

# Equality for Women in the Rabbinate - 1991

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## 38th Assembly, December 1991

### Issue

The Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations are placing a resolution, "Equality for Women Rabbis" before the Biennial Assembly because the goals of eliminating gender discrimination and applying pay equity for all in the Reform Movement "have yet to be fully realized."

### Background

The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods proudly notes that women were first ordained by the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion of the Reform Movement almost two decades ago. Yet 20 years later, NFTS is concerned that women in the rabbinate have not been accorded equal opportunity in synagogue hiring practices; according to a Summer 1991 article in Reform Judaism, only 3 of the 90 women eligible to serve as rabbis in congregations of 301-600 members serve in such synagogues. In addition, although 37 women are eligible, none as yet has been appointed to serve as senior rabbi of the largest congregations.

The Women of Reform Judaism has advocated the opportunity for women to serve as rabbis for over 40 years. During the late 1940s and early 50s the NFTS Board of Directors and its leaders petitioned the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion to accept women as full rabbinic candidates; in 1961 the issue was moved to the Assembly Resolution process. In 1963, NFTS called for a joint conference with the CCAR, UAHC, HUC-JIR to determine appropriate action regarding the ordination of women. Over the years NFTS has adopted resolutions concerned with women's equality in the community, e.g., equal pay for equal work, and in the synagogue, e.g., opportunities for leadership, decision making and full participation in religious life.

In 1979 NFTS passed a comprehensive resolution on Women's Rights. It included the intent to achieve full partnership of women in congregational life, with the specific provision that "Sisterhoods should participate actively in efforts to implement acceptance of women as rabbis, cantors, educators and other professionals in congregations and Jewish communal agencies. Full acceptance means equal recruitment and employment opportunities, equal salaries and nondiscriminatory conditions of work, and promotional opportunities at all levels of responsibility, based on ability, not sex."

We commend and support the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations for sharing with the Women of Reform Judaism efforts to accelerate the achievement of equal opportunity and economic parity for women in the rabbinate as expressed in their 1991 resolution, "Equality for Women Rabbis."

### Resolution

In consonance with prior resolutions relating to the status of women, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods calls upon its affiliates throughout the world to encourage congregational decisions to:

1. Implement a gender-free policy in interviewing, hiring and promoting rabbis.
2. Adopt a pay-equity policy regarding compensation of rabbis.
3. Extend the principles of economic justice to cantors and other synagogue professionals and employees without regard to gender.
4. Implement programs and workshops to generate congregational sensitivity to the changes necessitated by the increasing participation of women as rabbis, cantors, professional employees and lay leaders in synagogue life.

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