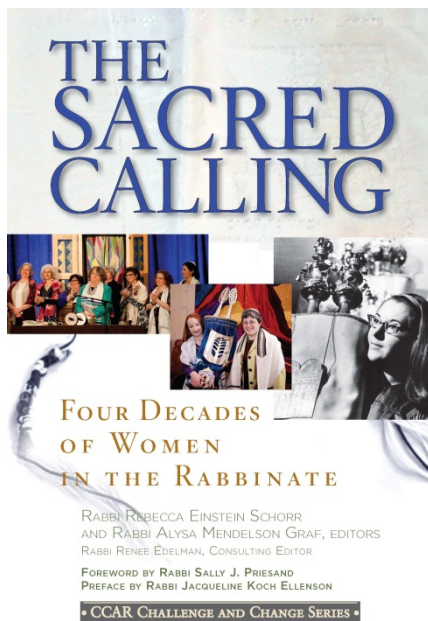


The Sacred Calling: Four Decades of Women in the Rabbinate



Edited by Rabbi Rebecca Einstein Schorr and Rabbi Alysa Mendelson Graf

Rabbi Renee Edelman, Consulting Editor

Foreword by Rabbi Sally J. Priesand

Preface by Rabbi Jacqueline Koch Ellenson

Study Guide by Andrue Kahn

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This study guide is divided into two sections:

- [Organized by Study Tracks](#)
- [Study Questions by Chapter](#)

Section One: Study Tracks

Tracks

Track	Title	Notes
<u>1</u>	<u>Women in Judaism</u>	Intended for any audience seeking to explore different conceptions of women in Judaism throughout history
<u>2</u>	<u>Boundary Breaking</u>	Intended for a confirmation or post-confirmation class, or any other subset that an educator is looking to inspire towards activism
<u>3</u>	<u>Denominational Differences</u>	Intended for an adult education course looking at differences in approaches to women in Judaism and the rabbinate
<u>4</u>	<u>Feminism and Tradition</u>	Intended for an adult education course investigating the ways that feminism has interacted with and affected Jewish tradition
<u>5</u>	<u>The History of the Rabbinate through a Feminist Lens</u>	Intended for an adult education course looking at the role of rabbi through a feminist lens, and especially the way this role has developed over the past few decades
<u>6</u>	<u>WRJ/Sisterhood</u>	Intended for a WRJ/Sisterhood book club or group discussion series
<u>7</u>	<u>MRJ/Brotherhood</u>	Intended for an MRJ/Brotherhood book club or group discussion series
<u>8</u>	<u>Teens</u>	Intended to get younger teens engaged in issues of gender and the rabbinate*

Each track lists several subtopics that are covered in one or more chapters of *The Sacred Calling*. You can opt to study just one chapter from each subtopic, dive into a particular subtopic and cover every chapter, or use some combination of the subtopics and chapters covered in each track for a longer period of study.

**Be sure to review the chapters and determine which (or perhaps which excerpts) are age appropriate for your particular group of teens.*

Track 1: Women in Judaism

Subtopic	Relevant Chapters
<i>Introduction</i>	Chapter 3: “The Long and Winding Road” to Women Rabbis
<i>Women in Text and Tradition</i>	Chapter 1: Who Controls the Narrative? A “Stop Action” Analysis of the Story of Beruriah and the Implications for Women Rabbis Chapter 32: How Jewish Women Have Come to Read the Bible: The Creating of Midrash Chapter 44: A Mirror, a Prism, and a Telescope: Reimagining Role Models Chapter 33: 140 Faces and Counting: Communal Transformation, Theological Evolution, and the Authority of Interpretation
<i>Women Affecting Change</i>	Chapter 13: O Pioneers: Reflections from Five Women Rabbis of the First Generation Chapter 16: Creating Opportunities for the “Other”: The Ordination of Women As a Turning Point for LGBT Jews Chapter 24: Shifting the Focus: Women Rabbis and Developments in Feminist Theology Chapter 27: Making Up for Lost Time: Female Rabbis and Ritual Change Chapter 29: Offering a New Look: Women Rabbis and Jewish Spirituality
<i>Women in Jewish Leadership</i>	Chapter 2: Chasidic Women Rebbes from 1479-1900 Chapter 5: The Women Who Set the Stage: Celebrating Over One Hundred Years of Women in Reform Judaism Chapter 21: Orthodox Women (Non-)Rabbis Chapter 37: Women Rabbis and the Gender Pay Gap: Lessons from CCAAR’s 2010 Landmark Study and a Call to Action Chapter 38: Getting to the Gold Standard in Maternity Leave Clauses
<i>Personal Reflection</i>	The Presence of Women Rabbis: A Transformation of the Rabbinate and of Jewish Life (p. 339)

Track 2: Boundary Breaking

Subtopic	Relevant Chapters
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Women Advancing Themselves and Others	Chapter 31: Kindling Change: Women Rabbis and Social Action Chapter 16: Creating Opportunities for the Other: The Ordination of Women As a Turning Point for LGBT Jews Chapter 12: Women Who Chose: First A Jew, Then A Rabbi Chapter 17: The Impact of Women on Male Rabbis Personal Reflection: A Rabbi in the Military (p. 541)
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Track 3: Denominational and Cultural Differences

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Track 4: Feminism and Tradition

Subtopic	Relevant Chapters
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<p>Ritual</p>	<p>Chapter 27: Making Up for Lost Time: Female Rabbis and Ritual Change</p> <p>Chapter 28: The Mikveh As a Well of Creativity</p> <p>Chapter 30: <i>El Na R'fah Na Lah</i>, Heal Us Now</p> <p>Chapter 41: From Imagination to Reality: <i>Ima on the Bima</i></p>
<p>Thought</p>	<p>Chapter 16: Creating Opportunities for the "Other": The Ordination of Women As a Turning Point for LGBT Jews</p> <p>Chapter 22: Women Rabbis and Feminism: On Our Way to the Promised Land</p> <p>Chapter 24: Shifting the Focus: Women Rabbis and Developments in Feminist Theology</p> <p>Chapter 25: Real Men Marry Rabbis: A History of the Jewish Feminist Movement</p>

Track 5: The History of Women in the Rabbinate

Subtopic	Relevant Chapters
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Track 6: WRJ/Sisterhood

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Track 7: MRJ/Brotherhood

Subtopic	Relevant Chapters
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Shifting and Challenging Gender Dynamics	Chapter 2: Chasidic Women Rebbes from 1749-1900 Chapter 37: Women Rabbis and the Gender Pay Gap: Lessons from the CCAR’s 2012 Landmark Study and a Call to Action Chapter 38: Getting to the Gold Standard in Maternity Leave Clauses <i>Personal Reflection: Dropping the “R-Bomb”</i> (p. 743) Chapter 35: Forty Years—What Moses Might Have Learned (from His Women Colleagues) Chapter 40: The Rabbi As Symbolic Exemplar: A Feminist Critique
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Men in the Struggle	Chapter 8: Looking Back to See Ahead Chapter 10: A Brief History of the Task Force on Women in the Rabbinate Chapter 17: The Impact of Woman Rabbis on Male Rabbis Chapter 21: Orthodox Women (Non-)Rabbis <i>Personal Reflection: Finding a Seat at the Right Table: Gender at HUC-JIR</i>

Track 8: Teens

Subtopic	Relevant Chapters
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What is feminism doing today?	Chapter 16: Creating Opportunities for the “Other”: The Ordination of Women As a Turning Point for LGBT Jews Chapter 33: 140 Faces of Torah and Counting: Communal Transformation, Theological Evolution, and the Authority of Interpretation Chapter 38: Getting the Gold Standard in Maternity Leave Clauses Chapter 40: The Rabbi As Symbolic Exemplar: A Feminist Critique

Section Two: Study Questions by Chapter

Part One: Those Who Came Before Us: The Pre-history of Women Rabbis

Chapter 1: Who Controls the Narrative? A “Stop Action” Analysis of the Story of Beruriah and the Implications for Women Rabbis

1. What do the female characters’ roles as creative and disruptive in these stories show about the traditional Jewish understanding of women?
2. How does the increasingly tragic portrayal of these female characters reflect on the traditional Jewish view of women?
3. Have you seen stories distorted over time for specific ends? When and where? Why do you think this was done?

Chapter 2: Chasidic Women Rebbes from 1749 to 1900

1. What does the fact that the women profiled in this chapter have their authority derived from their fathers say about the nature of the women’s authority?
2. How does the fluidity of gender and sex play into these women’s stories? What does the women embodying male spirits and doing practices viewed as male say about the nature of Chasidic authority?
3. What is the role of marriage in these stories? What does marriage mean to you today in contrast or in comparison to marriage in these stories?

1. Chapter 3: “The Long and Winding Road” to Women Rabbis How do you make sense of the fact that egalitarianism was a stated value of early Reform Judaism, but it took so long to allow women to be ordained?
2. Why do you think the men in power went back and forth so much about ordaining women? What do you imagine the conversations surrounding the topic were?
3. How is it that the stories of these women who made early strides into the rabbinate are so rarely shared? What would it mean if they were hailed as heroes more often? What would it say about women’s roles in Judaism?
4. How does the influence of the outside culture, for instance first and second wave feminism corresponding with the push for women in the rabbinate, mesh with the insider nature of Judaism? What place do you think that the movements of a wider secular culture have within the practice and development of Judaism?

Chapter 4: Rediscovering Regina Jonas: The First Woman Rabbi

1. How does Regina Jonas figure into the history of Judaism for you? What kind of role model is she? What, if anything, is surprising about her story?
2. Is there an inherent difference to the content of her work because she was a woman?

3. Should she be considered as separate or different from the other, primarily male, historical figures of her age? Why or why not?

Chapter 5: The Women Who Set the Stage: Celebrating Over One Hundred Years of Women in Reform Judaism

1. What is the difference between the laywoman leaders of the Reform Movement and the woman clergy of the Reform Movement? Should their leadership roles be looked on as equal or different in quality?
2. What does the framing of women's roles by male rabbis at the first NFTS meeting say about the general view of women at the time? How does it compare to our view of women today? How does it make you feel to read these words coming from rabbis?
3. What does the fact that these laywomen were integral to the process of opening the doors to female rabbis mean to you for the role of laypeople in the Reform Movement?

Personal Reflections

A First Rabbi, from a Long Line of Rabbis

1. How does familial upbringing affect one's view of equality and of women in the rabbinate? What messages were you sent regarding women rabbis as a child? About gender in general?
2. How does the role of rebbetzin (rabbi's wife) as "shadow 'rabbi'" speak to you, especially in light of the rebbetzin maintaining her own career?

Going into the Family Business

1. How does the reference to specifically male rabbis as role models affect the self-perception of female rabbis?
2. What does it mean for a female rabbi to have focused on becoming like her grandfather as opposed to becoming like a female family member?

Part Two: Reform Ordination of Women

Chapter 6: Letters from Hebrew Union College to Sally J. Priesand

1. How do these documents help you to understand the way in which HUC-JIR handled this issue?
2. How would you feel to receive these letters as you began to pursue your career?
3. What do you think that the letters are trying to communicate that they do not state outright?

Chapter 7: The Ordination of Sally J. Priesand, A Historic Interview

1. What do you think of Rabbi Priesand crediting Nelson Glueck with being the person who should be given credit for ordaining women?
2. Can you identify with any moments like Rabbi Priesand's in which you've felt you need to prove yourself? What do you make of Priesand isolating herself and learning on her own rather than studying with others?
3. Rabbi Priesand says that she "made a rule right at the beginning never to argue with anyone. [She] did not think that you score points by trying to argue with somebody who wants to tell you why women shouldn't be rabbis." In what ways is this an effective approach? How might you have reacted in her situation?
4. What does the fact that Malcolm Stern re-wrote Rabbi Priesand's article say about the voice of women in that time? How does the gender dynamic of a woman needing a man's voice affect the power of the story? How can privileged individuals ally with those who are not privileged without removing their voice?
5. How do you think that Rabbi Priesand's experience influenced the answers she gave to the book *If I Only Had Five Things to Pass On*?

Chapter 8: Looking Back to See Ahead

1. Do you think that Rabbi Frenkel's story proves that the "'revolution' has been won?" Why or why not?
2. How do you feel about Rabbi Elwell's exhortation that Reform Jews need to continue to be countercultural? Has your experience as a Jew felt countercultural? How have you experienced the acceptance of women, gays and people of differences in your Jewish life?
3. How do you respond to Dr. Eisen's statement that women as a group bring different experiences, sensibilities and concerns to their rabbinate? What do you think these differences are?

Chapter 9: What's in a Word? Inequality in the Reform S'michah

1. What do you think might have been the reason behind the difference in the text of the ordination document?
2. How would that difference affect you if you were being ordained? How would you feel as a man or as a woman with these differences?

Chapter 10: A Brief History of the Task Force on Women in the Rabbinate

1. What would you have changed or added to the undertakings of the Task Force?

2. How do you feel about the special opportunities afforded to women rabbis via the Task Force? Do you think it was correct to only offer them to women rabbis? Why or why not?
3. In what ways has the Task Force succeeded in its mission? What is still left to be accomplished?

Chapter 11: From Periphery to Center: A History of the Women's Rabbinic Network

1. What do you think the effects of not having female role-models to look to were on the first generations of female rabbis? What do you think the effects have been on male rabbis to now have female role models?
2. Would you have kept the WRN single-sex, or would you expand it to allow for men to join? Explain your choice.
3. Look closely at the list of fears associated with having female rabbis (pp. 145-146). What biases do they show? What assumptions do they hold about the nature of what it means to be a woman? Which pieces do you agree or disagree with?
4. What does the elusivity of the WRN's ability to define itself today say about the nature of women's issues in the rabbinate?

Chapter 12: Women Who Chose: First a Jew, Then a Rabbi

1. What do you think converts to Judaism bring to the rabbinate that is different from people who are born Jewish? What do you think that converts who are women bring that is different than converts who are men? What would this difference be, and what would it be based in?
2. What kinds of differences do you think there are between people who are born Jewish and people who convert? Rabbi Ahuva Zaches points out a socioeconomic difference—was this surprising to you? What did it make you think?
3. In what ways do you think that someone in the rabbinate who has converted to Judaism has to work harder to learn, or has more to prove, than someone who was born Jewish?

Chapter 13: O Pioneers: Reflections from Five Women Rabbis of the First Generation

1. What would you assume would be different in “The Chapters of the Mothers” versus “The Chapters of the Fathers”? What perspectives and ideas do you think you would find there that you would not find in the male version?
2. Have you ever had a “click” moment when you realized that you were part of something bigger, such as the women's movement? What did this entail for you?
3. What do you think the disadvantages were to men who attended school with only men?
4. What was your response to reading that Rabbi Alex Schindler told Rabbi Karen Fox to keep quiet about her receiving maternity leave?

Chapter 14: From Generation to Generation: A Roundtable Discussion with Rabbi Ellen Weinberg Dreyfus

1. Rabbi Ilene Haigh asks, “So it's an interesting question: Does my gender, in fact, limit my rabbinate?” What do you think the impact is of gender on individuals' rabinates? Are there generalizations to be made about how male and female rabbis are limited by their genders? If so, what are they?
2. Rabbi Rebekah Stern says, “The next stage of feminism in the rabbinate is congregants having equal access to rabbis of both genders.” Is gender as important an aspect of an individual rabbi as

other parts of the person? How heavily would you weigh gender when going to a rabbi? What issues would make you prefer one gender over another in any given situation?

3. Rabbi Alysa Mendelson Graf says, “To have me as a strong woman in that context and a working parent around all of these women who had given up great careers was also a difficult dynamic to navigate.” How and why does serving women in particular challenge female rabbis?
4. Rabbi Ellen Weinberg Dreyfus shares that when she entered rabbinical school the only female bathrooms were on the floor with the secretaries. What societally built-in gender issues do we take for granted today that may need to still be addressed?
5. Rabbi Rebekah Stern says that she thinks “that the sort of conversations that [women] have been having in women’s circles need to be expanded out [to men] in order to start making a difference for all of us.” What drawbacks and benefits are there to beginning to include men in these conversations?
6. Rabbi Alysa Mendelson Graf shares her experience of accepting a position at a small synagogue as part of a step towards realizing that “You can’t have it all.” In what ways is this a particularly female story? How does the idea of “You can’t have it all” resonate with you?
7. Rabbi Darah Lerner recounts a story of being rejected by a synagogue that she perceived as wanting to be “a congregation that would hire a lesbian, but they weren’t ready yet.” She is unsure of how to articulate their inability to do so. How might you articulate it? What do you think was behind their willingness to hire a straight woman but not a gay woman? Have you ever been part of an institution that had to align the way it saw itself in theory with the way it acted in reality? What did the institution do to close that gap?
8. Rabbi Melanie Aron says that inside of her community she feels accepted, but outside she still feels the difficulty attached to being a woman in a male-dominated world. What ways can you conceive of to speed up the process of normalization of gender equality on a wider basis? When and where have you seen this shift happen?
9. Rabbi Ellen Weinberg Dreyfus tells a story about a congregant telling her that an action she took made them know that she was a mom, and that they liked that. Can you think of gender biases that can be seen as positive? What dangers hide behind “positive” stereotyping? How would that conversation have gone had Rabbi Dreyfus not been a mother?
10. Rabbi Ellen Weinberg Dreyfus tells a story about a younger colleague coming to her for advice due to her senior rabbi advising her to not have more children. How did this story make you feel? What situations have you had when you needed to hear someone else “gasp” to confirm your understanding of what happened?
11. Rabbi Debby Hachen says “There are times when we want people to give us the respect of being neutral to our gender, and there are other times when we don’t want them to.” How does this resonate with you? What instances can you think of having had both desires for yourself?
12. Rabbi Rebekah Stern says, “There is still a significant trend that women are more empathetic than men, so I don’t know if it makes Judaism more accessible, but perhaps it makes rabbis feel more accessible.” How do you feel about this assessment?

Personal Reflection

The Pregnant Rabbi

1. How do you react to the issues surrounding sex and reproduction and being a rabbi?
2. What do you think the relationship is between being a rabbi and a parent? Is it different for men and women?

Part Three: Ripple Effects: The Impact of Ordaining Women

Chapter 15: JTS, HUC, and Women Rabbis—Redux

1. What issues do you see today that others may view as beyond the pale, schismatic, or just a passing phase in different sects of Judaism?
2. What can you glean from the different reactions of the different movements? What does it say about each of the movements? What does it say about Judaism in general?
3. How did the rhetoric Rabbi Isaac Wise delivered on women's equality influence the Reform Movement's later acceptance of female rabbis? How do you explain the length of time it took to truly allow equality?
4. Imagine that you were one of the leaders of the seminaries during the time that this controversy began. How would you have responded? What considerations that were taken into account are the most important? What if you were a representative of one of the Reform congregations?

Chapter 16: Creating Opportunities for the "Other": The Ordination of Women As a Turning Point for LGBT Jews

1. How do you see the gay rights movement as being related to the women's rights movement? In what ways are they related? What else may they be related to?
2. Why do you think Reform Judaism in particular became a nexus for all of these social justice movements?
3. It is often posited that the Reform Movement's choice to allow women and gay people to become rabbis opened the door to the Reconstructionist and Conservative movements doing the same, as well as the Orthodox movement beginning to discuss these issues more broadly. What social movements outside of the Jewish world opened the door to the Reform Movement making these decisions? What social changes do you see today that the Reform Movement should spearhead bringing into the Jewish orbit?

Chapter 17: The Impact of Women Rabbis on Male Rabbis

1. In what ways do you think the ordination of women affected people's conceptions of God? Do you think there is something particular about women as rabbis that would add a different understanding of what God meant in people's lives? What would that be?
2. Why do you think that women, as Rabbi Jacqueline Koch Ellenson suggests, were comfortable bringing personal issues into the workplace, as opposed to men who were not?
3. In what ways do you think gender impacts on leadership styles? Do you think there's something inherent to either gender that causes individuals to lean one way or the other? Where have you seen this in your life?
4. Has your experience been that women in your life are more nurturing than men? Are there exceptions to this rule on either side? How do you think this has affected the way in which you relate to your rabbi? To how your rabbi is perceived?

Chapter 18: Women Rabbis in Israel

1. How do you think the lack of recognition for liberal movements in general in Israel impacts the acceptance of women as rabbis there?
2. In what ways do you see anti-hierarchical and anti-authoritative structures as fitting with women rabbis in particular? In what ways do you think that these cultural differences in Israel may make it harder for women?
3. How do you feel about the idea that overt sexism in Israel makes it easier to respond to it? What different versions of overt and covert sexism have you experienced?
4. What are the difficulties and boons of using a gendered language like Hebrew when discussing gender differences? Which title do you like best for female rabbis in Hebrew? Why?

Chapter 19: The First Thirty Years in Israel: Avnei Derech

1. What is your opinion on using feminine words for God in Hebrew? How does it aid in the acceptance of egalitarianism? In what ways may it detract from egalitarianism?
2. How do you make sense of lay women being stigmatized for reading Torah in Israel, a country in which there are female rabbis? What do you think this says about the nature of Liberal or Progressive Judaism in Israel?
3. What kinds of new options have you seen arisen in your life through shifts in gender egalitarianism and other forms of social freedoms being expressed in your culture?

Chapter 20: A New Reality: Female Religious Leadership in the Modern Orthodox Community

1. How do you make of the newly invented title Maharat? How do you feel about it being used in place of rabbi?
2. What do you think the future is of women in the Orthodox rabbinate?

Chapter 21: Orthodox Women (Non-)Rabbis

1. Do you agree that the use of a new title is “separate but unequal-”? In what ways is it oppressive to deny the same title? In what ways is it helpful to delineate?
2. How do you feel about Weiss’s description of what “full religious leadership” means?
3. What innate differences between Reform and Orthodox Judaism are visible when viewing how the rabbis attempt to define the role of the new Orthodox Jewish female leader?
4. How do you think the Orthodox world may shift or change in relation to these female leaders? What impact might that have on the role of women in the Orthodox communities? On the relationship between liberal Judaism and the modern Orthodox world?

Personal Reflections

The Presence of Women Rabbis: A Transformation of the Rabbinate and of Jewish Life

1. What voices have you yet to hear in the Jewish world? Which voices would you like to hear?
2. How have women’s voices changed your view of the Jewish world?

Growing Up with Women Rabbis as Role Models

1. In what way does gender affect Rabbi Friedman's worldview in this short essay?
2. What does it say about the Reform Movement that Rabbi Friedman does not seem to have an experience of women rabbis being different or novel?

A Man's Experience of Women in the Rabbinate

1. In what ways have you experienced traditional understandings of Judaism to be considered more "authentic"? How do you feel when confronted with Jewish practices that are framed as traditional forms of Judaism?
2. Have you ever experienced gender-separated education? What are the benefits and the pitfalls? How do you think gender-inclusive education affects rabbinical training?

Part Four: Women Rabbis and Feminism

Chapter 22: Women Rabbis and Feminism: On Our Way to the Promised Land

1. What aspects of being a woman have moved from the hidden realm to the public realm during your lifetime? What pieces of being a woman are still in the hidden realm?
2. Through what methods can men be sensitized to the ways women experience the world? As a man, what questions have you been scared to ask women? As a woman, what information have you been scared to share with men?
3. How did Betty Freidan's suggestion that she speak at the conference impact on the complexity of the situation the female rabbis were experiencing? What do you think would have been the best option for the conference?
4. What benefit is there to having a mystique surrounding clergy? What benefit is there to blurring the boundary between clergy and laity?

Chapter 23: "I Find By Experience": Feminist Praxis of Theology and Knowledge

1. Can you imagine ways in which you would behave differently if you understood God to be differently gendered?
2. How has your experience of religion matched the definition of the patriarchal worldview as discussed in this essay? How has it changed or shifted over time?
3. How does the recently-emerged image of women's authoritative speech allow women to impact Judaism more directly? How does the image of all people being at Sinai, and the echoes of this being heard in women's voices today, impact your view of Judaism?

Chapter 24: Shifting the Focus: Women Rabbis and Developments in Feminist Theology

1. How is your God concept affected by gender? What would a feminist God concept do to your understanding of your place in the world?
2. What has been the impact of equal female participation on your synagogue or Jewish community? How has it affected other parts of your life?
3. In what spheres of your life have you experience subtle discrimination of yourself or others based on gender? What do you think would be the most effective way of dealing with the essentialist vs. gender-blind problems delineated here?
4. In what ways have women's metaphors enriched your language? When have you experienced language as different when used by a woman because she was a woman?

Chapter 25: Real Men Marry Rabbis: A History of the Jewish Feminist Movement

1. What do you associate with the name Lilith or with the concepts connected to her character?
2. How do you make sense of the desire to take part in a system that rejects you? When in your life have you struggled with the issue of being excluded from something that you later figured out how to be included in? What was the impact of feeling excluded?
3. How do you think we can move forward and continue fighting for women's equality? Where in your life can you help to push for greater equality?

Chapter 26: Betty Friedan's "Spiritual Daughters," the ERA, and the CCAR

1. How do you feel about the essentialist view of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise's understanding of women's roles in the congregation?
2. What do you think of Rabbi Debbie Prinz's valuation of the Reform Movement's "tradition of advocacy for women?"
3. Based on the quote provided, what do you think the relationship might have been between Betty Freidan's Jewishness and her writing *the Feminine Mystique*?
4. Do you agree or disagree with the idea expressed by Rabbi Laura Geller that women's voices bring change to tradition? Why or why not?

Personal Reflections

Finding a Seat at the Right Table: Gender at HUC-JIR

1. How can men best ally themselves with women to help with progress in women's issues?
2. When is it appropriate for there to be "women only" spaces? When is it appropriate for men to ask to be involved in these spaces?

Becoming a Woman of the Wall

1. In what ways are the gender conflicts in Israel an existential threat to Judaism?
2. What do you think of the conflict within Israeli society between religion and state? Between democracy and religion?

Part Five: Jewish Life

Chapter 27: Making Up for Lost Time: Female Rabbis and Ritual Change

1. In what ways have women revolutionized Jewish practice?
2. Why do you think women have both been so driven and so successful at revolutionizing this practice?
3. This essay states that “ritual seeks to provide a spiritual context for one’s experience of the world.” What have been the times when you sought a spiritual context for your experience and not found one? What have been the times where you have found one? What was it about the ritual that enabled you to find that context, or what was an obstacle in finding it?

Chapter 28: The Mikveh As a Well of Creativity

1. How does the mikveh function in particular as a site for renewal of ritual?
2. Why do you think that the mikveh ritual has been an area of focus for progressive Jews in recent years?
3. What aspects of the mikveh ritual are attractive to you, and why? Or what about it does not appeal, and why?
4. In what other kinds of rituals might mikveh serve as a focal point?

Chapter 29: Offering a New Look: Women Rabbis and Jewish Spirituality

1. What differences do you ascribe to a male understanding of God versus a female understanding of God?
2. Would you notice the types of changes mentioned in this article? How do you feel when a familiar prayer is changed?
3. Why do you think it is that so many women have been comfortable breaking boundaries and new ground in the Jewish world?
4. In what ways have the advances in the Jewish world made it better specifically for women? In what ways have these advances made the Jewish world better for people of all genders?

Chapter 30: El Na R’fah Na Lah, Heal Us Now

1. In what ways has Reform Judaism changed to address your issues today with tradition?
2. What role, if any, has the *Mi Shebeirach* played in your Jewish life?
3. How has your Jewish community, and in particular ritual, helped you through difficult times? What important experiences have you had that haven’t been addressed by your community?
4. What are other areas of Jewish life that you would wish to see the kind of change that the Healing Movement brought about?

Chapter 31: Kindling Change: Women Rabbis in Social Action

1. What do you think about the idea of rabbis as social justice activists? What about as political activists? Do you agree or disagree that these are important roles for rabbis, and why?

2. What are the pitfalls of rabbis speaking out on social issues? What are the benefits? What is the responsibility of rabbis vis-à-vis social justice or political activism?
3. Have you ever encountered an issue on which you wished your rabbi would speak out, or would stop speaking out? What was the issue?
4. What connection do you think there is between women rabbis and social justice activism? Is there a unique connection between women rabbis and activism?

Chapter 32: How Jewish Women Have Come to Read the Bible: The Creating of Midrash

1. What different perspectives do you think women bring to midrash?
2. Which voices have you found missing from Jewish text study?
3. How does the role of gender in Jewish stories affect your view of the characters?
4. In what ways have you added to the narrative of the people Israel?

Chapter 33: 140 Faces of Torah and Counting: Communal Transformations, Theological Evolution, and the Authority of Interpretation

1. In what ways might thinking about Torah through filters of “maleness” and “femaleness” limit Torah? In what ways might it limit people?
2. What distinctions, if any, do you make about what it means to be Jewish and what does not? When have these kinds of distinctions affected you?
3. Have you ever been surprised by an interpretation of Torah that you have been confronted with? How do you feel about the idea of making a space for a multifaceted view of Torah?

Personal Reflections

A Rabbi Goes to the Mikveh:

1. What rituals did you grow up with that felt like they had no meaning?
2. What can you think of that could be reinvented in a similar way to the ritual of mikveh?
3. What is the particular approach that has made this reappropriation of mikveh rituals that made it effective?

A Rabbi in the Military:

1. Have you ever felt this sense of *K'lal* America described by the author? In what ways has it overlapped with your view of *K'lal Yisrael*, the collective of the children of Israel? In what ways has it contrasted?
2. How do you feel about the plurality of Rabbi Schechter’s experience? In what ways has she served the Jewish community?

Born in the USSR:

1. What particular views and visions do you think Rabbi Rubinstein brings from her background?
2. How do you think her experience of her gender is different from that of an American female rabbi?

Part Six: Congregational Culture and Community Life

Chapter 34: Weaving Webs of Sacred Connection: Women Rabbis and Congregational Culture

1. Why do you think it took twenty years of women in the rabbinate for the first woman to become a senior rabbi?
2. What, if anything, do you think leads women to value partnership over dominance, as the author argues? How is it reductive of both women and men to think in these terms?
3. What values do you think are best suited to the millennial congregation?

Chapter 35: Forty Years—What Moses Might Have Learned (from His Women Colleagues)

1. In what ways do you think the Torah would be different if it were written in a time of egalitarianism?
2. Which leadership model is most attractive to you and why?
3. What markers of change can you identify within yourself? Within your congregation or community?

Chapter 36: Creating a New Model: From Rabbi and Rebbetzin to Co-Rabbis

1. How have you balanced relationship issues with your partner or partners in the past? What would it be like to share a job with them?
2. What are the pros and cons of having a rabbinic couple in a congregation?
3. In what other places and careers in society can you imagine a model like this working?

Chapter 37: Women Rabbis and the Gender Pay Gap: Lessons from the CCAR's 2012 Landmark Study and a Call to Action

1. Have you experienced gender inequality akin to what is described here in your workplace or elsewhere? How did it make you feel? How have you responded?
2. In what ways do you understand and estimate issues of gender inequality taking place in the rabbinate as opposed to elsewhere?
3. As a woman, when have you felt unable to negotiate and advocate for yourself? As a man, what has your response to women been when they have been assertive?

Chapter 38: Getting the Gold Standard in Maternity Leave Clauses

1. What do you think of parental leave? Should there be a difference in leave for women and for men, and if so, what should it be?
2. What does our current attitude towards parental leave show about our valuing of parental time with newborns? What is your ideal for parental time with newborns and young children?
3. How does a rabbi's role as a life-model affect the way in which synagogues should deal with parental leave?
4. How does the "gold standard" compare with parental leave in your place of work?
5. What is the current leave policy in your community or synagogue? Does it need to be improved, and if so, how can that best be achieved?

Chapter 39: Figuring It All Out: The Parenting Balancing Act

1. How do you define success in your line of work? How do you think rabbis should define their success?
2. How do you feel about the idea of being unable to “have it all”? What is the “all” for you?
3. How do the shifting gender roles in this story affect the rabbi’s role? How has changing gender roles affected your life?

Personal Reflections

Why I Almost Did Not Become a Rabbi

1. When have you experienced women (including yourself) being scrutinized based on appearance? What about men? How has this affected either your own professional life, or the way in which you interact with co-workers?
2. How does this story display both the positives and negatives of women in the rabbinate? In what ways do you think Rabbi Mendelson Graf’s story would be different if her rabbi had not been a woman?
3. Why do you think it is that women still tend to be the ones in a relationship expected to be the primary caregiver to children? How has this changed throughout your life? How do you think gay relationships impact these trends?

Being a Public Person, Suffering a Private Loss

1. What in particular can you identify that has led female rabbis to promote different models for rabbinic success?
2. When have conversations been most helpful to you to craft your life? Have you found something in particular that has led to conversations being especially meaningful or impactful?
3. How does this story open up a different understanding of what it means to be clergy? What were your thoughts about how clergy would deal with such life crises prior to this story?

The “Part-Time” Rabbi

4. What format would allow a rabbi to be part-time and still fulfill his or her responsibilities to a community?
5. What has your experience been of blending your personal and professional lives? What contradictions and what peaceful meldings have you found? In what ways is a rabbinical life different from other professions in this regard?

Journeying to the Edge of the Known and Comprehended World—Becoming a Senior Rabbi

1. What are the many forms you’ve seen of a successful pulpit rabbi? How is it colored by gender?
2. In what senses do you feel there can be an objective “best” rabbi? In what ways is it impossible for there to be a “best” rabbi for all communities and roles? How is this true particularly in the rabbinic field, or in other professions as well?

Leaning In, Leaning Out, and Just Managing to Stand Up: Notes of a Rabbinic Working Mother

1. How has being a parent influenced your career decisions? Might this be different if you were a rabbi?
2. What is your sense of “greater than” and “less than” regarding life choices when balancing professional and personal? How do you think society influences your thinking about finding balance?
3. How are women treated differently than men when it comes to professional versus personal life? Where have you seen this changing in your life?

Part Seven: Image

Chapter 40 The Rabbi As Symbolic Exemplar: A Feminist Critique

1. Has your experience with your rabbi reflected this idea of the Rabbi as Symbolic Exemplar? What do you expect of your rabbi in comparison to what you expect of other congregants? Why do you think this is?
2. Why do you think women in particular have been instrumental in toppling the hierarchical view of society in favor of relationality, especially in the rabbinate? When and where have you experienced this change in your life?
3. How do you think a whole community can strive for authenticity? Where does individual and communal authenticity meet, and where does it conflict?

Chapter 41: From Imagination to Reality: Ima on the Bima

1. How do the many choices that Rabbi Portnoy made reflect the complexity of being an early female rabbi? Which of these issues have you seen in your life, either in the Jewish world or outside?
2. How do you think such a book affected the reception of women in the rabbinate?
3. What would you change about the “*Ima on the Bima*” today? What issues do you think would need to be more directly confronted in such a work today?

Chapter 42: “Funny, You Don’t Look Like a Rabbi”: Transference and the Female Rabbi

1. How would be your experience of Reform Judaism if women were not allowed to be rabbis? Would your view of Judaism and your place within it be different?
2. What is your reaction to the characterization of congregants in this chapter? What is familiar and what is not in this characterization?
3. What cultural assumptions and unconscious fantasies do you think are widespread and play into the ways women are still treated unequally?

Chapter 43: The Public Image of the Woman Rabbi

1. Do you agree or disagree with the idea that rabbis represent God and Judaism to congregants? Why? How does this affect how a rabbi should present himself or herself in public?
2. What do you think is the most appropriate way for rabbis to dress? Can there be a style that is too formal? Too informal? What do your answers reveal about the way you perceive the role of rabbi?
3. Do you agree with the idea that women’s appearances are more scrutinized than men’s? Why or why not? Why do you think this may be true? How do you think this can be overcome?
4. If it is true that women’s appearances are more scrutinized than that of men, how should women respond in their choice of dress?

Chapter 44: A Mirror, a Prism, and a Telescope: Reimagining Role Models

1. What would you pick as the standards for a modern *Eishet Chayil* (Woman of Valor)? What about *Ish Chayil* (Man of Valor)? What would the differences be and why?
2. How do you view the image of the mutability of Jewish Law in the segment about the daughters of Zelophedad? How does this reflect a particularly feminist approach to the Bible? How does it strengthen or weaken Judaism?
3. When have you wrestled most with the Torah? What did you find through this process?

Chapter 45: Portraits of the Rabbi as a Young Woman

1. How do these literary depictions of women rabbis show the changing conception of women in the Jewish world? In what ways does this conception progress for the positive? In what ways the negative?
2. In what ways do you see the identities of the authors of the different stories playing a role in the way the women are depicted?
3. What pieces of “the full heart of humanity” do you see missing from the rabbinic desk today? Do you agree with the statement from Cohen’s story? Why or why not?

Chapter 46: Searching for the Fictional Woman Rabbi on the Small and Large Screen

1. What do these depictions of women rabbis say about the way popular culture views women Rabbis?
2. Can you think of any instances in which male rabbis have been depicted on screen? How do they differ from the ways in which female rabbis are depicted, according to this essay?
3. What do you think is the wider impact of these depictions of women rabbis?

Personal Reflections

Rabbis in Red Lipstick

1. How do you think being a rabbi should affect the way in which an individual presents him or herself?
2. In what ways ought rabbis to form their identities around their roles? In what ways should rabbis form their roles around their identities?

Letter to Hollywood—I Don’t Have a Beard or Side Curls and I Look Just Like You: American Judaism’s Image Problem

1. When you think of the word “rabbi,” what image first pops into your head? Why do you think this is? Would you actually want this image as your rabbi?
2. How do you think we can go about changing the cultural assumptions about what a rabbi looks like? Do you think we ought to?
3. Dropping the “R-Bomb” How do you think the dating world might be different for male rabbis?
4. What do you think the difference in dating is for women who are rabbis as opposed to women in other high-powered professions?
5. Why do you think men have trouble dating female rabbis?