's friends?

Oh yeah, definitely not.

Definitely not?

Those two women I was talking about happen to be parents of my children's friends, but I was friends with them before. But all the other parents, no. No, I'm always the rabbi. And they'll even make jokes. Like sometimes I'll show up at a parent's event, and they'll say, 'oh! You're here as the mom tonight!' and I say, 'yeah,' you know...

Do you feel that distinct separation, or do you think that's more imposed from the outside, or are there other ways that you put that on from the inside, too?

No, I think it's probably both. I think you're right. For me it's really easy when I have the title of 'rabbi' to go around and work the room. 'Hi, you know, I'm Nicole, I'm one of the rabbis here!' But if I weren't the rabbi, would I really go around and meet everyone in the room? No. I wouldn't do that. Not that I'm a mean person, but I wouldn't go around and work the place. So sometimes the title of rabbi enables me to, on the one hand connect with people, and on the other hand remain separate from them. It's a very interesting dichotomy.

Are there congregants with whom you would go out for dinner, socially?

Sure. A lot.

If you had to leave town on short notice, are there congregants with whom you would leave your kids?

Yes, that happened. I didn't leave town, but my father-in-law died and was buried the day before *Yom Kippur*, so my husband had to leave town. And I still had to be the rabbi, and I couldn't take care of my children and be the rabbi, so I farmed out my kids. And they picked them up and they took them home during the middle of the day, and they brought them back, yeah.

If you were struggling with a family crisis are there people in the congregation that you would tell?

Yeah, but these are my friends that I had before, who are congregants. Yeah. Those people. Probably not the rest of the congregation.

Anything I should have asked you and didn't?

Yeah. So, when you said are there people you would go out with socially, I understood that as a couple with my husband, which we do often. But would I actually call up someone, not for work reasons, and say I'd love to go out with you? Rarely. And its not because I wouldn't want to be with them, but it's a very odd line. And even when I do go out with individual congregants, like for lunch or whatever, we do socialize 80% of the time, but its under the auspices of me getting to know them as congregants or dealing with the MLK service we're planning or whatever it is. As opposed to me just saying 'I'd love to go out with you.' And I don't generally do that with congregants.

In thinking about the differences between these varying identities, what are the ways that you specifically edit yourself when you're in rabbi mode?

Yeah. Like an example about the *Musar* thing, that I choose, first of all, whose life I'm going to be exposing. So when I was driving to synagogue on Friday night, trying to decide what I was going to say at services, there was something my daughter had done that week and I realized I couldn't share it. She's too old now. I can't just share about her without her permission. So I didn't share. I held back. Or, the thing about my husband in the *Musar* class. I couldn't expose him or our relationship without his permission, so I didn't. So when I edit, when it comes to how other people would be affected – how my close family would be affected. So for example with the *Hanukkah* thing, I didn't edit that I grew up without a lot of money, and that my parents couldn't afford, I didn't edit that out. Now if my parents lived in this city and belonged to this congregation, maybe I would have left that out. But because they don't live here or belong to this congregation, and I knew that people wouldn't see them and think, I put in that information. Should I maybe not have? Maybe. So I think I'm more editing of my immediate family who is present and seen by our congregants.

Where else do you find socially fulfilling relationships?

Where else do I find them? My friendships outside of the synagogue. Yeah. I have a fourth grade friend who lives in the city, two colleagues that I'm friends with, one cantor I'm friends with, I have a friend from college I'm friends with, I have a friend from the neighborhood who is my closest friend. So... those are all my girlfriends. And those two other women who happen to be congregants.

The ways that you approach your relationships – do you think that they way that you approach them are different than your colleagues who are of the opposite gender?

So, something interesting came up. I forget who I was talking to – but they said that in relationships that are heterosexual relationships, usually the woman is the one who makes the social plans. And that often happens to [my husband] and I, we'll e-mail a couple and say, 'can you get together at such and such a date?' And the husband will say, 'talk to my planning secretary,' meaning his wife, not in a derogatory way, but meaning she's the one who takes care of the family plans. So what came up for [my husband] and I, was that what's uncomfortable about our relationship is that not only am I the public part of the couple, but I'm also the woman, who usually makes those connections. Couples often go out with each other because the woman initiates it. You know, the woman makes the plans, and then the husband goes along. But in my case, because I'm the public person, I don't make those plans because they would be with congregants, and that's a little uncomfortable. And so it's sort of weird that I'm the woman, but I'm not making those plans. So I'll like actually rely on my husband to say, 'you know I'd really like to go out with that couple,' and then either one of us will pursue it, but we change those roles and that's a little uncomfortable for people.

Is there anything along these lines that you didn't have the chance to say that I should think about?

I think it's interesting how pregnancy and children play a role in all of this. I know that the other rabbi said to me that once I started having children, that congregants saw me differently and they projected things on me like 'oh, *now* she understands what its like to be married,' 'now she understands what its like to have kids,' 'now she understands what its like to nurse or be pregnant or whatever.' So I think that part of gender plays a huge part. I also find it interesting, [another female rabbi] and I had a discussion about how we furnish our offices. I haven't been to her office actually, I've been to her home many times but not her office. But she told me that she sets up her office deliberately in a very male way with black leather couches and inkblot thing. So as you can see I don't have that kind of office, its light and its green, and whatever. So I find that interesting too. Like also my dress, is not very male at all. I don't wear suits, I don't own a suit. No. Not even for the High Holy Days. Yucky. No. So I think that's also an interesting interplay in gender. Like, how do we accommodate and make the other gender comfortable. And welcome. And how does that change who we are in any way. Or, does that just bring out parts of us we already are. I mean maybe [this other rabbi] is like that naturally, so she gets to develop that part of herself, that masculine part of herself. But for me I'm not... I have other masculine parts of myself, organizational, goal driven, that kind of stuff, that very male, thinking in boxes, those are ways that I'm very male, but my way of dress and my way of decorating is very

female and I don't change that to accommodate men.

Is there a way that men react when they come and sit down that's different than women?

To my space? No... I think because I've been here for fourteen years I've earned the respect and so I'm sure that they react differently to me just because I'm a different person than [the senior rabbi], and you react differently to different people and to different genders right away.

One other thing... spouses and the expectations of our spouses - I think that's very relevant. When I came to this congregation the rabbi was a man, is a man, and his spouse is a woman. And she had her own job as a professional and I think that the congregation got used to the fact that she had her own job, and she would appear for state events, and come for important things, but she wasn't baking sisterhood cookies and she wasn't at services every week, she wasn't any of that. So when my husband came, I think that role model broke in my husband and generally speaking people did not expect him here every week. And I think that's important. And I wonder if they also didn't expect him then because he was a man. And he had his own job. But they also don't realize that if you're married to a woman rabbi and you're a man, that you're the one home with the kids every Friday night every Saturday morning and every Sunday morning. So he's really the caretaker during Shabbat and the weekends. And so it forces the male gender married to the female rabbi to totally change their expectations of themselves and also the community is not really knowledgeable about that. They don't realize.

The role of the male rabbinic spouse isn't set, so there isn't anything to break from yet.

That's true, and in addition the congregation doesn't realize that it is set in one way, which is that they have to be caretakers. They have to be – a male married to a female rabbi has to be a caretaker. Because when the woman's being the rabbi, that's whose doing it. I find that interesting as well.

Rabbi Peter Harkess

Who you are as a rabbi, and what are the values that drive you?

I think there is five or six things that are really critical to me. Our new synagogue vision has, I think, ten values and the vision statement is really my vision with others. But I think at the top is that the synagogue is supposed to be a caring community, not just on paper, or in theory or to a certain group, but to everybody. People should walk into the synagogue and feel like its their home, their living room, and they're welcomed and they belong and no matter how long they've been away, they should feel like we care that they're back. I think that as a rabbi I'm a teacher and an exemplar of Judaism.

Are those things the same or are they different?

Teacher is what I preach. Exemplar is what I practice. I think that my role... it's easier for me actually to be the practice-er than the preacher. Because I've come to conclude that in part, what Judaism is, is the way that when I live my best, I live my life. I mean, not completely. I think other values are for me as rabbi, are ethical. That I need to play pretty much up front. And be responsible when I screw up and be honest when I screw up. And be above board on a lot of things. I think that I need to be real accessible. I think for me people want rabbis just like they want Judaism. That's real accessible, tangible. Not up on some mountaintop or over on the other side of the ocean, but here and now. I learned that from Jack Goldman.

...And something about presenting a vision of a better world, and a better life.

One more thing. I think being a rabbi for me is also about speaking truths and breaking down walls of our lives and our world. But in a caring way.

How would you describe your leadership style?

At my best, cause we're dealing with the hope and dream and what I strive for, and I fail sometimes. It's collaborative in the sense that I have a clear vision of what I want to do, but when I do it, when I'm at my best, meaning I'm really in the present or looking to the future, I'm doing it in partnership with others. I'm being pushed with others. As I've always said, my best interns are the ones who, after a certain point in time just don't take my words as honey from the tree or *m'sinai*, but push it. I think my leadership style is not to stand on ceremony, but in the literal way and in the metaphoric way. The literal way, meaning, you know, rituals are supposed to be vibrant and alive, so I don't care if the *sukkah* is this high or this wide, *sukkah, schach*... its what happens inside. And also on the figurative side, that I have to be really clear that this is a fight I really want to have. Most stuff just aint worth it. I don't need to be right, I need to be effective. And sometimes being effective means figuring out that this really doesn't matter.

Tell me a little bit about your relationship with power. When do you have it, and when don't you?

Power... power... I don't like the word. I feel like... I feel most power*ful* when I am motivating others to do good/ethical. I feel most power*ful* when great stuff is happening, and I ain't doing it. That's only partly cause I'm lazy. I feel most power*less*... I mean the truth is, I do great things at the synagogue and then I go home and my kids don't listen to me and I want them to do what I say. But within the rabbinic context, I feel most power*less* when people are kvetching to each other and complaining, and... no. wrong answer.

I feel most power*less* when I have people in pain and I can't make it better.

In what ways are you and perhaps your family a model of Jewish life to your congregation?

I send my kids to Jewish day school and my people know it. I light Shabbat candles and don't go out on Friday night, and people generally know it. I do Shabbat. They know that my family is a priority, and that my job comes second.

Truth in advertising, we are in a transition phase, and the last 6 months it hasn't been that way. We've actually talked about, [my wife] and I, how we have to re-adjust because the synagogue is just swallowing me up. But how am I an exemplar? From the minute of my installation, I put words in their mouths that they said back to me. A leader spoke, I spoke, the congregation spoke, and one of the things that they said we will learn from you, is how you take time away from us for your family. And they know because Jewish life is a parent with the kids. Jewish life is cancelling a meeting to see my daughter do something, my son do something. Jewish life is a public bar mitzvah that was about my kid and not the congregation. That's how. But a fact that I take my kids to Israel, that's a priority.

Tell me a little bit about the way that you reference your kids, on your blogs for example, telling about [your daughter's] college journey.

In general I won't share anything too personal, that's not out there. I will viciously protect my kids when they've done stuff wrong and we're going through stuff that's not public. But like any parent, I reference my kids. I'll share it like you'd share with friends, so I'll reference that way. In general I don't use the names of my kids, maybe [my daughter] cause she's older now, but I think most times I don't. I do very little about [my son] cause he doesn't like being in the public eye. So I reference them... how do I decide... If its not raw. If it would be public anyways. And they only a couple of times have been the 'rabbi's kids,' and that's when we moved out here, at [the Day School], and with his friends at public school.

Tell me a little bit about whether or not you feel your rabbinate is different than your colleagues who are female, and in what ways.

I would say that because of women rabbis I get to be the kind of rabbi I am. I am about consulting, partnership. I am about healing and caring, I am about non power politics and non-dysfunctional stuff. Those are traits that aren't the traditional male leader. And I can really be that because women in the rabbinate have made it more possible. I can call my wife about when to have a funeral because I know its okay for my family to be a priority in my life.

How am I different from women? I don't have to fight. No one's looking.... I don't have to fight. I don't have to fight to prove I'm good enough, even when I show the softer side or do the emotions or anything like that. Collaborative rabbi. Women have to show they have power and strength when they do that. I don't have to, cause its assumed.

How's my rabbinate different? I don't think that rabbis are God or that rabbis look like God, but in the eyes of my congregants, I look a lot more like God and a lot closer to God than you. How do I have it easier than women? Very few people are going to look at me and struggle with me as a man. I'm me as a rabbi, as God's vice regent on earth, any of that. No ones going to be checking out... I can wear jeans. I wear jeans 3 times a week. A woman can't get away with it – mostly – stereotypically unless she looks really great in jeans, and then there's a problem on the other end. No ones going to check out how low my shirt is, or this or that. They're going to be looking at me. I can be an old dumpy, whatever looking guy, with space between my teeth, doesn't matter. I think we're moving to a place by the time that you're out as many years as I've been out, it'll be less of an issue.

There used to be a movie where this guy wanted to get into Harvard, so he pigmented his skin so he was black, and he go through and got a scholarship and got into the school, and then in the end he was caught and his girlfriend who was black caught him and all this stuff, and he went in and the professor of the school was talking and he said, 'so what did you learn? Did you learn about being black?' he said, 'No, because I can turn it off anytime.' I don't have to fight. You do.

What I've heard from the women rabbis, is 'people will come to me with their fertility problems, or marriage problems...' they hear first about breast cancer. Are there ever challenges where you feel that women don't come to you?

I don't know what they're not coming to me about. That is why one day when we have another rabbi in the congregation I want it to be a woman, though that's not a requirement or a litmus test. So I don't know what they do or don't come to me about. People do come to me about marriage stuff, and women do it a lot. They don't come and talk about breast cancer. They don't come about infertility. I have to work harder

for that stuff. On the other hand, guys aren't necessarily coming to me for that either.

How well do you think your congregants really know you?

They don't know my rawness, when I'm raw, when I'm in pain... cause as we've talked about, I don't' think that's what we're supposed to share, while we're raw and in pain. I don't think a leader is supposed to do that. We're supposed to work it through and then use it as an example. They know I've had pain and they know I've had rawness and they know how I deal with it, but not in the moment. So they know things about me delayed. They don't know about the challenges in my marriage, they know about the challenges with my kids, but not really the real hard ones.

I am a rye, sarcastic, vulgar person when I'm on my own. Crude, not vulgar. Crude. You don't know that much about me, you know a little about the sarcasm, but I can't share that, I can't be that. I was that with one or two people and it blew up. They wanted me as the rabbi. And so I stopped. So how well do they know me? Peter Harkess is, Rabbi Peter Harkess is pretty much what you see is what you get. I don't put on airs.

That's the next question. Are there times where you consciously present yourself as Peter Harkess, as opposed to Rabbi Peter Harkess?

Peter Harkess... loves to preach but hates to write. Peter Harkess loves the idea of sports but hates sports. Peter Harkess would rather be with my wife and kids but gets bored just doing nothing. Peter Harkess is not part of the community, but plays part of the community. I present myself as the rabbi in almost all interactions with all congregants, because they can't deal with anything else.

What are the ways that you edit?

I don't talk about my pain. Except when I can't control it, I bring the closest leadership in and let them take care of my – not necessarily my family. When [my wife] had some skin cancer, the lightest form of it on her head, and it was freaking her out, I shared it with three people. I said you can deal with me, you can't go beyond me. My kids don't know and my wife doesn't want you talking about it. *Heneynu* me, but not them. You know, I try not to burp and fart in public.

What about food choices?

I don't eat shellfish with congregants. In general I don't eat pork anyways, I eat shellfish. But I don't do it, mainly cause I don't want to deal with it. When I'm on an airplane I don't tell people I'm a rabbi. I tell them I'm a teacher, a history teacher, whatever, cause I don't want to deal with their Bar and Bat Mitzvah stories. I tend to be an I as opposed to an E which is unbelievable, but I've learned that's what I am. So what I eat. Not where but what...

If people ask you if you keep kosher what do you tell them?

I did, I worked through it for awhile, it doesn't speak to me. Shabbat speaks to me. Going to Israel is a priority, it speaks to me. Sending my kids to Day School speaks to me. *Kashrut* doesn't. And that ends the conversation.

I edit the biggest challenges of things my kids do. I will talk to anyone who asks directly about it. I edit out... there are times where I don't' really care about anybody else, and the image I present is very caring. And I do care, but in the moment, I don't care. And I edit that. Cause people can't handle it.

Would you have dinner out socially with congregants?

Yes.

Who initiates those plans?

In my congregation they initiate, except sometimes with my present or various board member I initiate, but with purpose. Whenever I go out with them, there's always purpose. I know who I am. Moderate self disclosure. But I can have fun.

Would you have a glass of wine?

Of course. I'd have a bottle of wine. I'd have tequila. I have twice been drunk in front of my congregants. Controlled, but I knew I was drunk. I will not lose control.

When your kids were younger, would you have left them with congregants if you had to leave town on short notice?

I don't think we did... my in-laws lived here and my best friend lives close. But on my list now of people who pick up my kids in case of earthquake, emergency, are two congregants. And I would leave them.

If you were dealing with some kind of family crisis, are there any congregants that you would tell?

There's one guy who I'm close with, he has the potential to be a huge donor and isn't. And for some reason, he knows most of the gory gross real challenge pain issue stuff with my kids, whatever. And I'm not 100% sure why. Am I just trying to create a relationship and one day he'll make a big donation? I don't with other ones. I kind of like him, I like the back and forth, whatever, its an interesting experience. He is not involved in the congregation, but he's a member.

Is he a friend?

You know the answer to that from me. The answer is no.

You seem wistful about it.

He's older than me. He could be friend-like. But I'm... Borowitz once said that Buber

would say that a student can have an I thou with a teacher, but a teacher can't have an I thou with a student. So... I relate to him as if he were, and I take incredible risks.

Any other comments on friendship?

There are people that I could... we were maybe going to spend New Years Eve with them, they're crude. They sit they and they're crude in front of me. ...You know, stuff that I would normally do, but that I work to not do when I'm sitting with my interns because its just not appropriate, and I can't... I've got to be careful making them, because they're stuff I do, but the rabbi can't be making those jokes and we talked about making those jokes and whatever. So that's the biggest self... I am really inappropriate in my life, and its part of who I am.

So in those moments, where's the rabbi? Is it okay for the rabbi to be that?

No, it's not.

But it must be, because you are one.

It's not okay to do that. Just like its not okay for me to make jokes or whatever that are somewhere on the sexual, not sexual, but sex stuff, or body parts or anything like that. Because there is an expectation of a certain, whatever. A lot of people flirt and play and joke, sexual innuendo, whatever. And I actually do that, less so now that I'm 45, but in general – just take it right up to the line, I like just playing and going right up to the line and then just stepping over it. And the rabbi cannot do that. It's just not appropriate.

Is it okay for other people?

If you and one of your male friends want to do that banter back and forth. If I with 'Becky,' joke about kissing on the lips, its okay. But I'm the spiritual leader. And it's not just *maarit ayin*, it's creating an environment that those things really have some tension within them, and that tension can't be with the rabbi. Because in a world where there is so much transference, with a therapist or pastoral counselor, clergy figure, I think that plays into it. And we're not supposed to play into it. I'm not supposed to see my congregant... my congregant shouldn't see me seeing them sexually, or even the guys. Someone sent me some filthy jokes, they were hysterical, I had to sort of write back and say, you can't send these to me. And then when I saw him I said, if you want to tell me in private, not in mixed company, I'll sit and laugh, I just can't receive them.

It's not that you can't as a Jew, it's that you can't as a rabbi.

We're talking about sex, gender stuff, whatever... but a Jew doesn't have to be perfect. And I live in a congregation where they don't expect the rabbi to be perfect. They expect the rabbi to screw up, but they know I'm going to fix it and I'm going to take responsibility, and I'm going to do it. But we live in a society where in as much as the

rabbi is a purveyor of good Jewish values and wholesomeness and *sniut*, it's modern context, when a rabbi doesn't do that I'm inviting you (not you) to interact with me as a man. And I'm not sure that's how a congregant and a rabbi should do, as a man or a woman.

In fact, going back to the thing about women, what do you fight all the time? Stop looking at me as a woman. Stop thinking about my boobs, stop thinking about my hips, eyes up here! And not really to my eyes, it's to my brain, and maybe my heart. Well, that's perhaps where I struggle. That's where I do that... I have to maintain it. You have to fight to get people to do it, I have to fight to keep from descending away from it. It's very interesting.

The way that you approach relationships: do you feel that it's different than your colleagues who are female?

Sometimes I wonder if... with men, I think my issue is more with men. I'm a 'from the heart' type of guy. I don't care about rules and regs. I mean I do with my kids, but I really don't from the outside world. I don't care about *halacha*, per say. I care about the emotional, and the caring and the feeling. And the warmth and acceptance and tolerance. And women can do that easily, and some of the guys can do. But what do I do with all the other guys? And so, that's why I talk about sports. Cause I can sort of get there.

Anything else?

Some topic sentences.

I don't believe that rabbis can be friends with their congregants. I believe they can be friendly, I believe they can have a good time. But I don't believe... we had people who invited us down to their place in Mexico. Gorgeous, hang out, what happens in Mexico stays in Mexico, I'm sure that whatever illicit things they do they would not do while I'm there, there would be a lot of drinking and fun and whatever, I can't go do that... I've been invited on a cruise. I can't do it because I can't trust that I can maintain that boundary for that long. And its not worth it to take that risk.

Do you think they are hoping to invite friendship?

Yeah, and they like me, or want to like me. And I want them to like me. And I want to be there with them. And I want to go out with them. But they want me. Go back and read the things coming out in the eighties about women having affairs with male rabbis, or male rabbis who are taking advantage of women. And they talk about, it's like sleeping with God. They don't see the guy behind the role. They don't want to see behind the role. So I give a lot of it. More than most. And a sense of realness, but it would be well worth your while to have the same conversation with a couple of the women, wives or husbands or partners of some of the people you're interviewing. That

would be an interesting next step.

Just back to the children thing... I am more interested in creating Jewish kids who love being Jewish who are pissed off that their dad is a rabbi, than I am about teaching a lesson. Even when I don't do a great job.

Sally Weber taught that we can make all sorts of compromises in how we deal with congregants, how we relate to congregants, what we take from congregants, on all sorts of issues. The key is to be aware of, to be self aware of what we're doing, to be aware of the lines we're making, and to be purposeful and thoughtful when we do it. Which to me then says, I'm not really friends with them, or whatever, because I'm being purposeful. A real friend to Peter Harkess is someone I don't have to hold back from.

Where do you find socially fulfilling relationships?

My wife, my best friend, colleagues, and when I really have to get stuff out, a shrink, whose not a friend, but someone whose paid to listen to me. My sibling, and we have one friend, two, one who is now a congregant but was my kids friend beforehand, but we have another one who is [my son's] best friend and they became friendly and he was a member of my wife's shul... we have one guy and when there was stuff going on with my wife's shul, I made the decision with him that I'm just going to tell him everything, that his friendship is more important, they may one day quit that shul and join my place, and I'll let him do it for his kids but not for him. And he gets it... synagogue is his thing. So those are my friends.

Rabbi Leslie Agan

Tell me a little bit about who you are as a rabbi, and the values that drive you in your rabbinate.

It's printed on the window right there [*points to window*]: from the prophet Micah, what does God require of you? Only to do justice, love compassion and walk humbly with your God. And then around the temple in the design of our building we actually put a lot of the values. So, peace and justice, *shalom* and *tzedek* hang off the windows of the building. And the prophet Amos, "Let justice roll down like a mighty stream," is out in front of our fountain. These are the things that inspire me in my own rabbinate. My spirituality is very driven by social justice. When I do social justice things, that is a way I actualize my theology and actualize my faith. And I also have a very deep idea of a relationship with God. God's really important in my life, always has been, from the time I was a little girl. And I really, to me it is the ground of the being on which we all stand, on which the universe stands, but not as an entity, but more as a source that flows through all life.

Tell me a little bit about your leadership style:

Jump off the abyss, *Nachshon*... well, you know its changed. My leadership style as changed from the years.

How so?

Well at 28, when I was first a rabbi, I was just charge forward, intuitively, speak up, speak truth to power, it got me in trouble on more than one occasion. So I've learned a little finesse along the way, and how to build consensus politically to achieve the larger picture. I'm a big picture girl. I dream big dreams. And I try to inspire people to buy into that dream. But its not just my dream, its informed by the group. Because I believe you can do pretty much the things that you set your mind to.

So what are some of the methods and techniques that you use to get your consensus and rally the troops?

At this stage? Its very different at this stage, because at this stage I have a long track record with a community. So there's a high level of trust. Huge, high level of trust. And because I've dared to dream big and dared to challenge institutional structures and been successful at it, people are willing to give me the benefit of the doubt, which I hold as a sacred trust. I want to just say – this is not about my ego. I hold their trust very gingerly and very gently. And so when we're about to do things, it's not just 'Agan decides,' it's whether we're in an organizational setting or the temple setting, its about letting others speak. You know, Borowitz wrote this great article about the *tzimtzum* of leadership, it's a classic and fabulous article about *tzimtzum* and leadership. And

I didn't understand it as much at 27 and 6 as I do now. And so I don't have to be always the one to take the lead, I can support others and lift them up in taking the lead. And that's also about my pulling back and not having to be the one to always say it, but to do the behind the scenes work to get the stakeholders to buy into what the vision is. And then to leverage relationships to help do that. So here is an example. So Ruth Messinger comes and sits where you're sitting, from AJWS. 'I want to reach out to the gay community, and I want to make them aware of the LGBT work we're doing in Africa. Can I come speak here?' Ok. 'Well, sure you could come speak here...' and I have to figure out how to pay for that, we're a small shul, we've got a low programmatic budget... I mention it to a former officer of my congregation who works with the city. 'What would you think if we all did this together? You have a humanitarian speaker series. It's done around LGBT human rights before. Why don't we try and...' so boom. There was a meeting this week between me and the AJWS here and the city to start to think about what might this look like. It's a win/win, and we're going to bring another LGBT organization, it will be a win/win because I'm able to dream big. Now we have a whole city and the mayors office involved. Not just about [our synagogue], I could have just done this and had, 'oh we're a small shul, we're going to have Ruth Messinger...' but that's not really what the point is. The point is to dream big, to invite others, to say, 'what do you think about this?' Not to say 'let's just do it,' but 'what do you think about it.' Ask them. Invite them. To get their feedback. Explore it together, which is what we did, and now everyone's really excited about it. My chairpeople here, by adult ed people here, my social action chairpeople who will be like the [synagogue] co-chairs, the AJWS people are really excited... the city is really excited, and the only reason I haven't talked to the [local church] is that it's Christmas week and so [the reverend] was like, overwhelmed. This is right up their ally because their churches in Africa have been burned out, and so this is something that even though its AJWS, the NGOs that they're helping there have nothing to do with religion. So not we're able to build a larger collaborative effort. So I would say in the last 5-8 years, maybe 10 years, my model has shifted from just doing that, running out into the world and hoping people follow, or inspiring them to follow, to inviting and working on a more collaborative model of leadership to allow others to shine as well.

Tell me a little bit about power, and the times where you feel power and the times where you feel like you don't have power.

I don't feel like I have power when I'm dealing with my sixteen year old son who is strong and stubborn. And, I have no power. I feel the least powerful. You know, power is not a trip for me. I don't really relate to it. I know I have, oh people say 'you have a powerful presence.' Um, I don't feel like 'oh, wow, power... I'm the president of [rabbinical organization] now, so I have all the power' you know, it is what it is, it's like, we get together for convention once a year and hope that we have collegiality

and encourage friendships and encourage rabbis to let their hair down a little bit an study a lot and learn something, you know, what's so powerful? I don't know. And I know my colleagues in town, I know some of them very well, and some of them are now my classmates who are now the senior rabbis of very large pulpits in town. You know, I guess they do it differently. You know, Rabbi Roth is also a very dear friend and mentor and teacher, I was her Hillel president when she was in Hillel, and I worked for her there. But I think power... I'm not really on a power trip. And I don't have a good sense of my own power. I sat in a meeting yesterday with a past president of our temple who is also on the board of overseerers, and the union board and he's also president of the statewide GLBT political pact, organization, and we were talking and he's saying that I'm really well respected in the state for GLBT politics... but I don't really have a good sense of that. When I go speak at rallies, and when I go work behind the scenes like I did after Prop 8, with the police to try to keep people safe, negotiated down folks that wanted to instigate and turn the peaceful marches into rioting situations which I had to do several times, I was called upon to do that. Because of my street cred as an activist, but could bridge those institutional gaps. Or my AIDS work, back in the late eighties, whatever the 'it' is at the moment, you know, like clinic defense, abortion clinic defense... we did in the eighties... you know, I don't have a sense of my impact, but you know, in his eyes...

Well, it seems that you do have a sense of your credibility, but you don't see it as...

I don't see it as power. I'm not on a power trip. There is so much to be done. We can't afford power tripping and ego, we can't do that. There's too much of God's work left to be done. Whether it's... I'm most closely identified with LGBT issues, but my social justice world view is much bigger than that. You know, there's a lot of poverty, there are a lot of other issues. There's a lot of hunger, there's a lot of... I'm really worried about the health care package that got passed, and what it does to women's reproductive health. I'm terrified of that. I'm terrified that a group of men sat through, and sold old to one senator whose not powerful... if you want to talk about power, he leveraged his personal religious belief into public policy that affects 30 million Americans. 50 million, cause we take those of us who are lucky enough to have insurance, plus the 30 who don't. There's something immoral about that. Immoral. So, separation of church and state issues are HUGE to me, not just cause they impact GLBT stuff, but a whole host of other issues that this country is being remade into a Christian fundamentalist country. It's terrible. So anyway, I'm just saying,.. For me, its not about power. Not on a power trip.

Are there ways that you feel that your rabbinate is different than your colleagues are different than your colleagues who are of the opposite gender?

My rabbinate is different in a lot of ways. I don't make as much money as they do.

I haven't been able to break through in many ways to more senior positions. And we can argue about whether that's because I'm a woman or whether that's because I'm so identified with LGBT, as one of the first openly lesbian people identified with the reform movement. So we can argue about what that was. You know, when my colleague says 'I need you to make a loan because I need to buy a house in this neighborhood,' and they do it... you know, that's really different. You know, it happens when they're male colleagues. It doesn't happen as much. Maybe that's just cause we negotiate different, but I don't think they see women rabbis in the same way, especially if they're attached. I don't think there is an assumption when a male rabbi takes a pulpit, a senior pulpit, that they will be paying family medical insurance. I know from other female colleagues there is not that assumption when a woman takes a pulpit as a solo or a senior. Why is that? Because she's supposed to have a husband that takes care of her, or a spouse that takes care of her? That's just BS. That's just BS. So, I mean it comes out, and what do they say when a male colleague takes a pulpit and there's like this sigh of relief, cause they haven't emasculated the rabbinate yet, but when a woman takes that, all the 'ba ba ba ba ba ba chitter chatter,' and you can say its anecdotal, and its not real, but I can tell you its real. We were members of [another synagogue] when [a female rabbi] became the senior rabbi, cause we were there when our kid was going through post confirmation, you know, post Bar Mitzvah, and all of our social, our friends that we made, friends with parents of the kids he went through elementary school and childhood with, you know, they're our friends. And I love [this rabbi], I mean, but it was astounding, the back commentary. That they would even say in front of me as a colleague. Astounding. Astounding. And of our group of friends, there was only one man who is a lefty lefty left cal berkely grad, lefty lefty even further left than me sometimes, who goes, oh no, I love [the rabbi], she's great. To the rest of the men? Nothing but 'ba ba ba ba ba ba.'

Are the women talking too?

Yep. It's fascinating....

How well do you think your congregants know you?

They think they know me. They really think they know me. They know me for what I let them know.

In what ways do you edit?

Oh, I'm really crass and bawdy at times. I show them like a miniscule part. They don't really know how I think. They know I'm passionate about baseball, 'cause my son's a major baseball player. So that's something I can discuss publicly and be proud of my kid, brag on him, but they don't know what kind of books I like. They don't know what kind of movies I really enjoy. They don't know me really well at all. They see what they want to see, unless there is a few that I let in. My rabbinate is different

than Rabbi Roth's, in some ways, because [this city] is a really small city. It's much smaller than [the city where Rabbi Roth works]. And so I have a small town rabbinate. My rabbinate has been serving kind of quasi-niche, even though we're not just a gay temple, this temple isn't, but I've been in the part of that niche so its more like a small town rabbinate. And the size of our congregation is like a small shul. You know, it's 300, it's not like 100, so there's that kind of realm. The boundaries are a little different than in the big big big shuls where you're not as accessible, or you don't have to socialize with your congregants. You know I socialize some with my congregants, I have, that's how we built donor base, we've been conscious about it.

Are there congregants that you would consider friends?

There are congregants I would consider friends. A handful. Mostly those who've been in senior leadership at one time or another, or have been early members of the congregation that we did this journey together.

Are there congregants with whom you would socially go out to dinner?

Yes.

When your son was young, congregants you would have left him with if you had to go out of town?

Yes.

If you were dealing with some kind of family crisis, are there congregants you would tell?

Yes. There are people that would know. Some would know at a certain level. And others would know at a much deeper level.

How do you make those choices?

I have to know who is really trustworthy. You have to know what your past relationship is with them. For example. The founding president of the shul is a man in his 70s. He's 23 years older than I am. Really could be my father. Like a father figure. We talk every day on the phone. Because we've become really, really close. And often on a Friday night, because of the way traffic is, I don't go home for Shabbos dinner anymore. I used to work, and then I'd go home and then I'd come back. Now, we often go to dinner before Shabbos together. I mean we're really close. I value his advice, both professionally and personally, and seek it, and he knows everything. Another woman who is a past treasurer who is the co-chair of our 18th year, she lives around the corner and she and her wife is also president of the shul, and they are really close personal friends. My kid calls them Aunt _____ and Aunt _____. They're the kind of people that I would have had no hesitation having left my child with. They consider [my son] their nephew. We have a group of girlfriends, we live in the

same neighborhood, we call ourselves the 'girls in the hood,' every Jewish holiday... its our *havurah*. It's basically our *havurah*. But we're so close we're like family. And so we celebrate every Jewish holiday. Someone does *Rosh Hashanah*, someone does *Kol Nidre*, we do break-fast at our house, we usually do *Pesach* at our house, somebody else does *Hanukkah*, somebody else does memorial day and labor day, you know, they're all congregants. I've all married them, once or twice, depending on who they were with, I've named their children and Bar and Bat Mitzvah-ed their children, and you know... they're major donors to the congregation, many of them have served on the board of trustees at one time or another, as I said two have been officers, one president, treasurer... those people, they are friends. I can have a martini before *Kol Nidre* services with them and nobody says anything. Cause what's the big deal? When one of them gets a new girlfriend and they bring the new girlfriend in to the mix or whatever, and its like, then we have to do this whole thing where I'm not *not* having my martini, and somebody's got to deal with dealing with it with her. Because that's my family. That's the only family I have.

When are the times that you are conscious about presenting yourself as rabbi Leslie Agan, and when are the times that you are Leslie Agan, and is there a difference?

Oh yes. Absolutely. In public, in my leadership roles, as the president of [rabbinical association], president [another rabbinical association], I'm in Washington with human rights campaign, or whatever lobbying I'm doing, at temple, I'm Rabbi Leslie Agan. When I'm speaking at a rally or doing a workshop... when I'm at home or with my close friends, you know, I don't have any problem wearing jeans or hanging out or going to the gym and working out or... its been kind of weird a little bit because my trainer switched to a gym here in [this city] and there are temple members and community members and I'm in there twice a week you know, in sweatpants and tennis shoes. Its been great, I've been able to shmooze a little bit with them, and they like that their rabbi is taking care of herself, it inspires them, so they see me, I'm their rabbi there at the gym taking care of myself encouraging them to take care of themselves. But I have to be conscious of that, you know when I'm trying to lift weights and I'm grunting and groaning.

Where else do you find social relationships?

You know, I have my rabbi friends. The problem with rabbi friends is once you graduate HUC, you're far apart. So you have to really make an effort to stay in touch and talk. And you know, my son's father has had a major medical crisis and we're trying to get him well enough to get him a heart transplant. And my girlfriends who are rabbis who I've been close with since our year in Israel, one's now in Boston, ones in New Hampshire, one's in North Carolina... the North Carolina rabbi, we've been friends since we were 12. They've been amazing, calling and checking in once a week,

and leaving Facebook messages, you know they've been extraordinary. You know, and you try to make time to see each other and make sure we have time at biennial or conferences, we try to spend real time together because we don't really get it. I look forward to Hartman every summer... we're already planning stuff together. It's really important. People who knew you a long time ago. I don't have a lot of friends who have known me forever. So it's really, really, really nice.

Do you feel that the way you approach relationships is different than the way your colleagues who are male approach relationships in their congregations?

I think that's a generational question not a gender question. I think male rabbis of a certain generation, many of whom are just retiring, did do it differently. They were always the rabbi no matter where they are or where they were. And their wives were different. Because their wives most likely came to shul every Friday night and they sat there, and they really played the *rebbitzen* role. Many of them. But I think people who are in my cohort, in their 50's and certainly younger male rabbis who are just coming into their own as senior rabbis, the new cohort of 40 somethings who ascended to senior positions, I think they're very open, I think they've been influenced by their female colleagues and classmates, and I think they treat their congregants much in the same way I do. I have one colleague who has been retired for a couple of years. He's been a wonderful mentor, teacher, friend, he rarely made a hospital visit. He would call, but it would have to be like the guy was dying before he'd go. And he was uncomfortable. He was not a good hospital person. He was a good rabbi, a 'jack of all trades,' a generalist. You know, he was a good rabbi. And he led his small congregation nobly. And influenced hundreds of young people. But when I think about all the different kinds of training that we've had, and you in that category, but in my generation we were already starting to have stuff like that. I think it's really different. So again, I don't think its really so much gendered, as it is generation and how we're trained for the rabbinate. And there's the personality 'quirkies,' you know the ones who have napoleon complexes, or they are on a power trip, and so they get to that haughty, 'my feces doesn't smell' kind of... and there are plenty of my classmates and colleagues who are that way.

You've mentioned that women have had some influence. So do you think that feminism and the way that women are taking a greater presence has changed the rabbinate as a whole?

I do think its changed the rabbinate, I do think it's changed the Jewish world, but I don't think that's just true in the rabbinate. I think there's still plenty of places where women in the law and women in medicine still can't ascend, if we're talking about professions. But... and sometimes it's the old boys network and its really ugly. And we have that in the rabbinate. And we look at the boards of stuff. Why is it I'm the first woman to be the president of [this rabbinical association]. What does that say about

[this city], that prides itself on being cutting edge? Prides itself! I mean its this *geshtalt*, we're the most creative community, we're the most cutting edge community, but why did it take until 2009, here… I mean in New York it hasn't happened yet. So, the last two big, large Jewish communities, you know Chicago had it a long time ago. San Francisco, old news there. So… I do think that men who went to school with women in the seats when there was more than just one like Sally or Laura Geller or Karen Fox, and they were in a room full of men and they might have been the only woman, but as there started to be… I think it totally changed the dynamic. I know it changed the dynamic for the professors, and I know it changed the dynamic for other classmates of them, because they started to see the world in different ways because women's voices were present in the thinking discussions.

Anything that I should have asked you about that I didn't?

The only thing I would say is, do you use the Carol Gilligan model? I think that's… whether that's true as a rabbi or not, and I would say maybe some of it is true, but I tend to have been… I think I'm different than a lot of women colleagues. I run my rabbinate and my shul in a much more 'male' institutional model, or old fashioned model I guess, in that sense, obviously with a lot of feminist touches. I am a bit hierarchical, I don't always think… my critique of feminism is, and some of my female colleagues, is that they've been willing to be the number 2. That they haven't pushed harder. And that they're happy being number 2. And I guess they've been happy to raise their kids or whatever, that's great, okay, fabulous, but they are so talented. There are permanent 'number twos' around the country. Associate rabbis who are so phenomenal, so bright, so soulful, so talented… and it has always puzzled me that their ambition, and you know, that's kind of like, hasn't driven them maybe to push harder to be the number one. And maybe that's you know, their ego needs they don't have a power thing, all of those issues I understand, but I'm always fascinated by that.

Rabbi Alexander Kliner

Tell me about who you are as a rabbi, and how you define your rabbinate"

Name rank and serial number: Senior rabbi at [name of congregation] in [name of city], 26th year as a rabbi in that capacity. Founding rabbi, started with 4 families in a living room and have grown to 1200 family congregation. The major work of my rabbi has been growing and shepherding [this congregation] around the way.

What are the values that drive you?

Make Jews, that's our mission statement. Motivated by that, to try to create, enhance, strengthen Jewish life and Jewish identity who have given us the opportunity to be there in that way, in as many ways as we possibly can.

I've developed a theory of the rabbinate, which is in-elegant. It's something I came to a number of years ago, and it's been strengthened since: If you throw enough stuff up against the wall, some of it will stick.

So you're saying that your goal is to make as much stuff stick for as many people as possible.

Yes, it's an in-elegant metaphor, but I really find it true. There is some stuff that people will respond to, and they won't respond to anything else. We have a 12-step thing in our congregation that has drawn people out of the woodwork who would not be responsive to any of our other programs. We have people who are really concerned about Social Action and Social Justice, and not other things, and so on down the line.

We try to keep generating new ideas, and new things that will resonate with people, some work, some don't. It's a constant attempt to engage in different and creative ways.

How would you describe your leadership style in founding and raising up this congregation?

This is really hard for a modest person to go into. I've been very energetic, creative, and passionate and enthusiastic. Words like that I'd use. Those qualities resonate with people, but that's part of who I am. You can feel yourself connecting with people and people connecting with you in that way. Enthusiasm, if you want to give a Jewish word to it, it's *hitla'avut.* That's really important. You've got to be passionate and excited about what we do. Or at least I do. It's tremendously helpful. People can see that you love what you're doing.

When are the times that you feel most powerful?

High Holy Day preaching, High Holy Day sermons. Because you have 2000 people listening to you, somewhat quietly. I find that very empowering.

I think also when you're with people at important times in their lives and they turn to you because they need you, they need a rabbi. It doesn't have to be me, but it has to be a rabbi. Those are very empowering.

Also for me, I feel powerful when a teenager will come up to you and say 'rabbi, I heard what you said about such and such, and that really had an impact on me.' That melts me like nothing else. Every now and then people will tell you things like that, that something you said or did touched them in a profound way, and that for me is what it's all about, and that really sustains you for the times that aren't so wonderful.

In what ways do you consider yourself to be a model of Jewish life to your congregants?

I take it seriously. It is very important. I remember having a conversation with your parents about this a number of years ago. We weren't planning to live life in a fishbowl, but it came to us. We did bargain for it, we didn't ask for it, but we did it. It's a reality, and we had to play act- I'm not sure if that's the right words- but there is a certain public persona that we had to present. I take that very seriously. I think that's really important. It manifests itself in countless ways.

Are there times that you feel you consciously present yourself as Alex Kliner the Rabbi, as opposed to Alex Kliner the person?

I'm almost always presenting myself as Rabbi Kliner in the congregation. When I was younger I used less formal things, but for a long time now I've been Rabbi Kliner. That's how they know me, that's who I am. It's Rabbi [last name of the other rabbi in the congregation], and Rabbi Kliner. That's how we refer to one another, and I think that's important. I know that a lot of people have gotten into a first name kind of thing, and occasionally we'll do that, not with me but with the others- and I know in a lot of congregations they'll do that, and even drop the 'rabbi.'

Is that something that comes from you or from your congregation?

It comes from me. Occasionally they'll say to me, "What should we call you?" And I'll say, "Call me whatever you feel comfortable with, but most of they time they call me Rabbi Kliner." Some that know me better will call me by my first name. But I do think it is appropriate for us to be called by our title. Because we are a title, and we are serving as symbolic exemplars. They have enough friends. They don't need us to be their friends. And we don't need them to be our friends. We shouldn't need them to be our friends. We should have our own friends. And that's why these kinds of friendships (*gestures to another rabbi nearby*) are precious to us. Because there is a boundary with the congregants, and there should be and there needs to be. They need to have that symbolic exemplar kind of relationship. Because if we are just one of the guys, then who are we and what are we? And I know all to well my shortcomings and failings,

and they know that I have them, but it's better for them if they don't see them. So whenever I'm in public, which is why I joke I don't go out in public. I know if I go to the supermarket...

[Side conversation with another rabbi about how terrifying the supermarket is.]

I can do more business there. Last week at the supermarket I found out there that a lady was having stem cell therapy.

Part of the reason for that is I don't want to be on all the time. I can't be on all the time. I need to have my own time too, to yell at the television and exercise. And do what I do. It's important to get out of those roles.

Are there times where you are calculated about showing your congregation more personal aspects of yourself?

They know I'm a sports fan, that I root for the Mets. That's calculated on my part because it makes me human, but it's not over much. They don't know my drinking preferences, I'm not comfortable with them knowing. And I'm not a lush, but I don't talk about it with them. It's one of the things I'm afraid of at my funeral, too many martini references! I am calculating about the sports fan thing, some know that I sail, I've even let them know – and this took me awhile – that I have a house in the keys, and they seem to think that's okay. I even let that go for one of our auctions, they wanted to bid. It took me awhile. This is our second house down there, the first I didn't tell a soul about that.

So you've loosened up in some ways over the years, and maybe tightened up in others.

Yeah, maybe it's just a function of security. Once you give it out, you can never get it back. Once it's out it's out. It comes back to wanting them to have a rabbi. We're regular people like everyone else, but they don't see us that way. They need a rabbi. They want a rabbi. They want someone who's better, who's different. They don't want someone they can play poker with. They don't want someone who can curse or talk about the stock market. They need a rabbi. It's like parents - so many want to be friends with their kids, but we tell them, that's just the *wrong* thing to do. Kids have plenty of friends, they only get one or two parents. They need that parent relationship, and I think that they need that rabbi relationship too. If you're one of the guys, what do they need you for?

And it's a part of them too. They have a thirst or hunger for *kedusha* that they can't articulate, but they know that there's got to be something special about their rabbi – they see their rabbi, they hear their rabbi – it brings them to a different place. People are talking, you walk into a room, and the conversation changes for the better. They

want to engage you on a higher level. And that's a wonderful thing.

Do you think that there is something special about you?

Me personally? I'm ok.

I work really hard at what I do. I don't think I'm exceptionally talented or good looking, I can't sing, but I work very hard at what I do.

Are there ways that you feel you approach the rabbinate differently than your colleagues who are female? Do you feel that you approach tasks differently, or do you feel that people have different expectations of you?

We have a female rabbi on our staff, she's our third rabbi and she's been with us for four or five years now. I don't know if it's the fact that she's female, or she's younger, or both, but we approach things very differently in a lot of ways. She's less hierarchical, less vertical. More horizontal in terms of stuff that goes on. She's much more interested in making sure that we all have time off, which is a new and not unwelcome concept. That we take care of ourselves. Now, she's single, and I've got a family, so I don't know... whether that's youth, or gender or both, I don't know that's hard to say.

Do you think people have different expectations of you than they do of her?

Yes, but again, I don't know if that's because of gender as much as it is because of experience, or longevity of the relationship. She's good, she's got a lot of strengths, I'm doing a fair amount of mentoring with her because she needs it, but yeah, it is different.

Are there people in your congregation that you would socially have dinner with?

There were more back then than there are now. Probably the change is more personal than anything else. We had a birthday group, there were four of us born within the same weeks of each other, and we had a birthday dinner every year. But there was a divorce, a remarriage, leaving the temple, coming back to the temple. What was nice was that there were members who were peers, people who I could have kind of been friends with, but some have left the temple and it has kind of petered out. Just to go out for dinner, socially... we don't have a whole lot of time for social life to begin with. When we have a night off we're really happy to spend time together or do something together. And thank god we have family around us, my parents have been around us, my brother. One of the nice things about [this location] is you wait there long enough, and eventually everyone you know comes to visit. And so we have people coming from out of town fairly frequently, so we don't have a lot of social openings on the calendar.

Were there people in the congregation that you would have left your kids with if you had to go out of town on short notice?

Yeah. We never had to do that, but conceivably, yeah. We would have felt comfortable

doing so.

What if you had some kind of family crisis. Are there people in your congregation you would tell, other than staff or board?

A year ago my dad passed away, and of course we shared that with everybody.

When my wife was sick, I let her call all those shots. My wife had breast cancer and she had a double mastectomy. This is like a year and half ago now. When it started, I let her make every decision. You tell them what you want to tell them, when you want to tell them. The congregation knew. We never made a whole big announcement or anything. Anyone who knows us at all who is the least bit active knew about it at some point, and they were very supportive and helpful.

The social relationships you find most fulfilling are with your family, and other rabbis near and far.

Yeah, I think that's true. Again, there are a few congregants who we are close with (*air quotes*), they are nice relationships, but I always have my rabbi hat on in one way shape or form. I can go fishing or sailing with someone, we can go to a concert, but that's who I am in that role. We can socialize, schmooze, but I'm always in that role.

What's the dynamic like when those people come to you for pastoral counseling?

Right, you don't want to sacrifice that, and that's why I maintain the relationship – I don't want them to see me in some way that might jeopardize the relationship. We all have lesser parts of our personality, and it's important that they not determine we are not the person they think we are. That's deadly. Forget about it, you're done. And that would happen, of course. And at the same time, you want them to see you as someone that they can come to. You always have to be worthy of their respect and that's the bottom line.

We've met a lot of people who have gone far in their professions, and one of the things I've observed is that people who tend to rise high in the world are people of high character. And they are people of high character because whether they are a rabbi or CEO, they understand.

And that generates whether it is a rabbinic respect relationship, or respect from your clients. That's the same. People out there in the secular, rough and tumble world – the good ones – hold themselves to those kinds of standards. They certainly aren't going to tolerate that from us.

But do you think that if people got to know you, they would think about you any differently?

I've cleaned up my act by this point in my life, I think. But again, we all have a *yetzer ha-rah* within us, and you have to master it at some point. But if you don't, or you

can't, then you're not in the right place. The survivor in the rabbinate is with integrity. And we've seen people drop out along the way who weren't suited in one shape or form, and when those things are made manifest, when they show up, you lose your ability to function as a rabbi pretty much. It's pretty important to hold onto.

In approaching relationships in the congregation, have you noticed that you do that differently than your colleagues who are female?

Hard to say. I don't know if I have enough of an in to really answer.

Our assistant rabbi, she's approached me many times asking for 'how do I handle this situation' but I can't really remember any of them that were not gender neutral. It's just that she's a young rabbi – not because she's a she. Her questions have always been along those lines.

What is the definition of a successful rabbi?

I think the important question is the one we just asked- what are we doing to move Jews closer.

They can see that I haven't put this place out of business. They can hear a sermon that has a beginning middle and end. Those are, for observers, objective criteria of success. Now, what would be real success might be never having to field a telephone call when someone says this many hours of Jewish learning is too many, I want them to learn more torah so they can get out into the world so they can be better human beings and fill it with the presence of God.

Here's success: retreat a couple of weeks ago. Really wanted to bring [the assistant rabbi] on to be the rabbi, she's pretty good, doing the right kind of stuff and it's coming along. This year I said I'm not going, and she did. For the eighth grade retreat, neither I nor she went – everyone said it went great. 'We quoted you, and the Youth Director knew just what to say,' and I said, 'ok. This is my success.' I've given what they needed to get, I can go on from there and move on to the next thing. Ultimately, success is no longer being needed. When the vision that you've laid out, others have made their own, and they have adopted and implemented.

I'm interested in the way that people view your success. Do you have any way of knowing how people view the success of your colleagues?

One of the things I've learned is how shallow and inaccurate those kinds of success markers are. They are not accurate at all. I've been active in spirituality, spirituality in the rabbinate, and one of the things I've learned from that is that a lot of colleagues have no indication whatsoever of what kind of a spiritual life they have. Some might be in small places but that doesn't mean a real rabbinic heart isn't beating and working in a beautiful way. I've seen this a lot, and it has been a great thing for me. I know that some guy in a big place can be a jerk, and in a small place the guy can be the salt of

the earth. Especially for us, to see one another as spiritual beings, and the rest is the rest. Maybe we have certain technical skills, or *mazel*, or whatever we've had – but I have a lot of colleagues who I have a lot of respect for who are in different situations all together. But this is a tough and crazy business, and people get it in the neck for no reason. You have to have *mazel* in addition to everything else.

Rabbi Anna Roth

Tell me a little bit about the way you would describe your rabbinate, and the values that drive you as a rabbi.

I've been a rabbi in different settings. Hillel, organization, congregation. In some ways the values are different depending on what setting I was in. I can give you template answers, social justice, stuff like that. But I think the values that really animate my rabbis is a desire to help people feel more connected to living Judaism, that is, a source of meaning. To help people make meaning of their lives. And then all the stuff that goes into it would be the specific values. I'm always struck when we're sitting in meetings and colleagues like you suddenly refer to Rabbi David or Rabbi Roth. And it happens, like we're at a board meeting last night, saying Joseph this and Joseph that, and then [the temple president] uses Rabbi David. And its always a surprise to me in so many ways. My rabbinate is about being an engaged Jew in the word and I know that I'm rabbi, but there's something about the distancing, or the separation between rabbis and Jews that is not true for me. I've said this before and the way its connected is, the way that you can judge the success of a congregational rabbi is would he or she join the congregation after he or she is no longer working there. And that's not about being a rabbi, it's about being a Jew. It's about creating a place where my soul can be nourished. And I happen to be a rabbi doing it, I could be an educator doing it, I could be a layperson doing it. Maybe I'm not sufficiently attentive to the part of me that's a rabbi doing it, which is maybe why I'm a little blind to the symbolic exemplar thing, but anyway, the values that really animate my rabbinate are the attempts to be a serious Jew, and my attempt to help others be serious – not serious in the sense of not playful, but thoughtful and engaged. And authentic.

How would you describe your style of leading your congregation?

Honestly, I think it's collaborative. I'm not sure everyone I work with would say that. It's a really interesting thing, when I went to the communal service program about the conversation between an extrovert and an introvert, its clear to me that I talk more than [my associate] does. And even in a meeting like yesterday that [the cantor] is chairing, I'm still pretty bossy. So even though I would say that I am collaborative, I suspect that people I work with don't experience me in that collaborative way.

What are the ways that you strive to be collaborative?

I strive to be collaborative in everything that I do because it's more fun! It's more interesting. There have been times in my life where I've described it as a feminist model of leadership, and I've written about this somewhere, that the Gilligan notion of a different voice – you know, Rachel Adler helped me see that maybe this was an essentialist argument and stupid, so I don't know if this is gender based or not, but

I was persuaded by the argument that a hierarchical model in which success means being at the top is not a place that I'm particularly comfortable, and I would prefer to see my rabbinate in a web model – me still at the center, but more of an egalitarian notion of webs as opposed to hierarchy. So this is a collaborative model, but to be honest, I'm still at the center. This is really interesting. I'd be really interested to have this conversation with Joseph. I'm really ambitious. It's really important for me to be seen. And noticed, and when I'm not I get really pissed off.

I think that the model here is very different from the model at [another local synagogue]. It's important for me that the 'message from the rabbi' is shared by all the rabbis. The idea of my sending out my own, the way [another rabbi] does is not a style that I would be comfortable with, so in that sense I really am collaborative.

When are the times that you feel most powerful and when are the times that you feel least powerful?

You should see Elliot Dorff's book on Power - *Ish Lapidot –Eshet Lapidot* – woman who starts fires.

Lapidot is wicks. *Eshet lapidot*, a woman who lights fires. I think that's an image of power. There is no question that I am shaped by the generation in which I was ordained. I was one of the first, there were no other women, people didn't think this was possible, there was a lot of challenge, and that's on my shoulder all the time. And the thoughtful use of power is very gendered, because I really am of the generation that very different words were used for the same behaviors from men or women, you know, negative when women used power and positive when men used power. So I think that I have tried to empower as opposed to using power over, but again, I really think it's interesting to ask the people with whom I work whether or not they experience me that way. You know, what's the difference between how you see yourself, and how others perceive you. I'm more sensitive to that now than I used to be.

When are those times that you feel that you are empowering?

Mostly when I'm teaching. Occasionally in a counseling session. but mostly when I'm teaching.

What about not powerful, or not empowering?

In my work… sometimes I feel 'not powerful' around fundraising. It's interesting. The things I love doing, I feel powerful. The things I don't love doing, I feel less powerful.

I think I also feel powerful when I have time to think about things, to strategize, especially when I can collaborate and follow through. But I don't actually think about power that much. I mean, the nice thing about being a senior rabbi is that I have power, so I don't have to think about it. And what do I have power to actually do? I'm not sure. Do I have the power to stop you from becoming the congregational

educator? Yes. Do I have the power to make you the congregation educator, unilaterally, No. Would I ever use that power? No. There are certain things that would never happen here unless I made it happen. But not that many. I don't really think about it so much because it doesn't usually come down to that. I also feel like I have... it's like the work that we do around community organizing. That power is about really working with other people, you know, empowering other people and being empowered by other people. Its much more mutual than it is uni-directional I think. But it's because I'm in a really good situation where there aren't lines in the sand drawn very often. I don't feel vulnerable and therefore I don't have to feel powerful either.

In what ways do you see yourself as a model of Jewish life?

I see myself as a Jew living her life, and I am a model – I don't actually see myself as a model in that way. When I invite people to my home it isn't to see me do *sukkot*, it's to do *sukkot* with them. Which is why the cheeseburger story was so weird. Now I also was Richard Levy's student, this was years ago, and he said he doesn't wear blue jeans because rabbis shouldn't wear blue jeans. And I also know that he would say if you're wearing a *kippah*, that you shouldn't give somebody a finger on the freeway, which is why he wears a *kippah*, to remember. You know, the whole *ma'arit ayin* thing. I understand that notion, but I just think that my Jewishness and my being a model of Jewishness are not about being a model, its just about the way I am a Jew. But as I say that, I understand that I'm being naïve. I know that people look at me... it's interesting. I sign all my letters Anna . [The rabbi emeritus] signed all of his letters [with his first name]. I sign all of my letter to the Bar Mitzvah kids after their done 'Rabbi Anna,' I think that's stupid, but I don't want them to call me Anna, I want them to call me Rabbi Roth, but they're grown ups. And if I can call them by their first name, they can call me Anna. If God forbid there's moment when you need me to be your rabbi at a funeral or whatever, you're going to call me 'Rabbi' then anyway.

Do most people call you Anna?

Yes. They often ask, but I always sign my letters Anna. And because I do that, [Joseph] does and [cantor] does. Would [Joseph] do that on his own? I don't know. [The rabbi emeritus] didn't. That's why its weird when I sometimes hear you refer to [Joseph] who I know you know as [Joseph] as Rabbi David, except in front of kids. When we're all in role that's one thing, but when we're not...

My kids called Joseph 'Joseph' from the beginning, and I think his kids call me Anna to the extent that they call me anything.

This is an issue for a lot of people. This is why the symbolic exemplar thing is real, because if it weren't real it wouldn't be an issue. We did a whole class for my women's learning, these are women I've been studying with for years, I have been the guest in my home, they've been in my home, they're my friends. Some of them, not all, if I left

the congregation would still be my friends. A whole discussion began when we began *shmot* about what we call people. So it's an issue. I grew up in the sixties. For many years on my door at Hillel I had a sticker that said 'question authority.' Until one day, [a colleague] said 'you're the authority!' And I think that on some level I knew that, and I still wanted people to question authority. So part of this is not just gender, but its also the politics of having grown up and come of age in the sixties.

Do you think your rabbinate is strikingly different from colleagues who are of the opposite gender?

I don't know that many people who are my age...

The rabbis of my generation, many of them are not in congregations. I think the way that gender still... People still choose Joseph for certain life cycle events because he's a man, and sometimes they actually say it. They also choose Joseph for certain life cycle events because he's so good at them. It's not at all a typical for a Bar Mitzvah kid to be assigned to me, and then for the mom or dad to call in and say, 'you know, we love Rabbi Roth but my child really wants Rabbi David.' Is that gender? I don't think so. I think it's because he knows all the kids, he loves all the kids. The beginning of my work here with him I was hurt by that, I'm not hurt by that anymore. Now I think, how lucky I am to have such a talented colleague. And by the way it's more fun to do the *minyan* than the Bar Mitzvahs anyway. But I don't think that's gender. I think the gender thing actually comes up more often around fundraising. [A male rabbi I know] raises money by getting close to men playing golf. I can't do that. So if men are the people who make most of the financial decisions in the family, and I think that's still probably true, for most of our families, it puts me at a disadvantage. I can never be a real buddy to a man. Most of my students, my *talmidim*, are women. It's not that there aren't men who study with me, but the overwhelming majority of them are middle-aged women. And I think if you were to do a serious mapping of this congregation you would find that I am the rabbi for people 55 and older. And everybody else knows me and respects me but I'm the rabbi for those people. Jonathan is the rabbi for everybody else. It will be interesting to see who Jill will be the rabbi for. But I think that is a little bit about gender.

Its interesting that money is what comes up – in talking with a young, recently ordained rabbi, she said that people don't expect her to ask for more money, they don't expect her to push for more money like they do from their male colleagues.

So I think that's true, and I think that's also an issue here. I'm at a different stage of my life, my children are grown, finishing my last undergraduate tuitions. Joseph has a lot of tuitions ahead of him. He is the primary breadwinner in his family, I have never been the only breadwinner in any of the constellations of families that I've been a part

of. It is true that when I took this job I took it at a lot less than probably anyone else would have. Over time my salary has climbed up. I'm not at the top of my range, I'm comfortably in the middle, but I'm not at the top. And I think part of that is I never brought in a lawyer to negotiate for me, therefore I think it's harder to be my colleague because if I am making that choice, it is impossible for Joseph or [assistant rabbi] to think about making that choice. And it might not play to his advantage. And I think there is no question that when they hired me in the first place it was partly because they could hire me for less money. I'm sure.

How well do you think those congregants really know you?

I think some people really know me very well. I did not understand the distinction between private and personal. Obviously, I only share what I want to share, but I think I share – particularly in my teaching, you know if you take seriously this spiritual tradition that this is all about the Torah of our own life, you know, that's what you talk about. Now it is true that if I were having problem with [my husband], I wouldn't give a sermon about it. But there are plenty of people in the congregation I would talk to about it. I'm not afraid that I'm going to be fired. If I ever were fired I would find another job. You know my predecessor, it came to a very close vote, and they kept him because it was a very close vote. And you know I think that if it ever came to a vote, I would be gone. I don't need this job. And therefore I think I wouldn't stay in a situation that I didn't feel like I was in freely. It's like a marriage. Once your partner doesn't want you anymore, what's the marriage? You know, the marriage needs to end. If he's not there as a volunteer, you know, what are you doing? You know if I'm not voluntarily here, and if my leaders and congregants on the whole don't want me, I'm out of here. So I have freedom about it. I don't feel stuck at all. And maybe that's gender too. You know, through most of my life, there has been another salary. And even after I was divorced I was never primarily responsible, singularly, it was always 50/50 and if I were Joseph and the primary breadwinner, maybe I would feel more scared about losing my job. But the fact that I've had other jobs, I know I would get another job. You know I didn't change my lifestyle after I left Hillel. I live in the same house, I drive the equivalent car, I don't have fancier clothes, if I lost my job we could manage on [my husband's] salary.

Are there times when you are consciously presenting yourself as Rabbi Anna Roth as opposed to being Anna Roth? Is there any distinction for you between those two titles?

I would never wear pants on the *bima*. I'm the only woman rabbi left who wouldn't. I know it's stupid, I'm not sure why that is, but that's when I'm presenting as Rabbi Anna Roth. I made a date with a couple to meet them on [my day off]. It was right before the wedding, the only time they could do it. And I said 'It's my day off and I'm going to come in blue jeans, I want to warn you about that.' I wouldn't come in blue

jeans except on a Monday, and only after I told them that. So that's the difference. But I'm totally willing to learn that I'm kidding myself, but I don't actually experience such a big difference between Rabbi Anna Roth and Anna Roth.

There aren't ways that you edit yourself, or try to be particularly conscious in public?

You know, I'd like to do that a little more. You notice I'm the only person on the clergy team that curses. Maybe that's a generational thing, maybe it's an intentional thing so that I want everybody to know that I can curse too, and I probably wouldn't do it at a sermon, and I probably wouldn't do it at a committee meeting. I'm more free with my language with you guys than I am in settings with congregants, so in that sense, maybe that's the Rabbi Anna Roth person. I want you to hear me that I've actually thought about this, particularly since yesterday, and I'm wondering, am I kidding myself? But I just don't feel it. And I was shocked by the cheeseburger story. And I am, you know, I eat what I eat, no matter whose there. I drink, I don't drink excessively, but I am not – I wouldn't not have a couple glasses of wine around congregants, even though when I have a couple glasses of wine I might get a little bit drunk. Any more than I wouldn't do it with people who are not congregants. I don't know what behaviors I do in my real life that I don't do in my rabbi life because I don't know if there is really a distinction so much. But for some reason I feel like maybe I couldn't see the distinction and maybe you should ask my friends.

I love my job. It's a job. Is being a rabbi a job? It's a good question. Being the rabbi of [this congregation] is a job. I actually thought about this in Pilates today. [My husband] and I are going to Eselon, a lot of aging hippies. Very 'sixties.' They have these famous hot tubs that are naked hot tubs. Clothing optional hot tubs. And [my husband] and I have been there once together, and we brought bathing suits but in the changing area, it's a co-ed changing area, so you, know, so of course we went into the hot tubs naked. So for some reason in Pilates I was thinking, we're going next week, and I was thinking what would I do if there was a congregant there. Would I go naked in the hot tub? It was actually because of what [another rabbi] said – I don't know the answer, I'll tell you. But the fact that I even had that question, that's one area where it's true. If there is no congregant… there wouldn't be a hesitation about being naked. Will I tell people I'm a rabbi? You know, if it comes up in conversation. It's not something that I hide, but it's not necessarily something that I lead with because it often leads to conversations that are a drag. But anyway, that's something, one moment where there might be a difference.

Would you go out to dinner socially with congregants?

Yes.

When your children were young, were there congregants that you might have left them with if you had to leave town on short notice?

I wasn't in the congregation then, but I think the answer would have been yes. I hope it would have been yes. It is true that when I took this job some of my friends joined the congregation. So now they are my congregants but they were also my friends. And in addition I have other friends.

Here's how the rubber meets the road. When [my husband] and I got married, the question was who do we invite to the wedding. We made the decision for two reasons to have the wedding in Boston. My father was very ill at the time and couldn't come out, and there was no way that we would be married without him being there. And, by the way, it made it a lot easier. But we invited three or four congregants to come to the wedding, and they schlepped to Boston for the wedding, and some other people from LA who have not joined the congregation. When Ilana had her bat mitzvah, complicated because I'm not married to her dad, there was still a lot of conflict between us at the time. The whole congregation was invited to the bat mitzvah by [the temple newletter], there was a congregational *oneg* that I paid for, that everyone was invited to. And then there was a luncheon after the congregational *oneg*, which was a little weird for family and friends. Some congregants were invited to that, but not the whole board – people who are more my friends. When [my current husband] and I got married, we sponsored an *oneg* for the whole congregation on a Friday night.

If you were struggling with a family crisis, are there congregants you would let in to your struggle?

Yes. It's helpful. They're smart people. You know, especially because some of these groups are just women, we're all struggling with the same things. Getting older, the shame of divorce, everyone has their stuff. And when I share the Torah of my life, it is also instrumentally useful to other people, just like its useful for me to hear other people struggle with their things. And because I'm a rabbi, you know, and not a therapist, I think that my life experience is part of the conversation. You have to be smart about it, and careful and all that kind of stuff.

Would you share in a pastoral situation?

Yea. Again, I'd want to be careful that it didn't turn out to be about me, but yeah. What's weird about this is that my High Holy Day sermon about community started with my experience at [a summer Hebrew learning program], and I used it as a setup. I was at [this Hebrew program] this summer, and there were 41 people, and what it felt like to be older than everybody else, and community, and how community develops through language, and it was a setup for the theme of community. And people afterwards came up and said, 'it was so brave of you to admit that you don't speak Hebrew fluently.' And it didn't occur to me that that would be a take away. And

the other thing people said was, 'Wow, you really stretched, that is a model for me of doing something way beyond my comfort level.' That wasn't the point of the sermon. I had no idea that that was also what I was talking about. But it's interesting that that was sharing something that I didn't even realize. So, is that symbolic exemplar? You know, why would anybody think that I'm fluent? I know I'm not fluent, but duh, I'm the rabbi of the congregation. You might have actually thought I was fluent.

Do you feel that the way you approach relationships has to do with gender?

I don't know, I think it's as much about age and coming of age during a period of time that was very different than now.

But do you think that as a woman coming of age in that time, you had a different outcome?

It's possible because I was lonely, because I was the only woman, I needed other women. I got through rabbinical school at least initially by getting to be very close friends with the wives of the guys in my class. And we formed a women's group in Jerusalem, where we studied all kinds of stuff about women in Judaism long before this kind of stuff was on people's radar and it was exactly the same whether you were me or whether you were a spouse. Cause the challenge wasn't always, 'what does it mean to be a woman rabbi', the challenge was 'what does it mean to be a woman who wants to be a serious Jew, who also takes herself seriously as a person.' So that wasn't about being a rabbi, and it was about real collaboration and women's friendship and support and networks, and without that, I wouldn't have made it through school. Along the way I had some men friends, who also were supportive and wonderful, but not everybody. But to most everybody's credit, more were than weren't, but a couple were really close friends. They tended to be people who shared my politics, and my life style, which was a more like sixties-ish life style.

So I'm an [extrovert]. I need friends, I need people to talk to, I'm much smarter when I talk out loud and when you challenge me than when I'm sitting by myself. I write something and I can't tell you whether its any good until or not I have people read it. I have people edit the stuff I write, mostly [my husband], poor guy. But [my friend] is one, [another friend] is one, I never give a High Holy Day sermon that hasn't been read at least by those three people. Joseph sometimes shares his sermons and sometimes doesn't. I want us to be doing that more because I think that sermons can be better. Is that a personal style? Is that a gender thing? I don't know. Is it about insecurity? I doubt it. I think it's smart. I'm not a solitary person. I would not like to be in a job where I didn't have colleagues that I could run things by. This conversation we're about to have about Hebrew – fascinating to me. It's ultimately not my decision, but I'm happy to be part of the conversation because I'm interested. And its way more interesting to talk to you about than it is to talk about it on my own. [my husband]

is a different kind of learner. He's much more solitary, but he also wishes he had more colleagues. You know, in [his workplace] to talk about it, because its just more fun. One of the things that was frustrating to me with Joseph so connected to the Day School for so many years, was that I didn't have a friend that I could yell into the next room and say 'can you look at this.' So is that gender? I don't know. It might be a little bit of gender if you buy the Gilligan.

What I'm wondering now is whether or not it's changing now that both men and women act as caregivers in our culture.

I do think in yesterday's conversation it does seem to be true. In yesterday's conversation, [another rabbi] said that. Again, I really did think about that. I'm the only one that's divorced in that group. Did my first marriage end because of that boundary issue? If you talk to my ex-husband he'd probably say yes. If you talk to me I'd say it probably had more to do with his having an affair with his colleague, but who knows. So hard to say what the costs are. I felt in the conversation that I was much less boundaried than everyone else. Then I heard from one colleague that there are women who are considerably less boundaried. And that had [another area rabbi] been there, apparently she has even fewer boundaries than I.

I was wondering if starting out in a non pulpit role gave you the ability to be less boundaried.

I think it did. When I was a senior in rabbinical school, I stood out. It's easy to stand out, and I was called in by the *'gadolei hador'* who said 'don't go into Hillel, you're wasting your career.' 'You're going to be the first woman to be a senior rabbi;' 'you're throwing away your career.' And my response was, 'I want to be a Hillel rabbi.' I went into the rabbinate because my college experience was so important, I wanted to work with college students. When I took this job, the headline was 'woman rabbi breaks stained glass ceiling.' But the real headline was, 'you can get anywhere from starting anywhere.' And I really learned that. So I felt playfulness in every job I've been in, an opportunity to take risks, and clarity that when it's not fun anymore I don't have to stay in the job. And that's why I'm here now and not in any of these other positions. I do think that what I bring to this position is very different than what Joseph brings, because I know I can leave. And I have the financial wherewithal, I mean not completely, I'd have to get another job, but I don't feel stuck. And I've never felt stuck.

There was a woman who came to complain to me that I would not have done her daughters wedding. At the time I didn't do interfaith marriage – my position has changed over time. The child was married already, this was not a real issue. But the woman was pissed that I would not have done the wedding. So she came to me to talk about it, and in my explanation, I said 'It's in my role as rabbi I couldn't do the wedding because I can only do Jewish weddings. But for example, when my cousin

married somebody who wasn't Jewish, I was the maid of honor. And when my brother married somebody who wasn't Jewish, I was the sister of the groom. I can't be the rabbi.' I said, 'if my children married somebody who wasn't Jewish I would be there support them, I would be the mother.' But, she said, but 'you *have* to be the rabbi, because you're the mother. To be the rabbi is to be the mother. Just as a mother can't say no to her child, a rabbi is like a mother and can't say no to her child.' That was a moment. Just as a mother can't forsake her child, so a rabbi must do everything that the congregant wants because the rabbi is the mother.

The other thing that once happened, I was here for a few years, and I don't think that I was putting on weight, but I heard that some people thought I was pregnant and they didn't like that. The idea that I might be that baby's mother if you're really our mother. So there's been those moments as well. I do experience myself as people's daughters, particularly the old people, for better or worse. I do cry at funerals, especially when I knew and loved the person, I think that's okay. I think that has really changed since David Ellenson became the president of Hebrew union college.

So I do think that there is some mother/daughter stuff that does go on, but I think the important thing is to be able to notice it, to be able to name, it, and to be able to say 'I'm not your mother.' And I would say that. And the difference between the symbolic exemplar of Bloom and of us is, when you make that projection onto [a male rabbi], that God is a tall man with a deep beautiful voice, you don't notice that you're making that projection. When you do it to me or to you, you notice that you're making that projection, and you have to stop and think about who is the God that you're praying to. So by definition, women in the story challenge these male metaphors and then the whole symbolic exemplar thing begins to fall apart in a way, cause I think it is structured in this male model with a male God. So once we're not operating in that universe, it beings to change.

Rabbi Jack Goldman

Tell me a little bit about who you are as a rabbi, and the values that drive you.

The values that drive me are ultimately two values: the value of family, and the value of doing the job I was hired to do. That is, to take care of the congregation, and to try to do both at the same time. And taking care of the congregation means being there if at all possible, whenever I'm needed or whenever I see that I'm needed, and wherever possible try to go above and beyond the call. Try to do it 110% instead of 100%. Because I find that ultimately that's what people either remember or appreciate. Can't always do 110%. Sometimes you have to do 90% or 80%, you know, because whatever is happening in your personal life, or the laypeople won't allow you to do that, so that's...

How would you describe yourself as a leader?

Depends on whose looking at me. It would be... I generally lead by consensus unless I'm really hot on something, but I generally tend to lead by consensus. Meaning, knowing I'm a leader but pretending I'm a follower.

What does that mean?

Just you know, sitting back and being, listening from the people around me whatever they tend to think. And I'm good at synthesizing. Good at piecing together disparate opinions and thoughts. I'm good at mediating, you know, which requires you to sometimes in the middle of a staff meeting to either be assertive and be a leader, or sit back and let stuff happen, let the process happen. I mean, like with Leah. The only people who really knew how I felt about Leah, in terms of her being senior rabbi were... first of all, any congregants who came up to me, I said 'you know you think Leah should stay on,' and I'd say, 'absolutely yes.' But with a private, inner circle, I didn't, and I set as an expectation of the committee, I'm not going to tell you what I really, really think, until you've been through your process.

So they knew that you were withholding.

Yeah, there's no point for me to express myself, and they knew what I thought. I mean they all knew I supported her, otherwise I wouldn't have supported her for her last contract. Because I knew probably I would be retiring. So it doesn't have to be...

It's not a game. I think they know if I'm quiet, it's their turn to speak up. That's the right thing to do. You need to be free to voice your feelings about things, whether they like it or.... Whatever you want to do. Because I know I do have some influence, and I know people don't want to cross me, and it wasn't that way 37 years ago, but its that way now. So yeah, some combination of following and leading.

I think generally speaking being honest about your leadership strategy is really

important. I think in many congregations when it doesn't work out, it's not that they don't like the rabbi, and definitely its got nothing to do with sermons or anything like that, it's got everything to do with behind the scenes. And when the leadership strategy of the rabbi doesn't match the leadership style of the leadership at the time, because it changes. Every president is different, and every board makeup is different, and it all has to do with the *zeitgeist* of what's going on at the time, and then the world, and you've got to constantly monitor that and figure out how to still lead and allow them to... it's a nice waltz. It's a part of the rabbinate that I enjoy, actually. People say, you know, 'how do you stand the politics?' I say, you know, it's not politics. It's not politics in the regular sense, it's working with people. I like working with the people. I'm retiring not because of the politics; I'm retiring because I don't want to worry about a four million dollar budget, and because I don't want to worry about staffing. I just want to teach and pray... I also don't care about leading services as much as I like going.

In what ways do you consider yourself a model of Jewish life to your congregation?

I don't. I've never portrayed myself that way, as a model. I've portrayed myself only as a teacher. There's a difference.

How do you teach the difference?

I say 'I'm an authentic reform Jew.' And that is ethically and morally, I try to behave. And there's no choice about that. I may be the senior of a congregation for 37 years, but that doesn't give me the right to commit adultery. So ethically and morally I see myself as a model, but I don't behave in the right way because I'm a model. But also I know myself well enough to know I'm not perfect, and I do my little white lies, and I do my little stuff, and you know, it's just the stuff that I do isn't as bad as some of the other stuff. But you know, on custom and ceremony, I'm not a model; I'm just a teacher. I teach *kashrut*, I teach *mikvah*, I teach classes... I don't teach *t'fillin* because I've only lain *t'fillin* once. You know I teach about it, but... you know I teach all that, but I just say do what you want. Here's the reasoning for it, and my philosophy is that there's not a single Jewish custom that - not any one - that does not have a good wholesome Jewish value behind it. And so that's my role as a rabbi, to teach the values behind all those rituals, and now encourage you to go do what you want to do. So I don't judge – modeling implies a judgment of some kind. It's me saying, 'I'm your model.' I don't think that's right for the Reform movement. I think its perfect for the Conservative movement, and definitely it's an orthodox way of life...

Do you share your personal practice?

Sure. I'm famous for saying, when I teach *kashrut* to the adult classes and the confirmation kids, I say 'I don't keep kosher,' but here it is. The book I recommend

people read at the beginning is Donin's *To Be A Jew.* And I say its an Orthodox book because that's what we should be studying, traditional Judaism. To read Morrison Bial's *Liberal Judaism At Home,* you get 3 pages on *kashrut,* but in Donin you get 120 pages. You should read the 120, and then figure out what you want to do. But I say you know, when I teach *mikvah,* my wife and I don't observe that but we do it when we want to do it. Or not. But here's the value behind it, and here's why men and women do observe it, and it makes lots of sense for lots of people. I don't keep kosher at all. At all. And when people ask me, you know 'I don't keep kosher.' But when it comes to *Pesach,* my wife and I are crazy. We change dishes, we do absolutely everything. There's not an ounce of *hametz* that touches our lips. And so I'm fond of saying that yes, I don't keep kosher, but I keep kosher for *Pesach.* I'm fond of saying, I don't say it too much anymore because I've found that some people get offended by it, but yes, for Passover, I would eat a bacon sandwich on *matzah.* Beause I don't keep kosher, but I keep kosher for Passover. So the answer is yes, I allow you to do what you want in terms of custom and ritual, and I teach everything and I don't judge you, not an ounce of me judges you whether your good or bad or whatever else, and so don't do that to me. So I'm honest about what I do and don't do. I don't go to services the Friday night that Leah works. So what do I do? I don't go to temple, and I stay home. So yeah.

Are there times when you are conscious of being Rabbi Jack Goldman, as opposed to Jack Goldman?

Yeah. Usually at funerals, weddings, High Holy Days, and counseling sessions. When I'm teaching I don't see that. I see myself not as Rabbi Goldman, but as teacher-guy. I have a different hat on. This body of stuff that's really terrific and good and needs to be taught.

How do you define the difference between those two?

Teacher and rabbi? See, the rabbi part is the person who helps people in their lives. So going back to that original value of being there to help people. So the pastoral side, the clergy side of it all, when I'm helping you in your hospital, and your dying and your marrying and your burying, and your naming and your... and worship to a certain extent, though I tend to identify more with the congregation than I do with the pulpit when I'm leading services which is why I try to be down on the same level, and that kind of stuff. When I came back in '73 they were screaming because I wouldn't put a robe on. I said, 'no I don't want to put a robe on.' I hate the black. I love the white robe, but I don't like the black robe and I'm not going to wear one. So [the senior rabbi] wore his robe, and I didn't wear a robe. It was ok.

It's when I need to rise above the situation and help you out with whatever you're involved in. If it's a counseling session and you need my advice, I feel rabbinic. I try to draw upon the tradition to help you. I'm not a therapist. I tell people, 'I'm not a

therapist.' I'll do what I can to help you out with your problem, and then if I need to I'll send them on to a therapist. And I tend to know, I have an inner thing when I'm in a room with 2 or 3 people or a family, when I'll just stop [the conversation] and say 'you know, this is so beyond what I can handle.' It's misleading for us to keep talking, because I wouldn't know the next question to ask. I wouldn't know how to bring it.

Are there ways that you edit when you are out and about? Edit yourself or your behavior so that the person they see is who they expect to see?

Like eating pork in public? I don't care. They'll make jokes about it. They'll pass my table in the Chinese restaurant, we're eating scallops and stuff like that, and people make jokes. And I'll say, 'you know, I don't joke about you, you'll eat what you want and I'll eat what I want.' No. No. Not with *kippah* or *tallit.* I wear it when I lead services, and I wear it because I like to wear it, it makes me feel... like the leader of the service, sort of. So there's a little bit of that there. But when I'm going to a service, there's not a driving desire to put a *kippah* on or not, or put a *tallit* on or not. You know when I'm at camp, I hardly ever wear it. I like to wear a hat cause I like to wear a hat... but probably the only time is when I'm not in the mood to be a rabbi. Sometimes there's a disconnect. But that could be that I just had a big fight with my wife, or I remember one *Yom Kippur* when the kids were just so... obnoxious. Beyond. And I got up and I had to go to work. And I just said, I can't stand this. And I walked in and I was angry at everyone, and everyone was angry at me, the whole thing. You know, family is family. So a situation like that I have to push myself, I have to edit myself in a sense. But I can't think of anything. I think that's part of the role of trying to be as authentic as possible, and it worked out at [this synagogue]. I mean, is there any magic of [this synagogue]? I doubt it. Had it not, had me being me, doing whatever I was doing not worked out, then I would have moved on to another congregation, and it would have worked out.

One family, you know I'll never forget it, they said 'I can't stand it when they call you Rabbi Jack. To me its Rabbi Goldman.' You know, I don't care what they called me. My first born, my own son called me Jack until he was 5 years old. He called me Jack. When he'd talk about me to other people it was always Dad, or Daddy, but face to face it was Jack. It never bothered me. It bothered my wife, but it never bothered me. And then one day she said to him, 'you know, he's the only one you can call Dad in the whole entire world.' And he never called me Jack again. But I said, I don't really care what I'm called. In '73 caring about what I'm called did have to do with growing into the rabbinate. You know, I wasn't comfortable with it. The title rabbi. You know I'm not really a rabbi... I mean, I'm a rabbi, you're right, but I'm Jack! So initially in '73, '74, probably the first 4 or 5 years I insisted that they call me Jack. Over whatever else. But now, even the last 20 years when I call somebody, sometimes I'll say its Jack, and sometimes I'll say it's Rabbi Jack. Its still my occupation, I still go to work when I go

to the temple, I go to work when I go to services, I go to work when I bury and marry somebody.

How do you think your relationship to the term will change when you enter retirement?

I'm not retiring... I'm glad Leah pushed for that so I don't have to hide, because if anybody knew I'd have to really be absent. I don't intend to sit on the pulpit and I surely don't intend to lead services, I mean if she's really in a pinch I'll do it. I'm going to marry and bury, and there's a couple of retirement homes and convalescent homes I visit on a regular basis, there are congregants there, they've asked me: am I going to be gone? I say, 'no, I'm going to still come and play my guitar and have a little 20 minute Shabbat service on a Friday afternoon.' So... yeah, I don't foresee changing much. Cause I like the rabbinate. I just don't want to be saddled with... Because in the end, even though the budget committee is responsible for the budget and the board, I learned in 1998, we had a major fiasco at the temple and the executive director was doing some things wrong and a lot of stuff was going on, and so there was a big scare and they froze salaries, and we all... that's when Peter Harkess left and we all resigned and there was a big mess. And I'll never forget the meeting I had.... It's the only time in 37 years that I've ever missed a service that I was assigned to do. Five in the afternoon on a Friday and I had this meeting with leaders, executive committee, and they were blaming me for what the executive director did, and all the budgetary misuse of funds, they were blaming me. I said, 'well you can't blame me,' they said, 'well you're the senior rabbi.' From that day on, I stuck my nose, learned what an aging report was, what a financial report... because as a senior rabbi, I misjudged for twenty years the fact that I could be Rabbi Jack and not be the CEO. But I was the CEO for them.

Are there ways that you feel your rabbinate is different from your colleagues who are of the opposite gender?

It's hard to know. I don't know cause I don't look at it... I find women easier to work with, frankly.

Why's that?

More honest. Much more honest. And I like stronger women, I just... you know... most men tend to be ... there's a part of me too that can be passive aggressive. That follower side of me can sometimes slip into saying 'well, I should be a follower,' when in fact I shouldn't have been, I should have been... you know, you misjudge sometimes. I don't know. I don't find any... with Leah, you know... I don't find any difference between her and... other than the fact, she'll tell you, when we interviewed her, we had to do it over telephone from Cincinnati because she was pregnant. And so the layperson and I had to do it from the phone, and she asked the question, 'so

what are you looking for?' And I just said, 'I'm looking for someone who's real. Who's just real. That's all.' Which is what she is. And that offends some people. And as I told them, you know, the people I've offended over the last 37 years are not there anymore. So am I beloved? Oh absolutely I'm beloved. By the people who are still here. The people who are not here, I'm not beloved.

But... I don't... if you're asking me the differences, there's no question that I think women have brought the whole sense of caring community and compassion and made that kind of motherly, as in Richard Levy's many prayers, you know the mother caring and the father caring, is the phrase he had in one of his, *Wings of Awe*, or I forget whatever prayer book it is. But that aspect of the rabbinate, I think it softened it...

Any more changes you've seen since there have been more and more women?

Other than I would assume that more women rabbis has created the reality of more women student rabbis and more women clergy, I don't see any difference in the makeup of the board of trustees. In '73 when I came it tended to be men. There are women, but ... I don't know.... It's mostly women with some men, but I'm not sure... I don't think that's women in the rabbinate. I don't see any, other than that nurturing... the outwardly nurturing... I haven't found a difference with me personally, cause I... that's really... I think really the heart of my rabbinate is to be... I don't want to use the word feminine, but to be nurturing. But I'm that way at home. I'm an involved father, I bathe my kids and do dishes and make lunches, so there's that feminine side of me or whatever you want to call it. And I think that feminine side of men, women in the rabbinate challenge men to be that way, so it's a tremendous benefit.

It'd be interesting to see a study of the longevity, since Sally [Priesand] was ordained, the longevity of rabbis in congregations. Whether its extended or not. Because I think that's the heart and soul of a good rabbi in a congregation. Because rabbis get fired, or don't get rehired, not because of their sermons, and usually not because they're stink-o teachers in confirmation, I think a lot of it has to do with either, 'he didn't call me back,' or 'after the funeral didn't call me again,' the follow up of starting with somebody on whatever good or bad track they're on and they've involved you, the minute they've called you, a death, a hospital, a marriage, whatever else, and carrying it all the way to the end to where they're almost saying, 'don't call me anymore I don't need you.' That's... what I try to do with every single encounter that I have. And you know, I carry my little list of people to call, and when they tell me they're done with me, that's when I drop it off. But my point is that kind of parental caring is... I find the rabbis who stay a long time have at least a nucleus of people who stay in power and love them and the rest of the congregation may hate them, but they're staying on. Then I think it'd be interesting to see how many keep on getting rehired because of their nurturing qualities, because ultimately that's what people want. It would be

interesting to see if there are more men staying longer in congregations than there were before Sally [was ordained].

Do you think that your congregants really know you?

I mean... I'm always fond of telling them that, when people say 'Jack you're just so patient and so sensitive,' I say, 'yeah, I am here, because I'm paid to be that! You don't have to live with me.' And can I get hysterical and crazy and obnoxious and stupid and whatever else. 'Yeah, if I behaved in the office the way I do at home, you'd fire me.' I say that all the time to people. So that side, you don't know me, but I... you know... there are times when that side, I'm there long enough to know that I'll go off the deep end or get so pissed off about something that I'll just go off the deep end. But not too often. You know. And it usually has to do with social issues. Yeah... so, I think they will say that I'm consistent, they know me, they know me. But what they know is that part of me that's a rabbi and a teacher and in that role, in a sense. And if there's a second element to what people want in a congregation, I mean like I said they want someone who goes 100%, there for me, and accessible and I get them, and also consistent. Emotionally consistent is as best you can be, which is not easy to do. I've been to therapy, at times when its built up and you've got to go you know... if I've got to some way be consistent for my congregants. And there's 750 families and that family that calls me on that particular day, you can have some bad days, and I've had 'em, you know... funeral, uh. At the congregational meeting someone got up and said, you know, 'Leah is this and Leah is that,' and whatever else, 'Rabbi Jack, how can you support her?' And 'you know she did this...' so I got up and I said, 'you know, you want me to get up and read you the letter I got last week about how cruel and insensitive I was at a funeral?' I got this nasty letter. I didn't think I was, but you know, it happens. And you can't get around it. But I would say they know that side of me, and they don't know the other side. And it's the same too at home. Do my wife and kids know the rabbi side of me? No. And they shouldn't. Because at home I'm not a rabbi. And I think that's one of the reasons why my kids... I'm not sure there's a stereotypical preacher's kid... there is... which I think is fair, sometimes not fair, but all my kids are favorably disposed to synagogue life and they'll join a temple. It's because I just, I used to say I don't take my rabbinate that seriously. And that's probably wrong. I do take it seriously, but I just don't take it home with me, and I don't impose it upon my kids. That fits my system of not judging anybody. So when my kids don't go to services, or don't do this and don't do that, I don't say, 'oh, you should've, you know...' In some rabbinic families, its not 'my kid the committed Jew,' it's 'my kid the rabbi's kid,' and the rabbi is telling him to do that cause he's embarrassed. I have said to my kids, 'if you don't go on to confirmation its going to embarrass me.' So it's expected you go on to confirmation, but I'm making you do it. Whereas my philosophy with other kids is, 'don't drag them on to Confirmation after Bar Mitzvah.' Because you can be in danger of creating a self-hating Jew. So we try to

push for it, and push kids along, but I've told me own kids, you know, you've got to be confirmed. So just do it because it's better for my... you know. And they get that. And it's honest.

Jack Bloom's argument is that the rabbi cannot have friends in the congregation. And I'm wondering if that barrier is still as strict as he sets it, or whether or not it has become more porous. So I'm going to ask you a few questions about levels of social interaction if you have any other comments, then that will be helpful too.

Would you have dinner our with congregants?

With no ulterior motive? No.

When your kids were young, would you have left them with congregants if you had to go out of town?

Would I have? No.

If you were dealing with some sort of family crisis are there any congregants that you would tell about your struggle?

No.

I don't have friends in the congregation. Do they consider me a friend? Some do... We went out to dinner before some folks got divorced, but it was one of my largest givers in the capital campaign... so, they're fun to be with, and they're enjoyable and they like good red wine and we have a good time with it, but they're not my friends. So, I would say that I'm able to give them 110%, and have them be appreciative of that. But I stop, if I did 125% I'd be their buddy. You know, 'he's doing this because he's my friend.' So I'm able to give as much as I can, but not to the point where they're getting special favors and they're my buddies. So... I have, there's no favorites. ...there's no favoritism. That's the danger of the friendship business. That you're perceived as somebody whose got friends.

Do you think it's a function of gender?

I don't know, because I don't think so... because our Executive Director is in a *havurah*. Do you get people who really want to, you know, 'Jack, how are you really feeling about this candidate for the temple presidency?' or, 'I know you're negotiating and whatever else, must be tough, as a friend I want to give you this advice,' and stuff like that, you know. But... I'm not sure I'm typical or a typical. I tend to be a loner. I don't go out with other rabbis either. I don't go to lunches, I don't go to dinner meetings, never go to any dinner meetings. Dinners are inviolate time with the family, and even though my last kid went off to college, I still don't go to dinner meetings. They would say that they're my friend, but I think that they know that they would say

number one, he's our rabbi, and he's a friendly rabbi. I think it's... you're playing with fire to... especially not to the individual that you're friendlier with, but it's the rest of the people. Whether it's fifty families or all 700 families, its people looking at you. You live in a glass bowl. How do they feel about you being this close to somebody? Everybody gets being close to the president, or the executive board. They all get that. And people always translate it as, well he's closer to Jane, and when Jane calls, well, he's there. And I don't care who calls me. It could be a 6 year old whose calling with a question about death dreams. Everybody gets a call back. I have a reputation for being accessible. And am I that accessible? Absolutely not. Is it perceived that I am? Absolutely yes. But I know how to hide, and it was my dream in '73 was to come back to [this synagogue] for two years, and go to [another suburb] at [a small congregation], cause at that time it was 200 families, and that's what I wanted. A small place where I could develop a nice relationship with people. Then after three to four years of being at a big place, I found safety, security, anonymity, and you can get lost in people thinking you're working 85 hours a week. And people say, 'oh, you must be exhausted.' And I disabuse them of that, but 'you must be torn apart, with your family, and your kids are so normal,' and 'how do you do all of this?' And I say, 'well, because I don't work 80 hours a week.' Do I work 50? Yes. It's a 50 hour a week job. And it's sometimes 60, and sometimes more, yes. But sometimes its only 35. But you don't lie about that either and pretend that you work more than you do. But they still think you do, and so... but if you just return the call, that same day, its all you need to do. I do the same thing with meetings. I pull out my calendar and make a date. Getting a call back, making a date, telling them I prefer to meet with them face to face than talk on the phone all makes you accessible.

Is there anything I should have asked you about anything of these topics?

Its just... if there's a regret that I have over the last 37 years, its that it took me a long time to learn how to be a senior rabbi.

Do you see it as a hierarchy?

It has to be otherwise there's chaos. It doesn't have to be a hierarchy that has strict boundaries, its just finding the balance. If you are the senior rabbi, it's not printed anywhere... but internally there needs to be someone who's the leader. There was a time when we tried to have Co's at the top. In other words, she was the senior lead professional on the administrative side, I was the lead on the programmatic side. So we were Co's, lead partners. And that was written into our contracts, but that if either one of us left, but that didn't work. Because it was confusing for the support staff. Yeah, I learned a lot from that experience. Peter was there during those years, and I'm sure he felt it. Amongst the programmatic staff there was a hierarchy. If you constantly remind people that you're the boss, people don't like that. They like that in the Conservative movement. If you want me to tell you what to do, go join the

Conservative movement. As a Jew, or whatever else. In a Reform synagogue, a Reform rabbi has got to accept the fact that he's got a bunch of Jesus' out there who are going to do what they're going to do. But you've got to enjoy that. Because I want to do what I want to do too.