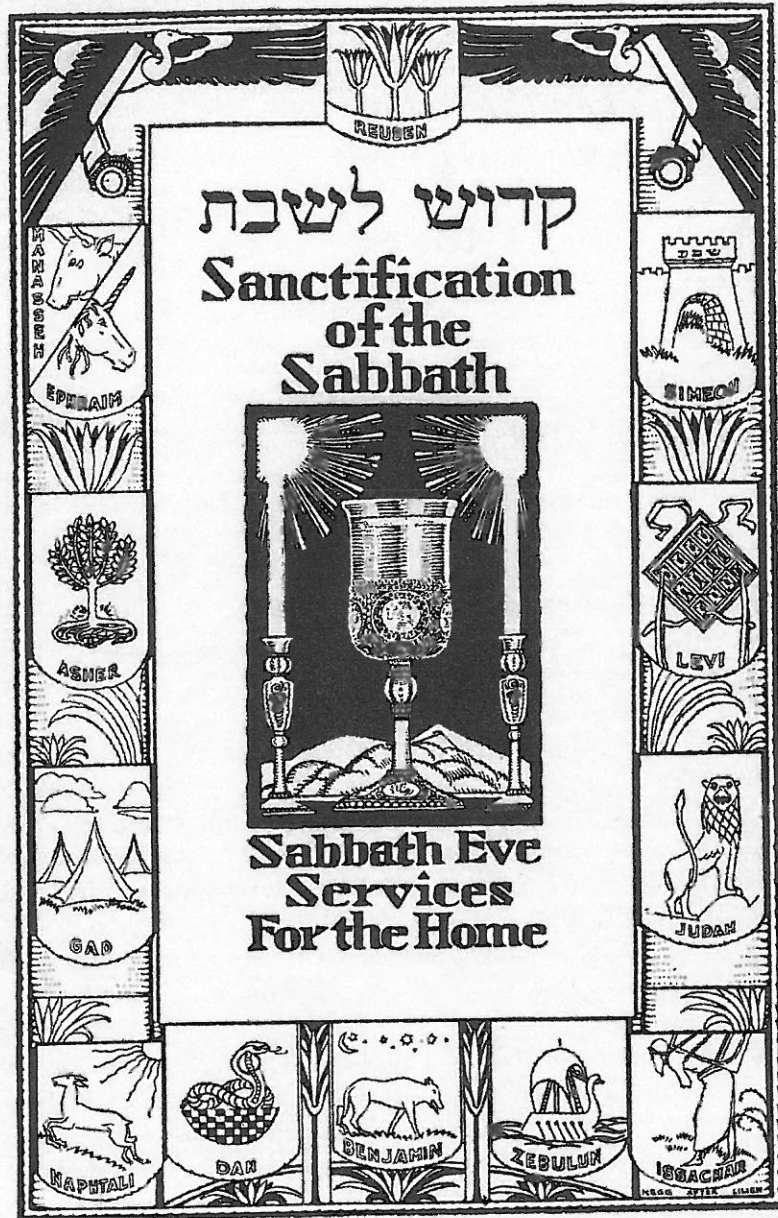

*“To Quicken the Religious
Consciousness of Israel”*

THE NFTS NATIONAL
COMMITTEE ON RELIGION,
1913–1933

Jonathan D. Sarna

In 1929, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS) produced an attractive *kiddush* card seeking to promote the “Sanctification [Hebrew: *Kiddush*] of the Sabbath.” The traditional symbols of the Sabbath—two glowing candles, a handsome *kiddush* cup, and a braided challah—adorned the four-page card’s cover, surrounded by representations of the twelve tribes of Israel.¹ Inside, the card reproduced, in modified form, the Sabbath eve service for the home found in the back pages of the Reform movement’s *Union Prayer Book*.² “The table is given a festive appearance,” it instructed. “A wine cup and a loaf of bread for the blessing are set before the head of the household. The ceremony of ushering in the Sabbath is begun by the kindling of the lights, during which a blessing by the wife is silently asked upon the home and the dear ones. The following may be used.”

The prayer that followed was the traditional blessing over the Sabbath lights, printed in Hebrew, in transliterated English, and in English translation. This diverged boldly from the text in the *Union Prayer Book* that had deleted the traditional blessing entirely, replacing it with a meditation. “The lighting of the Sabbath Lights on Friday evening is a lovely ceremonial and should be carried out in every Jewish home,” the National Committee on Religion explained in its report to the NFTS Executive Board.³ A year later, it exulted in the “hearty response” to its initiative—more than 10,500 *kiddush* cards had been distributed. “To those of us who have memories of kindling the Sabbath Lights,” Barbara Goodman, the committee’s longtime chair reported with delight, “a revival of this beautiful



NFTS Kiddush Card
COURTESY AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

custom means much, and we rejoice in the thought that we, in turn, may be privileged to leave something precious in the minds and hearts of our dear ones."⁴

That NFTS once campaigned to revive women's kindling of Sabbath lights comes as something of a surprise.⁵ Early-twentieth-century Reform Jews, we generally assume, focused not on rituals and ceremonies of this sort, but on social justice and philanthropy. Reform Jewish women, according to most accounts, raised funds for their temples, enhanced synagogue aesthetics, promoted the central institutions of the Reform movement, aided Reform religious schools, and helped the needy. There is hardly any account of their working to revitalize Jewish ritual practices.⁶ Classical Reform Judaism, after all, attached "low importance" to rituals such as candle lighting. In late-nineteenth-century American Reform homes, President Julian Morgenstern of Hebrew Union College (HUC) recalled, "Jewish ceremonialism was cultivated but little, and was even looked upon somewhat askance as a survival from a rather remote and now completely outgrown age." Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch of Chicago, at that time, viewed religious sentiment and symbolism as distractions from what he and many Reform Jews of his day saw as Judaism's core message: social justice.⁷

How then to explain the *kiddush* card?

The women of NFTS, to be sure, did care deeply about social justice. But to a far greater degree than has generally been recognized, they also undertook to revitalize the practice of Judaism, the explicit goal being "to quicken the religious consciousness of Israel."⁸ That goal, written into the NFTS constitution—probably to distinguish NFTS from the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), which by 1913 had abandoned its religious mission⁹—became for two decades the watchword of one of NFTS's most important and energetic standing committees: the National Committee on Religion. Taking upon itself the task of "devising various ways whereby the religious spirit may be deepened,"¹⁰ the committee pursued four overlapping goals: (1) to "introduce religious observances into the home," (2) to "encourage Sabbath observance and synagogue attendance," (3) to "stimulate the religious life of the congregation," and (4) to promote adult Jewish education.¹¹

The dynamo behind the National Committee on Religion was Barbara Solomon Goodman (1868-1948) of Louisville, usually identified in the minutes, following the practice of the time, as "Mrs. Leon Goodman."¹² Daughter of the wealthy German-born merchant Joseph Solomon (1838-1911), who owned a chain of Kentucky country stores, Goodman was a lifelong member of Louisville's Temple Adath Israel, an active community leader, and the sister of prominent local physician Leon L. Solomon. Her husband, Leon Goodman (1863-1908), was a traveling salesman with Laub Bros. trunk manufacturers and died prematurely in a gruesome railroad accident in Texas, leaving her widowed

at age forty. Before then, in 1903, she served as one of the founders and the first president of Adath Israel's temple sisterhood. Her goal, she explained in her inaugural report to Adath Israel members, was not only to promote sociability, but also to "awaken . . . a love and yearning for things spiritual."¹³

Goodman, like so many Americans of her day, believed that women were "deeply interested in things religious," far more so than men. At Adath Israel, and in churches and synagogues throughout the United States, women predominated among those in attendance. The reason for this, her scholarly rabbi, Hyman G. Enelow, explained, was that "the average man of today is absorbed overmuch in the ordinary toil and business of the world to pay much heed to the pursuits of culture and religion." His solution, like that of so many clergy of the time, was "to employ the greater leisure and richer spiritual propensities natural to woman in the work of human betterment and religious progress." "Today and tomorrow," Enelow confidently predicted, "the Jewess is destined to play anew an important part in the life and development of her religion."¹⁴

Goodman seems to have internalized these words. Her commitment to her synagogue, which she attended faithfully, combined with her sisterhood experience in Louisville and the freedom and economic independence that came with widowhood, all merged to make her a prime candidate for national leadership. When NFTS was established in 1913 as the umbrella organization for temple sisterhoods, she was selected to preside over its National Committee on Religion.

Deepening Jewish Religious Consciousness

From her first report to the NFTS's biennial, Goodman defined the work of her committee in terms of a single goal: "devising plans in which the sisterhoods can engage for the general purpose of deepening the Jewish religious consciousness."¹⁵ The term "Jewish religious consciousness" was left vague, but it clearly had much in common with what a later generation (with equal vagueness) would call "Jewish identity." As her championing of the *kiddush* card illustrates, it was the "religious consciousness" of the home that particularly concerned her. Perhaps for this reason, her committee's first great success in a campaign aimed at "Judaizing the homes" ("our most successful single project") was the Jewish art calendar.¹⁶

Introduced for Rosh Hashanah 5674 (1913), the initial NFTS art calendar consisted "of six sheets of heavy paper, each bearing a copy of some famous picture and each in a border especially drawn for this calendar." Both picture and border illustrated the Jewish holidays that fell during each two-month

period, specifically the “Fall Holidays” (Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot), Hanukkah, Purim, Passover, Shavuot, and—somewhat surprisingly, considering Reform Judaism’s discomfort with the day—the Fast of the Ninth of Av (Tisha B’Av). The calendar served, in Goodman’s words, as “an artistic reminder of things Jewish”—most American calendars, after all, did not even list Jewish holidays—and she hoped “to place a calendar in the home of every Sisterhood member.”¹⁷

That did not initially happen: “The first three [calendars],” NFTS President Carrie Simon admitted, “won slow approval.” Once the calendars became better designed and more aesthetically pleasing, however, sales soared. The fourth calendar (5677/1916) “won instant appreciation on the part of the Jewish community,” and for decades afterward the calendar served as something of an NFTS trademark, a winning combination of aesthetics, education, and Jewish symbolism that came to adorn thousands of Reform Jewish homes while augmenting sisterhood treasuries.¹⁸ The Jewish art calendar, in a sense, served as successor to two traditional Jewish products that most Reform Jewish homes had dispensed with: the doorpost *mezuzah*, which inscribed a home as Jewish, and the Hebrew *lu’ah*, which marked time according to Jewish reckoning, listing Hebrew months, Jewish holidays, the weekly Torah portions, the seasons of the moon, and more.¹⁹ With a Jewish art calendar on the wall, a Reform Jewish home, even in the absence of other symbols, proclaimed itself tastefully yet demonstrably Jewish (much as many a Christian home at that time marked itself through symbols and wall decorations as tastefully yet demonstrably Christian²⁰). The calendar was a first step on the road to Goodman’s more audacious goal: to “introduce religious observances into the home.”

In her first report on the work of the National Committee on Religion, Goodman lamented that but nine sisterhoods “report active propaganda for a more widespread home observance of the Jewish holidays.” Undaunted, she urged the NFTS Executive Office to issue “a general communication preceding each holiday explaining the meaning of the holiday and setting forth the ways in which the sisterhood as a body or the individual members might observe the day.”²¹ One sisterhood member even produced a “sisterhood prayer,” to be recited prior to each meeting, seeking God’s help “to realize the importance of bringing religion into our homes.”²² NFTS president Carrie Simon, the wife of a rabbi, heartily endorsed this goal and lyrically defended it in her 1919 presidential address:

It surely is our duty to make our homes the flaming altars where the fires of faith and hope shall warm the hearts of our children, but there can be no fires aglow unless the Jewess has the sense of duty and the fervor in her own heart, and unless she takes her task seriously.²³

Four years later, Rabbi Isaac M. Wise's daughter, Jean (Regina), then known as Mrs. Albert J. May, reinforced these efforts, delivering a long paean to Jewish home life at the NFTS convention. In response to "the Jewish problem in the home," she challenged NFTS women to return to the practices of their own mothers and to "make your homes the stronghold of religious 'TRUTH' and your children its banner bearers."²⁴

Children were most likely to deviate from "religious truth" at Hanukkah time, Barbara Goodman feared. A properly instructed child, she explained to the NFTS Executive Board, "will delight in lighting the Hanukkah candles and will not need the Christmas tree to stimulate his understanding."²⁵ Concern about Jews celebrating Christmas was not new; a counter measure described as a "grand revival of the Jewish national holiday of Chanucka" dated back to 1879.²⁶ But the growing commercialization of Christmas heightened fears of assimilation, especially among the children of American-born parents who belonged to Reform congregations. In response, Goodman sent a circular letter in 1921 to every temple sisterhood recalling the meaning of Hanukkah and warning that "this year, Chanukah eve falls at the same time as a widely celebrated non-Jewish holiday which commemorates an event of an entirely different character." She urged members, among other things, to distribute "a Menorah and candles" to each child in the religious school.²⁷ Three years later, with an explicit warning that Christmas is "*not* a Jewish holiday," she urged women "to kindle the Chanukah candles in your home, to give presents to the children at that time and to make them feel the significance of our own holiday."²⁸ Three years after that, she declared it an "aim" of her committee "to stimulate interest in the observance of Chanukah and to lessen interest in the Christmas festival in Jewish families." To further that aim (and raise much-needed funds), her committee created Hanukkah greeting cards as an alternative to Christmas cards and urged members to exchange them.²⁹ In a report to the National Executive Committee, in 1927, she boasted of success: sisterhoods "responded splendidly" to the Hanukkah cards, selling 11,182 of them, and Hanukkah candles were being lit in more and more homes. (According to a survey of Reform Judaism in large cities conducted in the late 1920s, "Chanukah candles are lit regularly . . . in 40% of our homes."³⁰) "It is," she exclaimed, "with nothing short of delight that the chairman reports the lighting of Chanukah Lights in the homes of many members—women who never dreamed of kindling Chanukah Lights, until the Sisterhoods became active."³¹

In the same report to the National Executive Committee, Goodman likewise boasted of success in her committee's campaign to revitalize home celebrations of Passover. "Many homes have the Seder service," she declared, "and it is a longed for evening in the household." Back in 1917, the National Committee

on Religion had called for a special edition of the Passover *haggadah* "with the object of popularizing the observance of this home festival." The seder, by then, had fallen out of fashion in many Reform Jewish homes. Julian Morgenstern, later the president of HUC, recalled that growing up in western Kansas in the late nineteenth century, he ate matzah on Passover but never once experienced a seder. "At the Passover immediately preceding my ordination as rabbi," he sheepishly admitted, "I attended my first Seder."³² In an effort to bring back the observance of the Passover seder, many temples organized a congregational seder, led by the rabbi. But that did not satisfy Goodman. "We must bring back the beautiful family gatherings," she insisted, "and this Passover celebration is a golden opportunity."³³ The efforts of her committee increased the popularity of the home-based family seder, but only marginally so. Even in large U.S. cities in the late 1920s, a home seder was conducted on Passover in only about one-third of Reform Jewish homes.³⁴

Goodman never tired of speaking out on behalf of home-based rituals, even ones that had long since been abandoned. One year she heaped praise on a temple sisterhood where "the old 'Shalach Monas' is being revived to the extent that food, money and clothing are gathered together [on Purim] for various charities."³⁵ Another year, she talked about building sukkot.³⁶ A third year, she spoke about the spirit of the Sabbath, admonishing that, for a woman, "sewing on the Sabbath Day detracts from her dignity and surely does not command respect for her or for her religion."³⁷ A fourth year she recommended saying "Grace before and after the meal."³⁸ Underlying all of these revivalist efforts was her sense that Jewish continuity depended on home-based rituals. "The religious inspiration which we receive in our youth is the basis on which we build for the future," she wrote in an inspiring circular letter addressed to the chairs of local sisterhood committees on religion. "If the Jewish mother can create a religious atmosphere in her home, her child will instinctively be religious."³⁹ Her friend, NFTS President Stella Freiberg, agreed, quoting approvingly from a revealing poem titled "The Jewish Woman" by Annette Kohn. The poem underscored not only the necessity for home-based Judaism, but also the desire to recover some of the spiritual piety that characterized Jewish women of earlier generations:

I need what the old Jewess had
 In her old life however sad,
 To make it strong and rich and glad
 God and my JEWISH FAITH MUST COME INTO
 MY LIFE—INTO MY HOME.⁴⁰

While Freiberg and Goodman hearkened back to traditional rituals to return the Jewish faith into their homes, other members of NFTS looked to

prayer. Prayer played an important daily role in the home life of many American Christians, they knew, and often their own mothers and grandmothers (“the old Jewess”) had likewise recited daily prayers.⁴¹ Books of private Jewish devotions and supplications (Hebrew *tehinnot*; Yiddish *tshines*) had appeared in Europe as early as the seventeenth century, chiefly for recitation by women. In 1855 Fanny Neuda published in German an immensely popular volume of Jewish women’s prayers titled *Stunden der Andacht (Hours of Devotion)*. Translated into English and published in America in 1866 under the title *Hours of Devotion. A Book of Prayers and Meditations for the Use of the Daughters of Israel, During Public Service and at Home, For All Conditions of Woman’s Life*, it included daily, Sabbath, and festival prayers; prayers for children, for the sick, and for the dead; as well as “prayers for maidens” and “prayers for married women.” The book went through at least five editions. Another volume, produced by a man but directed for “our females especially,” likewise proved popular. Titled *Imre Lev: Meditations and Prayers for Every Situation and Occasion in Life* (1864), it billed itself as a prayer book companion, rather than a woman’s prayer book, but also included many prayers explicitly written for women, such as a “Prayer for an Unhappy Wife” and “A Mother’s Prayer in behalf of her Sick Child.”⁴²

Neither of these pious nineteenth-century volumes met the spiritual requirements of enlightened twentieth-century Reform Jewish women, but the need for a woman’s prayer book was nevertheless sorely felt.⁴³ So, in 1919, an NFTS committee led by Hattie Wiesenfeld approached the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) with an “earnest plea” that it “prepare a book containing a series of biblical readings, one for every day of the year, these readings to make for hope, cheer, strength and confidence; these readings always to end with a prayer expressive of the best thought of the synagogue liturgy.” A committee headed by Wiesenfeld’s “dear friend” Rabbi Henry Berkowitz took up this challenge with alacrity. It promised to produce a “book of prayers and meditations”—the same two words that characterized the nineteenth-century volumes—but stipulated “that the book should aim to meet the religious needs of men no less than of women.” It may have had in mind the example of Rabbi Gustav Gottheil’s *Sun and Shield: A Book of Devout Thoughts for Every-Day Use* (1896), which was commercially published and aimed at readers of both sexes, as well as non-Jewish readers.⁴⁴ Whatever the case, Berkowitz soon took ill and abandoned the project. The task was then handed off to a twenty-eight-year-old instructor at HUC named Solomon Freehof, later one of the Reform movement’s greatest rabbis and scholars. At the time, he taught liturgy and was writing a doctoral dissertation dealing with “Private Prayers in the Talmud.”⁴⁵

Freehof, deeply engaged in his own teaching and research, might understandably have carried over his task, but Wiesenfeld, who had become president of NFTS, was determined. "I have written endlessly. I have written more letters about the Prayer Book than about almost anything else in the last two years of my presidency," she confessed.⁴⁶ She reported to the Executive Board that "requests and demands for this book increase steadily; our women need it for their own use and we need it to offset growing indifference, and . . . infidelity."⁴⁷ In the face of such pressure, the CCAR decided in 1922 to publish the material it had on hand—some fifty meditations and prayers—"for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not it will meet the needs of the Sisterhoods." Freehof's committee promised "to go ahead with the preparation of a larger book of the same character" if the first book proved successful.⁴⁸

It did not. Indeed, for a volume commissioned by temple sisterhoods and composed to meet their needs, *Blessing and Praise: A Book of Meditations and Prayers for Individual and Home Devotion* (1923) was astonishingly tone deaf. Not only did it fail to make any reference whatsoever to the role of NFTS in commissioning and distributing the book, it also made no reference at all to women! It included no prayers written *by* women and no prayers written explicitly *for* women. To be sure, the preface characterized the volume as part of the literature of *tehinnot*, but it neither explained the relationship of that literature to women nor did it include the kinds of supplications that made previous *tehinnot* (like Neuda's volume) appealing to them.⁴⁹ NFTS still attempted to put a good face on the volume—"Blessing and Praise is primarily a book for home devotion and its chief purpose is to reawaken the service of the heart in the mothers of Israel"⁵⁰—but between the lines the women's disappointment was palpable. "The volume was published at the request of the Sisterhoods," Barbara Goodman wrote morosely, "and I feel that it our duty to dispose of it." Though she promised that the "little book" would "bring comfort and solace to every one who reads it," NFTS women were undecieved.⁵¹ The volume died on the shelf.

In retrospect, the failure of *Blessing and Praise* illuminates broader tensions between the women of the National Committee on Religion and the all-male Reform rabbinate of the day. The women, in an era before Jewish learning was available to them, knew that they could not produce the volume that they wanted on their own. So they needed to "earnestly plea" with rabbis to produce it, and they then needed to pester them to get the job done. The men, for their part, patronized the women but had no real appreciation of their spiritual needs. They instead pursued their own vision as to how the work should proceed and apparently considered it beneath their dignity to consult with their female sponsors at all; the sisterhoods only saw *Blessing and Praise* after it was already in print. With so little communication between the men

and the women, their “separate spheres” relationship—men as producers of the book, women as consumers—was foredoomed. As a result, the National Committee on Religion mostly focused on tasks that women could accomplish on their own.

The most important of these tasks, Goodman believed, was to encourage women to come to temple. At Louisville’s Adath Israel, she began campaigning as early as 1904 for women to come to the congregation “at least once a week” for “a pleasant and instructive hour at divine service.”⁵² Her very first report of the National Committee on Religion, in 1915, mentioned “the task of increasing the synagog attendance.” Two years later, at her suggestion, NFTS President Carrie Simon urged that “all our energies should be concentrated” on this goal.⁵³ Thirteen years after that, in 1930, when she came to deliver what turned out to be her last report, Goodman was still focused on the same objective, proposing that NFTS adopt the slogan, “Once a week to Temple if humanly possible.”⁵⁴

Along the way, Goodman offered a host of suggestions. In 1916, she lamented that only “a woefully small percentage of young men” belonged to congregations (“due first to the lack of interest and secondly to the unwillingness of the younger men to pay even the minimum rates”) and suggested that to encourage their attendance—which, she reasonably believed, would impact on the attendance of young women—congregations should charge the young men only a “very small fee,” so as to foster their “manliness and sense of responsibility.”⁵⁵ In 1917, she noted that some sisterhoods took attendance at services and endeavored “to telephone to all absentees and urge upon them a more regular attendance.”⁵⁶ A year later, she urged the “ladies of the Sisterhood” to create “a warm spirit of cordiality” to make their temples more inviting. She encouraged them to set a personal example through “the exchange of ‘Gut Shabbes’ greetings and pleasant conversation.”⁵⁷ At other times, she promoted a “social hour after Friday evening services” and even “the placing of cards of invitation to divine services in the boxes of strangers at hotels.”⁵⁸ The ever-optimistic Goodman always professed to see progress being made in her lifelong campaign, but in 1929 one delegate to the NFTS biennial was doubtful. “Everything ha[s] been offered as an inducement [to congregational attendance] except these wonderful California prunes,” she opined, and questioned whether “artificial rewards” would solve the problem.⁵⁹

Creation of the Sisterhood Service

Goodman’s most daring and significant effort to promote women’s synagogue attendance was the “Sisterhood Sabbath,” an innovation whose impact proved

far more radical than she could possibly have envisaged. It first found mention in 1916, when Goodman matter-of-factly reported that "one Sisterhood secured the consent of the rabbi and congregation to set aside one Sabbath in the year as 'Sisterhood Sabbath,' and requested a special sermon for that day."⁶⁰ On 27 October 1922, she sent out a circular letter announcing that the project had grown into a national sisterhood initiative:

Last year at the Executive Board meeting in Indianapolis the following resolution was passed: It was moved and carried that the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods recommend to all congregations the advisability of establishing a national Sisterhood Sabbath in November.

It has always seemed to me that *every* Sabbath should be a Sisterhood Sabbath and that each Sisterhood member should feel it incumbent upon herself to attend services regularly. Temple going is an excellent habit to acquire, and like all good habits, it grows upon one.

It was thought, however, that a special Sisterhood Sabbath should be established, and that on that day the members of the Sisterhood should ask for the cooperation of the Rabbi in bringing before the congregation some knowledge of the work and activities of the organization. Furthermore, it was hoped that wherever and whenever possible on this particular day a woman should deliver a message to the congregation.

I already had reports that several of these Sisterhood Sabbaths are being planned. I hope that you will be able to observe this Sabbath in your community and that by its observance you will be able to bring home to the members of your Sisterhood the importance of regular attendance at every Sabbath service.⁶¹

While Sisterhood Sabbath began as an attempt to promote synagogue attendance, bring publicity to the work of the sisterhood, and create an opportunity for women to speak before the congregation, it soon took on a life of its own. Within a year, Goodman reported that "in some Temples the women occupy the pulpit during part of the service."⁶² Within two years, "in many communities the women conducted the entire service and delivered inspiring messages."⁶³ Within four years, the service had been renamed "Sisterhood Service" ("inasmuch as it is the aim of the National Committee on Religion to make every Sabbath 'Sisterhood Sabbath'") and was devoted "to the special place of women in religion and more especially to the place of the Sisterhood in Congregational life." According to Goodman, in 1926, eighty-nine Reform congregations conducted Sisterhood Services; these fell into one of three formats, reflecting a growing dispute in Reform circles as to the appropriate role of women in congregational life:

Sometimes the Rabbi conducts the Service as usual, choosing for the subject of his sermon, some phase of Judaism which appeals directly to the women, or he may speak specifically on the importance of Sisterhood work. In other cases the entire Service is conducted by the Sisterhood members themselves, even to the giving of a sermon. And in still other places, the Sisterhood members read the Service and the Rabbi delivers the sermon.⁶⁴

The dispute over how women should participate in the Sisterhood Service took place against the background of new roles for women across the United States. In 1920, women's suffrage became the law of the land with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Several Christian churches in the 1920s debated women's ordination and preaching. In 1922, twelve-year-old Judith Kaplan, daughter of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, became America's first bat mitzvah. Most important, for Reform Jewish women, HUC in Cincinnati spent two years debating whether it might ordain a student, Martha Neumark (daughter of faculty member David Neumark), as the Reform movement's first woman rabbi. Carrie Simon and other NFTS leaders supported Neumark, but in 1923 HUC's Board of Governors denied her bid, voting that "no change should be made in the present practice of limiting to males the right to matriculate for the purpose of entering the rabbinate."⁶⁵

In the face of all of these developments, the growth of the Sisterhood Service took on new significance. It not only recalled the important role that women played in Judaism; it also, at least in some congregations, provided annual testimony to women's religious competence, displaying how well they could, on their own, conduct services and deliver sermons. Barbara Goodman herself acknowledged the quiet subversiveness of what she had originally established mainly to encourage women to come to temple on the Sabbath. "The Sisterhood Service in November," she wrote in 1930, "is often a revelation of what the women may do if they ever enter the rabbinate."⁶⁶

New Religious Initiatives

Beyond Sisterhood Services, the National Committee on Religion sought to stimulate the religious life of Reform congregations in myriad ways. Some entailed work that women had engaged in for generations, such as raising funds to defray synagogue expenses, improving and beautifying the synagogue, supplying altar decorations and flowers, caring for cemeteries, arranging entertainments, organizing bazaars, and preparing collations.⁶⁷ In its annual reports, the committee devoted minimal space to these traditional women's activities, perhaps because it took them for granted. At the local level, however,

these forms of "service" constituted the principal religious work of women. It allowed them to contribute in their own distinctive way, and in a "different voice," to the religious life of the synagogue and to the Jewish community as a whole.⁶⁸

The focus of the National Committee on Religion turned to bolder initiatives, including some that influenced the character of the worship service itself. Most significantly, Goodman urged sisterhoods "to co-operate with the rabbis in introducing congregational singing at the public services."⁶⁹ Decades earlier, many American synagogues had virtually abandoned communal singing, believing that enlightened Jews sought more solemn, decorous, and awe-inspiring services, on the model of liberal Protestant worship. Favored traditional tunes gave way to choral music, performed by a trained choir for congregants who listened in silence. In the early twentieth century, the call rang out (especially among women) to restore congregational singing so as to counter what had become a passive, performance-oriented worship experience.⁷⁰ Participatory worship and song, leaders like Goodman believed, would lure Jews back to the synagogue. By 1917, she reported happily that "many sisterhoods" were helping "to familiarize their members with Jewish hymns and traditional melodies."⁷¹

Carrie Simon enthusiastically hoped that some of these women would go on to "write new hymns and songs for the Temple Hymnal of the future."⁷² But Hattie Wiesenfeld, Simon's successor as NFTS president, demurred. She preferred that "traditional music" be sung in the sanctuary, on the argument (well known to Sephardic Jews of an earlier era) that if the same hymns were sung everywhere, "We shall have gone a step further in making Jews feel at home in any and every temple." Even then, she appeared dubious of the chances for success: "We Jews," she grouched, "seem to be afraid of the sound of our own voices."⁷³ Goodman, by contrast, fixed her eyes on the goal and refused to give up. Eleven years later, in 1928, she was still speaking out on the issue, calling on congregations to appoint song leaders "who will inspire us and teach us to sing our beautiful Hymns in order that we may become a Singing Congregation—a Singing People."⁷⁴

Just as Goodman wanted congregants to sing together, so she sought to advance other initiatives aimed at smoothing away differences among congregants, particularly class differences. Like many religious-minded progressives of her day, she sought to democratize the house of worship, blunting the more evident differences between rich and poor. Early in her tenure, she lashed out at ostentatious confirmation parties that, in some circles, had come to resemble high-society debutante balls. "Let us insist on simplicity in everything pertaining to the day," she declared.⁷⁵ Urging women to eschew fancy home receptions, glamorous clothing, and elaborate gift-giving in honor of

their children's confirmation, she called for less conspicuous consumption and more "spiritual responsibility." Confirmation, she felt, should be a "democratic institution" with all receptions held in the temple.⁷⁶ Fearing renewed extravagance during the Roaring Twenties, she reminded women as late as 1927 "to encourage confirmation and to discourage the promiscuous gift-giving and extravagant dress of former days."⁷⁷

In a similar bid to "bring democracy into our Synagogue," Goodman came to advocate free, unassigned pews. Until the twentieth century, most American synagogues (as well as churches) had sold, rented or assigned pews to their members; the wealthiest members tended to get the best seats. Progressive rabbis, influenced by the tenets of prophetic Judaism (parallel to the Protestant Social Gospel) as well as the Progressive Movement in American politics, came down in opposition to this system. "In God's house," Rabbi Leo Franklin of Temple Beth El in Detroit proclaimed in 1904, "all must be equal. There must be no aristocracy and no snobocracy."⁷⁸ Fifteen years later, the National Committee on Religion added its weight to this cause, demanding the "Free Pew in Every Synagogue." For "far too long," Goodman confessed, "have we encouraged the rich man's front row and the poor man's corner." She urged sisterhoods to continue to spread the message of synagogue democracy throughout the country "till the designation 'Free Pew' is taken for granted." Within a generation, thanks in part to these efforts, that battle was won. Free pews became normative in American synagogues, except on the High Holidays.⁷⁹

Strengthening Women's Role in the Synagogue

Gender equality, of course, took longer to achieve, but in its own way the National Committee on Religion also worked to advance women within the world of the Reform synagogue. In 1919, for example, it urged sisterhoods to conduct summer services in the synagogue while the rabbi was away on vacation. "No letter has ever been set out by the Committee on Religion that brought as many responses to the Chairman," Goodman disclosed. She credited the "lively interest" that these women-led services created for stimulating "a very large summer attendance." But she likely understood that these summer services, like the Sisterhood Sabbath that she had pioneered, also expanded the possibilities open to women and paved the way for more.⁸⁰

Indeed, the National Committee on Religion took pride in the advances made by Reform Jewish women throughout the 1920s. It noted, in 1922, that in some communities men had accorded women "representation on the Temple Board, an innovation in women's religious duties."⁸¹ It cheered year by year

as those numbers increased. In 1925, Goodman told the story of how "on an unusually bad day," one of the male trustees honored with a seat on the pulpit during the reading of the Torah did not turn up. "A woman member of the Board, who was in the congregation, was asked to take his place. . .," she revealed, "and those who did not know the circumstances, took the incident as a matter of course." That same year, she disclosed the "radical" news that four women participated in the Torah service on Yom Kippur at Rockdale Temple in Cincinnati ("a most inspiring innovation on this most holy of days").⁸² Five years after that, also at Rockdale, two women "read portions of the Hap Torah [sic] . . . on Yom Kippur."⁸³ Goodman took a great deal of satisfaction in chronicling these advances, even if, in retrospect, she exaggerated their significance. "From her seat in the gallery where [a] woman was permitted to watch the men participate in the service, but not to take an active part," she gushed on one occasion, "she has found her place in all the activities of the synagog."⁸⁴

Occasionally, as time went on, those activities came to include formal study. Promotion of adult Jewish education formed part of the mandate of the National Committee on Religion, but for years it was not a priority. "We have done nothing in the creation of Study Circles," Carrie Simon admitted in 1917.⁸⁵ "It is true that some of the Sisterhoods invite their rabbis to conduct classes for them, and in other Sisterhoods the rabbis give monthly talks on Jewish current themes. But in addition to this," she exhorted, "we ought to emphasize the value of smaller groups of women meeting for study among themselves." That, by and large, did not happen, nor did most sisterhoods take advantage of the lecture bureau that NFTS established. Perhaps, as Simon suggested, the problem lay with the National Committee on Religion, which already shouldered "too heavy a burden." More likely, though, the women themselves were uninterested in formal study. The National Council of Jewish Women, as we have seen in Pamela Nadell's article in this volume, had already shifted its focus away from Jewish education. Meanwhile, those women most focused on improving their Jewish education more likely joined Hadassah.

Bible classes nevertheless became a common sisterhood activity as the years went on, especially following the publication of the Jewish Publication Society's new translation of the Bible in 1917. As a result, the National Committee on Religion recommended that NFTS conduct "an active campaign in the interest of Bible Study on the part of its members."⁸⁶ Rabbis agreed to teach the Bible classes, and some were held at night so that men and women might participate together. By 1922, Goodman was "looking forward to the day when the Jews will not only be known as the 'People of the Book' but the 'People who know and love the Book.'"⁸⁷ Yet, while over one hundred sisterhoods (out of more than three hundred) reported the organization of Bible classes in 1924,

only fifty-six of those classes still met two years later. Goodman soldiered on, trumpeting the slogan "a Bible class for every Sisterhood."⁸⁸ She urged men and women alike to "value 'Adult Education in Judaism,' in order to prepare ourselves for the education of our children."⁸⁹ Likely influenced by the Reform movement's new director of education, Emanuel Gamoran, she even called for the "*Study of Hebrew*."⁹⁰ But time and again, success eluded her. "All the Bible study classes are very poorly attended," an NFTS leader disclosed in 1929. "The rabbis can't seem to get the women to come."⁹¹ Goodman herself confessed that some women were "discouraged with their efforts" and exhorted them toward "a renewal of interest."⁹²

NFTS Reinterprets its Religious Mission

In 1930, at age 62, Goodman penned her last report as chair of the National Committee on Religion. She had held the position "ever since the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods came into existence," and it was time to make way for a younger generation. A few months later, at the ninth biennial, which she missed, "the cause and the cure of the laxity of our youth in religion" was a major theme. One of the participants, to the consternation of her peers, questioned an assumption that had long been central to the National Committee on Religion: Why, she wondered, should a woman be barred from the NFTS Executive Board just "because she does not happen to be interested in the religious services which are going on at her particular temple"? Another dissident chimed in that "one of the reasons why a lot of people, whether married or unmarried, don't come to temple is because the synagogue is not concerning itself sufficiently with the very vital thing[s] of today."⁹³

The National Committee on Religion, now headed by Mabel Cohn Hartman of Nashville, pointed out, as if in reply, that its work closely adhered to the original objective set forth in the NFTS constitution: "To quicken the religious consciousness of Israel, by stimulating spiritual and educational activity."⁹⁴ But, in 1933, with the country in economic collapse and NFTS under the management of a forty-four-year-old president, Martha Levy Steinfeld, and a twenty-six-year-old executive director, Jane Evans, change was in the air. As part of a wide-ranging reorganization of NFTS, Steinfeld recommended the merger of the National Committee on Religion with the National Committee on Sisterhood Extension.⁹⁵

A rare floor fight saw some women seek to thwart that merger, apparently fearing that the work of organizing new sisterhoods would divert attention from the National Committee on Religion's extensive previous agenda.⁹⁶ But

the merger came to pass. Subsequently, just as opponents had feared, the new committee focused almost entirely on the necessary work of signing up new affiliates.⁹⁷ Innovative efforts to promote home-based rituals and meaningful personal prayers, exhortations to observe the Sabbath and to “come to temple once a week if humanly possible,” campaigns to revive communal singing and to promote synagogue democracy, prideful accounts of women’s achievement in the religious sphere, details concerning Bible study classes, and, of course, announcements about the *kiddush* card—all immediately vanished from the committee’s annual reports. This is not to say that local chapters likewise abandoned these activities. Sisterhood Services, in particular, remained popular. But at the national level, NFTS reinterpreted its religious mission to focus less on religious ritual and going to temple, and more on social justice and the “vital things of today.”

Even as it ended, however, the National Committee on Religion’s twenty-year effort “to quicken the religious consciousness of Israel” remains significant, for it reflects an oft-overlooked revivalist strand in early-twentieth-century Reform Judaism that ran counter to the dominant tendencies of Reform Judaism of that time. Women like Barbara Goodman—children of central European immigrants seeking to recover elements of Jewish life that they or their parents had previously discarded—came to believe that the future of the Jewish religion rested on their own shoulders. They worked tirelessly—viewing themselves as (and on at least one occasion calling themselves) “missionaries”⁹⁸—to re-Judaize homes, repopulate synagogues, and rekindle Jewish spirituality. Many of their initiatives failed; some were downright quixotic. But some of them—such as the Jewish art calendar, Friday-night candle lighting, the revitalization of Hanukkah lights, the revival of the Passover seder, the renewed focus on synagogue singing, the creation of the Sisterhood Service, and the celebration of women’s achievement in the religious realm—achieved long-lasting success. Moreover, the very fact that NFTS maintained a National Committee on Religion made a statement concerning the importance of religion to women and Reform Jews. That statement, internalized by daughters and granddaughters, would ultimately transform Reform Jewish life.

Notes

- 1 A copy of the card is found in Women of Reform Judaism Records (MS-73), box E-3, folder 1, AJA.
- 2 *The Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship*, Revised Edition (Cincinnati: Bloch Publishing, 1918), Part I, 345–348.
- 3 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1929), 44, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA.
- 4 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1930), 33, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 3, AJA. The NFTS card also diverged from the *Union Prayer Book* in recommending the full recitation of Proverbs 31:10–31, the “Woman of Valor,” and not just selected verses; in adding the traditional blessing (in Hebrew, transliteration, and English) for the sanctification of the Sabbath; in deleting the instruction that the Sabbath bread be dipped in salt; and in abandoning the parental blessing of children. For an earlier effort to strengthen Sabbath home observances, see Joseph Krauskopf, *Kiddush: The Consecration of the Sabbath Eve at the Family Table* (Philadelphia: Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, 1907).
- 5 It calls to mind the Sabbath candle-lighting campaign initiated by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, in the wake of the Six-Day-War; see Sue Fishkoff, *The Rebbe's Army: Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch* (New York: Schocken, 2003), 46–65; Samuel Heilman and Menachem Friedman, *The Rebbe: The Life and Afterlife of Menachem Mendel Schneerson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 169–170.
- 6 Karla Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding A Place for Women in American Judaism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 208; Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of The Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 285–286; “National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods,” in *Jewish American Voluntary Organizations*, ed. Michael N. Dobkowski (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 343–345. By contrast, the following do appreciate the religious role of NFTS and anticipate some of my findings: Pamela S. Nadell, “National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods,” in *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore (New York: Routledge, 1997), 979–982; and Pamela S. Nadell and Rita J. Simon, “Ladies of the Sisterhood: Women in the American Reform Synagogue 1900–1930,” in *Active Voices: Women in Jewish Culture*, ed. Maurie Sacks (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 63–75.
- 7 Michael A. Meyer and W. Gunther Plaut, *The Reform Judaism Reader: North American Documents* (New York: UAHC Press, 2001), 176; Julian Morgenstern, “Spiritual Autobiography,” in *Thirteen Americans: Their Spiritual Autobiographies*, ed. Louis Finkelstein (New York: Harper & Bros., 1953), 255; Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 275. Other rabbis, such as Kaufmann Kohler, sought in different ways to restore rituals to Reform Jewish homes, and they may well have influenced the members of the National Committee on Religion.
- 8 NFTS Constitution, First General Convention (1913), 24, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 9 The National Council of Jewish Women appointed a “National Committee on Religion” in April 1894 to “perfect plans for study and for the consideration of religious topics at general meetings.” Religion proved divisive, however, so in the early twentieth century, NCJW abandoned its religious mission and focused on philanthropy. See *Proceedings of the First Convention of the National Council of Jewish Women* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1897), 184–199; Faith Rogow, *Gone To Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women 1893–1993* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), esp. 115; Sue

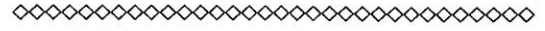
- Levi Elwell, "The Founding and Early Programs of the National Council of Jewish Women: Study and Practice as Jewish Women's Religious Expression," doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1982; Jacob Rader Marcus, ed., *The American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History* (New York and Cincinnati: Ktav/American Jewish Archives, 1981), 664. See Pamela S. Nadell's article in this volume.
- 10 Letter from National Committee on Religion to Every Local Chairman, Committee on Religion (14 December 1915), MS-73, box E-3, folder 1, AJA.
 - 11 Report of the National Committee on Religion, First Biennial Meeting (1915), 60, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA; Article 15 of NFTS by-laws as published in Twenty-first Annual Report (1934), 76, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 3, AJA.
 - 12 With the much-appreciated assistance of Mr. Lev Rooks-Rapport of Louisville, I have pieced together the following biographical details from the *Louisville Courier Journal*, 26 June 1908, 8; 8 February 1948, sec. 2, 12; and the *Shelby Record*, 27 January 1911. <http://boards.ancestry.com/localities.northam.usa.states.kentucky.counties.shelby/6177/mb.ashx> (accessed 16 November 2012). The Goodman gravestones are online at <http://www.meyerfuneral.com/cemetery/The%20Temple/stones/A6,10,5/Goodman,%20Leon%201908.jpg> (accessed 16 November 2012).
 - 13 *Year Book of the Adath Israel Sisterhood 1903-1904* (Louisville, 1904), 3, Adath Israel Archives, Louisville, KY.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, 1,4. On Enelow, see Felix A. Levy, "Hyman Gerson Enelow—A Biographical Sketch," *Selected Works of Hyman G. Enelow* (4 volumes, Kingsport, TN: Kingsport Press, 1935), I, 1-49, esp. 11; and, for his views on women, Hyman G. Enelow, "The Synagogue and Woman," *ibid.*, III, 10-26. For more on the centrality of women in American Judaism and in American religion generally, see Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery*, esp. 172-199; Jonathan D. Sarna, *A Great Awakening: The Transformation that Shaped Twentieth Century American Judaism and its Implications for Today* (New York: CIJE, 1995), 18-26; Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna, eds., *Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2001); and Ann Braude, "Women's History Is American Religious History," in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas A. Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 87-107. For the situation in nineteenth-century Germany, see Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 64-84.
 - 15 First Biennial Meeting (1915), 60, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
 - 16 *Ibid.*
 - 17 *Ibid.*, 60-61; Proceedings of the Executive Board (16-18 January 1917), 13, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
 - 18 Second Biennial Meeting (16 January 1917), 25, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA. For more on the Jewish art calendar, see Joellyn Wallen Zollman's article in this volume.
 - 19 Elisheva Carlebach, *Palaces of Time: Jewish Calendar and Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011). According to *Reform Judaism in the Large Cities: A Survey* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1931), 13, 75, only 40 percent of Reform Jewish homes had a mezuzah "on display or affixed to the door."
 - 20 See Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).
 - 21 Report of the National Committee on Religion, First Biennial Meeting (1915), 60-61, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
 - 22 "Sisterhood Prayer" (1917), MS-73, box E-3, folder 1, AJA. The resolution that this be adopted as the official "sisterhood prayer" and be recited prior to every

- meeting was voted down; see Second Biennial Meeting (18 January 1917), 55–56, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA. While no reason was given, later prayers focus less on the home and more on the synagogue, the sisterhood, the particular gathering, and service to the Jewish people.
- 23 Third Biennial Meeting (20 May 1919), 32, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
 - 24 Fifth Biennial Assembly (1923), 125–129, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
 - 25 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1920), MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
 - 26 Jonathan D. Sarna, "Is Judaism Compatible with American Civil Religion? The Problem of Christmas and the 'National Faith,'" in *Religion and the Life of the Nation*, ed. Rowland A. Sherrill (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 162.
 - 27 Circular letter from Mrs. Leon Goodman (6 December 1921), MS-73, box E-3, folder 1, AJA.
 - 28 Circular letter from Mrs. Leon Goodman (3 December 1924), MS-73, box E-3, folder 1, AJA.
 - 29 Circular letter from Mrs. Leon Goodman (19 October 1927), MS-73, box E-3, folder 1, AJA.
 - 30 *Reform Judaism in the Large Cities*, 15.
 - 31 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1927), 36, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA.
 - 32 Morgenstern, "Spiritual Autobiography," 255.
 - 33 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1922), 64, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
 - 34 *Reform Judaism in the Large Cities*, 15.
 - 35 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1920), 58, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
 - 36 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1921), 23, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA.
 - 37 Circular letter from Mrs. Leon Goodman (15 June 1923), MS-73, box E-3, folder 1, AJA.
 - 38 Report of the National Committee on Religion (17 January 1927), 161, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA. Three years earlier, Kaufmann Kohler had asked the Jewish mother to "again teach her child to recite its morning and evening prayer and say the grace at every meal," and Goodman may have been influenced by this request. See Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery*, 169.
 - 39 Circular letter from Mrs. Leon Goodman (2 September 1925), MS-73, box E-3, folder 1, AJA.
 - 40 President's Message (31 October 1928), 101, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA.
 - 41 McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America*, 77–91; Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).
 - 42 Fanny Neuda, *Hours of Devotion*, trans. M. Mayer (New York: L.H. Frank, 1866); Jonas Ennery, *Imre Lev: Meditations and Prayers for Every Situation & Occasion in Life*, trans. Hester Rothschild; revised by Isaac Leeser (New York: Bloch, 1910 [1864]), esp. p. v. For a more literal translation of Neuda, see *Hours of Devotion: Fanny Neuda's Book of Prayers for Jewish Women*, ed. Dinah Berland (New York: Schocken Book, 2007).
 - 43 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1919), 22, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA. The survey of Reform Judaism found that 22 percent of Reform Jews engaged in private recitation of prayers; 40 percent made a practice of having children say bed-time prayers; *Reform Judaism in the Large Cities*, 14–15.

- 44 For a survey of what Gottheil called "aids to devotional self-exercise" (Gustav Gottheil, *Sun and Shield* [New York: Brentano's, 1896], ii), see Eric L. Friedland, "Meditation in Progressive Judaism," in *Platforms and Prayer Books: Theological and Liturgical Perspectives on Reform Judaism*, ed. Dana Evan Kaplan (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 129-154.
- 45 *Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* 30 (1920): 79-80; 31 (1921): 45-46; Transcript of the Proceedings of the Fourth Biennial Assembly (1921), 25-29, MS-73, box B-1, folder 1, AJA; Joan S. Friedman, "The Making of a Reform Rabbi: Solomon B. Freehof from Childhood to HUC," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 58 (2006): 34.
- 46 Transcript of the Proceedings of the Fourth Biennial Assembly (1921), 27, MS-73, box B-1, folder 1, AJA.
- 47 Report of the President (7 January 1922), 17, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 48 *Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* 33 (1923): 47-48; cf. 32 (1922): 38-39.
- 49 *Blessing and Praise: A Book of Meditations and Prayers for Individual and Home Devotions* (Cincinnati: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1923), esp. 8. Remarkably, Freehof published a path-breaking study of the *tehinnot* literature in the very year that *Blessing and Praise* appeared: Solomon B. Freehof, "Devotional Literature in the Vernacular," *Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* 33 (1923): 375-415.
- 50 Sixth Biennial Assembly (22 January 1925), 156, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA.
- 51 Circular letter from Mrs. Leon Goodman (2 September 1925), MS-73, box E-3, folder 1, AJA.
- 52 *Year Book of the Adath Israel Sisterhood 1903-1904*, 4.
- 53 Report of the National Committee on Religion, First Biennial Meeting (1915), 60, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA; President's Annual Message (16 January 1917), Second Biennial Meeting, 26, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 54 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1930), 33, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 3, AJA.
- 55 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1916), 46, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 56 Report of the National Committee on Religion (1 November 1917), 19, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 57 Report of the National Committee on Religion (1 November 1918), 45, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 58 Report of the National Committee on Religion (25 January 1923), 151, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 59 Transcript of the Proceedings of the Eighth Biennial Assembly, 39, MS-73, box B-1, folder 3, AJA.
- 60 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1916), 45, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 61 Circular letter from (Mrs. Leon) Barbara L. Goodman (27 October 1922), MS-73, box E-3, folder 1, AJA. The subsequent claim that "this idea was originated in 1923 by Mrs. Leon Goodman of Louisville" is erroneous; see Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1931), 42, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 3, AJA.
- 62 Circular letter from Mrs. Leon Goodman (26 October 1923), MS-73, box E-3, folder 1, AJA.
- 63 Circular letter from Mrs. Leon Goodman (17 October 1924), MS-73, box E-3, folder 1, AJA.
- 64 Circular letter from Mrs. Leon Goodman (15 October 1926), MS-73, box E-3, folder 1, AJA; Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1926),

- 85, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA. For accounts of local Sisterhood Services, see Deborah Levine Lefton, "Women's Equality in the Synagogue: The National Federation of Temple Sisterhood's Search for Autonomy 1913-1930," rabbinical thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, 2001, 80-88.
- 65 Pamela S. Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination 1889-1985* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 61-72 (quote on 71).
- 66 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1930), 33, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 3, AJA.
- 67 For examples, see Report of the National Committee on Religion, Proceedings of the First Biennial Meeting (1915), 60, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA; Report of the National Committee on Religion, Proceedings of the Third Biennial Meeting (1919), 45, MS-73, box A-1, vol.1, AJA; Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1920), 58, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 68 Recent histories of Reform congregations shed light on sisterhood activities; see for example, Peter Eisenstadt, *Affirming the Covenant: A History of Temple B'rith Kodesh Rochester, New York, 1848-1998* (Rochester: Temple B'rith Kodesh, 1999) and Meghan Dwyer-Ryan et al., *Becoming American Jews: Temple Israel of Boston* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2009). On the distinctive religious activities of women, see Susan Starr Sered, *Women as Ritual Experts: The Religious Lives of Elderly Jewish Women in Jerusalem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), esp. 87-102 and Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
- 69 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1916), 45, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 70 See Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Question of Music in American Judaism: Reflections at 350 Years," *American Jewish History* 91 (July 2003): 195-203.
- 71 Report of the National Committee on Religion (1 November 1917), 20, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 72 The President's Annual Message (16 January 1917), 26, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 73 Report of the President (7 January 1922), 17, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 74 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1928), 26, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA. In the 1950s, Reform Jewish camps did appoint song leaders, and much as Goodman had predicted, they did, over time, transform Reform Jewish worship; see Judah M. Cohen, "Singing Out for Judaism: A History of Song Leaders and Song Leading at Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute," in *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*, ed. Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 173-208.
- 75 Report of the National Committee on Religion, First Biennial Meeting (1915), 61; Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1916), 46, all located in MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 76 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1920), 58, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA; circular letter from Mrs. Leon Goodman (25 April 1922), MS-73, box E-3, folder 1, AJA.
- 77 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1927), 36, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA.
- 78 Jonathan D. Sarna, "Seating and the American Synagogue," in *Belief and Behavior: Essays in the New Religious History*, ed. Philip R. Vandermeer and Robert P. Swierenga (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 189-206.
- 79 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1919), 20; Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1920), 59; both in MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA; Sarna, "Seating and the American Synagogue," 200.

- 80 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1920), 58, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA. It was just about this time that Martha Neumark, at age sixteen, first led services on a summer Friday night at a Michigan resort and was transformed by the experience, shaping her decision to seek the rabbinate; see Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis*, 63.
- 81 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1922), 63, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 82 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1925), 20, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA.
- 83 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1930), 34, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 3, AJA.
- 84 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1924), 75, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA.
- 85 Quotations in this paragraph are from The President's Annual Message, Second Biennial Meeting (1917), 26-27, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 86 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1919), 20, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA. On the JPS translation and its impact, see Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture 1888-1988* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 95-116.
- 87 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1922), 63, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 1, AJA.
- 88 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1924), 74; Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1926), 88; Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1927), 36; all in MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA.
- 89 Report of the National Committee on Religion, Sixteenth Annual Report (1928), 26, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA.
- 90 Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1927), 36, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA; on Gamoran, see Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 251-252 and Jonathan B. Krasner, *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011).
- 91 Transcript of the Proceedings of the Eighth Biennial Assembly (1929), 41, MS-73, box B-1, folder 3, AJA.
- 92 Seventeenth Annual Report (1929), 50, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA. For a more positive evaluation of NFTS educational activities, see Lefton, "Women's Equality in the Synagogue," 59-70.
- 93 Transcript of the Proceedings of the Ninth Biennial Assembly (1931), 148, 158, 160, MS-73, box B-1, AJA.
- 94 Report of the National Committee on Religion, Nineteenth Annual Report (1932), 42, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 3, AJA.
- 95 Tenth Biennial Assembly (1933), 109, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 3, AJA.
- 96 Twenty-First Annual Report (1934), 76, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 3, AJA.
- 97 Report of the National Committee on Religious Extension (31 October 1933), 55-56; Report of the National Committee on Religious Extension (1 February 1935), 76-78; all found in MS-73, box A-1, vol. 3, AJA.
- 98 Goodman suggested, in 1929, that the Jewish woman serve "as a 'Missionary' among her own people." Report of the National Committee on Religion (31 October 1929), 45, MS-73, box A-1, vol. 2, AJA.



SISTERHOOD

A Centennial History of Women of Reform Judaism

EDITED BY

*Carole B. Balin, Dana Herman,
Jonathan D. Sarna, & Gary P. Zola*

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