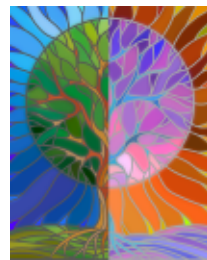


# The Reform Advocate

Volume XII, Number I: High Holy Days 2020

Scott O'Neal, Editor



## ROOTS OF REFORM JUDAISM

Inspired by the past, embracing today, shaping tomorrow.

### A message from Rabbinic Director Rabbi Ken Kanter



When last I had the opportunity to write the front page for our “Advocate,” you and I lived in a different world. Yes, our concerns were similar - our families and friends, neighbors and communities, synagogues and Jewish issues, concerns for those around us who were hungry or homeless, minorities and the powerless, an inequitable economy, events and problems in Israel. The phrase “Covid 19” was new and had not touched our country in a meaningful way. We had never heard of George Floyd or Breonna Taylor. “Black Lives Matter” was an important but not front-and-center issue it had been a few years earlier. Our Reform movement was “chugging along” pretty well, and we all knew what “normalcy” meant - going to work; our kids and grandchildren going to school and religious school; many of us (but not enough!) going to worship, Torah study, or volunteering in our temples and synagogues; celebrating weddings and simchas with scores of people gathered together; enjoying our favorite restaurants, theater, and films, sporting events, and concerts with our spouses or partners, families and friends. That was life as we knew it.

However, that is not the world we live in now. We have been sequestered in our homes for months, precluded from groups, events, in-person worship services, even kissing our grandchildren and hugging our friends. College classes, cocktail parties, and even shiva minyans are on-line. Every word we utter must be reconsidered for its hurtfulness or history. Each statement we make must be sensitized. Every historical figure or work of representation must be seen in a new light, through others’ eyes.

Our High Holy Day Reform Jewish Advocate is the product of this new world. Soon after the pandemic forced synagogues and churches to close, schools to become virtual, social life outside our homes to be prohibited, everything in our day-to-day lives to be altered, we decided to take this opportunity to explore the theme “The Disruptive Moments in Reform Judaism.”

Through the insights of very thoughtful women and men, we are looking at the enormous changes in our Jewish world, specifically our Reform Jewish world. We are viewing some of the major “disruptive” issues that have been part of our new normalcy in 2020: how our Jewish lives and the Reform movement are impacted by race and

*continued on next page*



#### Creation

*Stained glass window  
from Temple Sinai,  
New Orleans*



civil rights; the search for women's and LGBTQ equality, especially in the rabbinate; the momentous changes in our Reform Jewish liturgy, of which "Roots of Reform" has proudly played a part; and importantly, looking forward to creative models of Reform Judaism which could be our future.

All these momentous changes, these disruptive events, are firmly grounded in our history. We

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***All these momentous changes, these disruptive events, are firmly grounded in our history.***

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include those stories, as well.

Roots of Reform Judaism has come a long way, with equally momentous changes and important accomplishments. We are grateful that you are part of our journey, the new liturgy we have created, the scholarship, music, and learning opportunities we provide, and the heritage we celebrate together as we look to the future. With your help and interest, we will go from strength to strength.

Shanah Tova, a Happy New Year, and may what is written about us in the Book of Life be good health, fulfillment, and blessings.

Devotedly,  
**Ken**



### Roots of Reform Judaism Virtual Services and Music Offerings

Our world has changed profoundly in these past months. Moments that used to be communal and social are now virtual and on-line. Whether it is birthday parties or college courses, dinner with friends or Passover Seders, business meetings or political conventions, our 2020 reality is zoom and FaceTime.

The Roots of Reform Judaism community recognized the need for Shabbat and High Holy Day services virtually as well, with magnificent music of our great Reform heritage, contemporary yet very familiar liturgy accessible to everyone, and messages of inspiration to lift our spirits in sacred times.

We hope that these services for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (including beautiful words from our newly completed High Holy Day prayer booklets, gorgeous music by cantorial soloists, and an extraordinary 24 voice choir, with cello, organ and piano accompaniment) and Shabbat, and other services to follow, led by the professional team and board members of the RRJ, will give you joy, comfort, and community, enveloped by the words of our Reform tradition and the melodies of our people.

Our virtual services and music offerings are always available on our website ([www.rootsofreform.org](http://www.rootsofreform.org)) and our YouTube page.

Shanah tova, a happy new year!



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## Race, Social Justice and the Roots of American Reform Judaism: 1824-1860

Rabbi Dr. Lance Sussman  
*Roots of Reform Judaism  
Senior Scholar*

We are currently living in a historiographical moment in American history. Historiography is the study of history and how historical reporting has changed over time including methodologies, sources, themes, worldview, and more. Because of the current unrest over the place of race and racism in the American experience, we as a society are being challenged to rethink not only who we are today and where we want to go as a society but also how we arrived at this moment.

Until this moment, it has been generally acceptable to tell the story of the early years of American Reform Judaism with minimal attention to the politics of race in the United States. By revisiting

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### ***It was no accident that Reform Judaism in American began in Charleston, South Carolina.***

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the early history of American Reform Judaism in a new light, we can learn that not only were the first Reform Jews were diverse in their opinions about race but that ultimately the deep root of classical Reform Judaism which developed after the Civil War included a strong principled devotion to the abolition of slavery. In short, Classical Reform and in particular the interpretation of Judaism advocated by Rabbi David Einhorn (1809-1879) was committed not only to the aesthetic reform of Jewish religious practice but also to the ideals of the prophets of Ancient Israel and the belief that Judaism is a faith

anchored in a teleological belief in the pursuit of justice.



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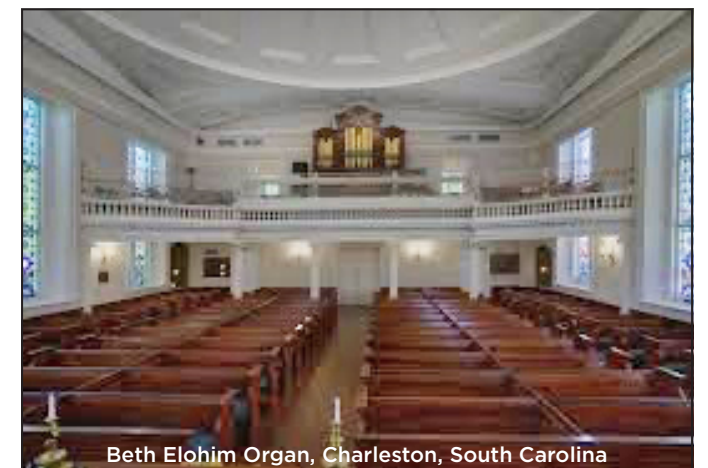
Inspired by the past, embracing today, shaping tomorrow.



It was no accident that Reform Judaism in American began in Charleston, South Carolina. The Jewish population of South Carolina grew quickly after the Revolution and by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was probably the largest of any state in the United States during the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Heavily of Sephardic descent, Charleston's Jews were prosperous and integrated into the city's thriving "Cotton" culture including the ownership of slaves and the emergence of a small class of mixed-race people of Jewish paternity who were excluded from

synagogue life. Significantly, Charleston also was the home of Francis Salvador (1747-1776), a plantation and slave owner. Salvador was the first Jew in America both elected to public office and to die in war in defense of the United States.

In November 1824, a group of young families from Charleston, South Carolina's Beth Elohim congregation led by a Moroccan born Jew, Isaac Harby (1788-1828) who had been inspired by reports of a Reform movement in Judaism in Germany, met to beth elohimdiscuss modernizing their synagogue's ritual and educational practices.



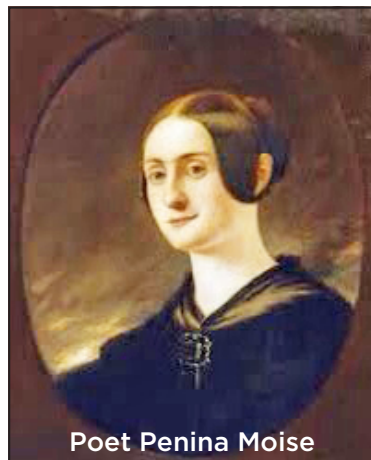
Beth Elohim Organ, Charleston, South Carolina



Their suggestions were summarily dismissed leading by the established synagogue's leadership resulting in them creating the first organization dedicated to the reforming of Judaism in the United States, the Reformed Society of Israelites (RSI).

Early in 1825 in their response to the leaders of Beth Elohim, the RSI wrote that "they are wholly influenced by a warm zeal to preserve and perpetuate the principles of Judaism in their utmost purity and vigor." Furthermore, they sought "to see the present generations of Israelites enlightened on the subjects of their holy religion.... that they will always fervently and zealously support it as the first and most ancient of religions." On the other hand, no program of social justice was advocated by the RSI.

The Society flourished for nearly a decade. They produced their own prayer book which included original hymns by Penina Moise (1797-1880), an early American Jewish poet and educator and held annual dinners for its male members. The Moise family immigrated to America from St.



Poet Penina Moise

Eustace fleeing from the instability throughout the Caribbean in the wake of the Haitian Slave Revolt in 1791. The untimely death of Isaac Harby and continued pressure from the leadership of Beth Elohim as well as individual families led to the suspension of RSI activity in 1833.

While American Reform Judaism was off to a shaky start, it did not, die in the crib. Beginning in 1838, after the original synagogue building in town had burned to the ground, a successful campaign was mounted by former RSI leaders including Abraham Moise (1799-1869), Penina's younger brother, to install an organ in the new building which in turn led to a court case whose favorable outcome led to the Reform group taking control of the new synagogue building.

Moreover, the spiritual leader of the congregation, Gustavus Poznanski (1805-1879) who had arrived in Charleston in 1836 from Germany where had

served congregations in Hamburg and Bremen, supported the reformers in their quest for installing an organ in the new temple although he had initially been hired to lead traditional services. In protest, the Charleston traditionalists formed their own congregation, Shearith Israel, which later (1866) reunited with the reformers. Poznanski himself remained at Beth Elohim until 1850 until the political divide in the community made it too difficult for him to remain in his pulpit.

In 1841, Poznanski spoke at the dedication of the new Beth Elohim building and offered a historic discourse. Informed by the denationalizing ideology of Reform Judaism, he boldly proclaimed, "this synagogue is our temple, this city our Jerusalem, this happy land our Palestine, and as our fathers defended with their lives that temple, that city and that land, so will their sons defend this temple, this city and this land." Tragically and ironically, Poznanski's son, Gustavus Poznanski, Jr., died in 1862 at the nearby Battle of Secessionville while serving in the Confederate Army.

To some extent, Poznanski helped connect the indigenous Reform Judaism in Charleston to the more fully developed Reform movement in Germany at the same time that German Jewish immigration began increasing to the United States. In 1820, there were only 3,000 Jews in the United States. Twenty years later in 1840, the American Jewish population grew to 15,000 and then in the next twenty years, grew tenfold to 150,000 by 1860 on the eve of the Civil War.

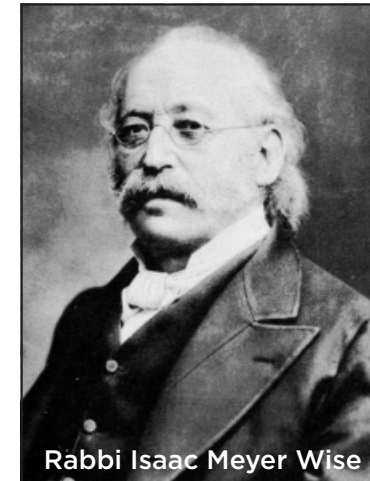
The new immigrants were overwhelmingly from German speaking lands in Central Europe. The first immigrant Reform group in the United States, the Har Sinai Verein, was organized in Baltimore in 1842. Three years later in 1845, the Emanu-El congregation was established in New York. They invited Leo Merzbacher (1809-1856) to their pulpit. Trained by Rabbi Moses Sofer in Fuerth, Bavaria, Merzbacher introduced Confirmation in 1848 and a modified traditional prayer book in 1855. Despite his own poor health, Emanu-El quickly emerged as a leading American congregation.

At the national level, new and dynamic leadership for Reform Judaism was provided with the arrival of Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900) in 1846. Born

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in Steingrub, Wise was a man of unusual energy and vision. His initial appointment to a pulpit in Albany, New York literally included a fist fight with the congregation's President and his not surprising departure to Cincinnati where he later founded the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1873, the Hebrew Union College (1875) two years later and the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1889. A "reform moderate," in 1857 Wise wrote his own prayer book, Minhag America, which he hoped would be adopted broadly by the American Jewish community. Popular throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Wise's siddur ultimately yielded to a more "radical reform" approach to Jewish worship with publication of the Union Prayer Book (second edition) in 1895.



Rabbi Isaac Meyer Wise

Wise also sought a 'middle position' on the sensitive issue of slavery. Like other Americans, American Jews were deeply divided. Nearly all Southern Jews and their rabbis defended the institution of slavery and argued that it was Biblically sanctioned. A handful of Jews, mostly laymen like Ernestine Rose (1810-1892) and August Bondi (1833-1907), working outside of the organized Jewish religious community, were Abolitionists. However, the majority probably accepted the view that slavery itself was acceptable if it followed Biblical standards on the treatment and rights of the slave. For this "middle" group, Union, ultimately was more important than the manumission of the slave population. Wise, who expressed political ambitions as a Copperhead Democrat from Ohio and was a critic of Abraham Lincoln until the end of the Civil War, not only was a "moderate" but warned of the dangers of Abolitionism to the Jewish community because of their evangelism.

In 1855, Wise convened the first American rabbinic conference in American history in Cleveland, Ohio with the goal of shaping a unified American

approach to Jewish practice. Struggling to achieve religious consensus, Wise made some progress in convincing traditional delegates to join his centrist group. However, any prospect for unanimity ended with the arrival of Rabbi David Einhorn (1809-1879) to the United States to serve Har Sinai in Baltimore. Einhorn immediately blasted Wise's efforts and insisted on maintaining a separate, ideologically defined expression of Reform Judaism. Armed with both proper rabbinic ordination and a Ph.D. from a German university, Einhorn issued his own prayer book, Olat Tamid (The Eternal Sacrifice) and strongly condemned American slavery as morally unacceptable.

Einhorn preached and wrote both persistently and boldly against slavery. His arguments against 'the peculiar argument' were summed up in an article he wrote in his own German language newspaper, Sinai, in 1861 in a response to a "Biblical" defense of slavery by Morris Raphall (1798-1868), a popular, traditional New York based rabbi. "A



Rabbi David Einhorn

person who is more than a thing and in whom the dignity of human nature must be respected," Einhorn asked rhetorically, "IS (emphasis added)" the property, the possession of someone else, like a field, an ox, an ass?" Einhorn then answered himself, "We cannot even

conceive that God, whilst granting human rights to the slave, would approve of depriving him against his will and with inflexible force of the most sacred of human rights, that of disposing of himself."

Einhorn passionately continued his argument,

*"A book (the Torah) which ... says that all human beings are descended from the same human parents, can never approve of slavery and have it find favor in the sight of God. A law, which recognizes slavery, in its present day meaning, neither according to the conception of the institution of it, nor in its literal sense, and prescribes that the*



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Rabbi Emil Hirsch

Hebrew, who after six years will not cease from serving as a slave, must as a sign of shame, submit to having his ear pierced, considers no human being to be property. A religion which spares the feeling of the animal mother as the order

regarding the bird's nest proves, certainly objects to having the human mother forcibly deprived of her child. The ten commandments, the first of which is: "I am the Lord, thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt,—out of the house of bondage" can by no means want to place slavery of any human-being under divine sanction."

Einhorn's radical Reform Judaism and commitment to social justice ultimately prevailed in the United States reshaping the ideology and worship practices of the movement. His emphasis on social justice was later codified in the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 by his son-in-law, Rabbi Emil Hirsch. At the same time, Wise's national institutions developed under his tutelage until the following generation when Einhorn's followers largely redefined the religious character of Reform in the direction of what generally became known as Classical Reform Judaism.

Ritual and educational reform were not enough for Reform Jews in America. American Jewish ethical monotheism also needed a broader application in society. For American Reform Jews, this evolution began with issues of race and then expanded to include the rights of labor, war and peace, the enfranchisement of women and, most recently the LGBTQ community. Today, for Reform Jews of many stripes, the path to universal redemption includes prayer, progressive principles and social activism.

**Lance J. Sussman, PhD.** is the Senior Rabbi Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel and Chair of Board of Governors, Gratz College, both in Elkins Park, PA. Sussman also serves as the Senior Scholar to Roots of Reform Judaism.

## The Disruptive Courage of Southern Reform Rabbis

Rabbi Micah Greenstein

If we were to catalogue the strengths of Reform Judaism, we would have to begin with our freedom to choose and embrace the historical progression of our heritage and faith. We recognize the dynamic, evolutionary nature of our religious tradition, which has survived so long precisely because it has been so flexible and adaptable. The world is different.

When new realities require new changes, and we fail to meet them, we forsake our calling to be God's moral conscience in the here and now. In rabbinical school, I studied Amos, Jeremiah, Micah, and Isaiah; but I learned their modern application serving alongside brilliant African American faith leaders who chose to address civil and human rights on the front lines in Memphis before and after Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination at the Lorraine Motel. Nearly three decades as a Memphian has made the field of Southern Rabbis and black civil rights less academic or organizational and more deeply personal. Mentors like the Rev. Samuel "Billy" Kyles and the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Hooks were unknown to me when I co-published a book chapter on Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights 26 years ago.

**The jury is still out in 2020 on whether American Jewry will follow their courageous lead.**

Before his recent passing, Rep. John Lewis articulated the historic and necessary disruption Southern Reform Rabbis co-instigated in the 1960s, seeds of justice far from realized in the face of the appalling and ongoing inequities between black and white America. "Ours is the struggle of a lifetime, or maybe even many lifetimes," Lewis preached, "and each one of us in every generation must do our part...to build a better society and a more peaceful world."

There can be no peace when America remains a color-based society. 66 years after Brown vs.

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Board of Education, black children lack access to quality public school education as well as safeguards from the present pandemic. The economic and health disparities between blacks and whites has only worsened since the civil rights era. The eloquent dream which King proclaimed a generation ago has yet to be remotely realized.

It is true that no other single segment of

American society demonstrated more vigorously its solidarity with black aspirations in the days of segregation and racial turmoil than the American Jewish community. In terms of both individual and organizational participation, Southern rabbis were conspicuous in the struggle for justice and equality. The courageous southern rabbi who risked his life in defense of civil rights may have been socially and geographically removed from the blacks he defended, but these predominantly Classical Reform rabbis were convicted to fight prejudice against all races, kindled by the flame of the prophets' passion, viewing their affirmation of equality and dignity for all as a core religious imperative.

In retrospect, the disruptive courage of Southern Reform Rabbis – from Atlanta and Alexandria, to Birmingham, Baton Rouge, Memphis, and Meridian – is all the more remarkable, inasmuch as most preferred to accept the existing reality rather than change it. For these principled Reform Rabbis of yesteryear, self-sacrifice overcame self-interest. The jury is still out in 2020 on whether American Jewry will follow their courageous lead.

**Rabbi Micah Greenstein** has served Temple Israel, Memphis' historic 166-year-old synagogue, for close to three decades, sustaining its position as the largest congregation in Tennessee and the Deep South. Greenstein received the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Be The Dream Legacy Award in 2016, served as two-time president of the Memphis Ministers Association, on the national board of the NAACP, and on the executive committee of the National Civil Rights Museum, where he continues to serve on its Board of Directors. In 2019, he was named one of the "Top 40 Change Makers for Memphis."



### Taylor Festival Choir Partnership

Roots of Reform Judaism has partnered with the Taylor Festival Choir (TFC) to produce virtual recordings of High Holy Day choir music for the holy days. 24 Singers recorded parts for 10 pieces by Janowski, Steinberg, Fromm, Bloch, and more; then the pieces were mixed into virtual choir recordings. One of our Roots of Reform Judaism Cantorial Soloists, Bates O'Neal, a member of The Taylor Festival Choir, is featured as well on these recordings.

Led by founding director Dr. Robert Taylor, TFC is part of the Taylor Music Group based in Charleston, South Carolina, and serves as the professional choir-in-residence at the College of Charleston. It presents a full concert season in the Charleston area, and serves as the flagship ensemble for the Piccolo Spoleto Celtic Arts Series. The Choir has a brand new CD, "So Hallow'd the Time", released in July 2020. The CD is under consideration for two Grammy Awards: Best Choral Performance and Best New Composition. The link to the record is: <https://smarturl.it/sohallowdthetime>



## Disruptive and Dramatic Moments of History: Black Lives

Rabbi Ben Zeidman

There are disruptive events which happen to us, and there are moments in history when we embrace disruption. American Reform Judaism has inspired us to embrace dramatic moments for the sake of justice, to refuse to remain content with the dreams our country and our faith inspire. But rather to strive to see those dreams born into the world as a matter of Jewish obligation to society. While it may be a bit ‘on-the-nose’ to quote the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 in an article for The Reform Advocate, the document set the stage for how we as American Jews understand our calling to participate in disruptive and dramatic moments in pursuit of justice:

*“8. In full accordance with the spirit of the Mosaic legislation, which strives to regulate the relations between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.”*

This calling has forced us as American Jews, and especially those of us who are not Jews of color, to reflect on how we may have been complicit in injustice. Nevertheless “we deem it our duty” to confront our biases and privileges to right the wrongs we see not only in our own Jewish community, but in broader society as well.

We find ourselves in a moment of societal disruption as the cause for justice for Black lives calls upon all of us to reflect deeply and join the call for a “more perfect union.” However, the real beauty is that this is not, and should not be, a disruptive moment for American Jewry. Yes, it may be a reckoning for some American Jewish communities who have been idle, but taking an



active role in the call for justice is part and parcel to the effort of American Judaism since before 1885.

We have long marched side by side with those who would push for the continued reorganization of society on the basis of justice and righteousness. He have and must continue to do so for the poor, the downtrodden, the overlooked and the victimized. Not only because we have been those people in ages past, but because (we need to recognize more and more clearly) those people are also people who are already part of the American

Jewish community.

We must see ourselves as obligated to pursue a world of wholeness. It is therefore incumbent upon us to open our eyes, our ears, and our minds to those who seek fairness and equality. As God calls upon us to work together with the Divine in the ongoing effort of creation, God calls upon us to heal the brokenness which exists from society

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***We have long marched side by side with those who would push for the continued reorganization of society on the basis of justice and righteousness.***

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which is organized by imperfect human beings.

The Reform Jew is therefore faced with an obligation to support Black lives. We do so not only because of our shared journey with Black Americans in the face of oppression and hate, not only because we are a community which includes

so many Jews of Color (here in El Paso and in many other communities that is especially true), and not only because we have been the victims in generations past. We take part in this dramatic moment of disruption in America because we are called by our faith and our history “to solve... the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.”

In doing so we will find ourselves confronting people who will prove challenging. They will espouse views and opinions which directly contradict our own on our faith, our commitment to Israel, our love for America, and more. But there is no doubt that we will be unable to humanize ourselves or our ideas in their eyes if we remain out of sight and out of mind. By walking side by side with our neighbors in the cause of justice, we may find that we are fighting for justice in more ways than we realize.

Systemic racism is a reality in America. It is a strong society which confronts its weaknesses and continually strives to improve. The Jewish people are obligated to that pursuit as well. This is what has made America a home for the Jewish people, and our participation in historic moments will ensure that is the case for many generations to come.

**Rabbi Ben Zeidman** currently serves as rabbi at Temple Mount Sinai in El Paso, Texas. He grew up in Columbus, Ohio, attended James Madison College at Michigan State University, was ordained by Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in 2010, and then served as assistant and associate rabbi at Temple Emanu-El in New York City until 2015. He was also the Developmental Editor of *The New Union Haggadah, Revised Edition* (2014), and a contributing author for *Lights in the Forest: Rabbis Respond to Twelve Essential Jewish Questions* (2014). Ben is currently a Board member of Roots of Reform Judaism.

## The Legacy of Rabbi Joachim Prinz

Rand Burke  
Roots Rabbinical  
Student Intern,  
Cincinnati

Reform Judaism has always been a bulwark against social injustice. One of the values taught in the Reform movement is the collective denouncement of



social and racial injustice and the pledge to education to foster a more inclusive, welcoming, and just society. The storied history of our people escaping slavery in Egypt and journeying to the Promised Land, all the while being reminded by God and Moses that they were once strangers in the Land of Egypt, echoed in the minds of many Reform Jews as injustice in our society still presents itself. Combining this experience with the reminder that all humans are created B'tzelem Elohim, in the image of God, and it provides the foundational motivation that Reform Jews feel to fight alongside marginalized groups in the United States.

With the current political and social climate in the United States being tainted by ever-present news stories and articles detailing the plight of Black Americans, Jewish organizations across the country have rallied behind the slogan “Black Lives Matter,” but this is not the first time that the Jewish community has advocated alongside their African-American neighbors. Although Jews were instrumental in the Abolition movement of the 19th century, their activism and dedication to liberty and justice for all was demonstrated full force during the Civil Rights movement of the

*continued on page 13*

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1960s as rabbis and community leaders chose to march alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

On August 28 1963, Dr. King and his followers descended on Washington DC's National Mall to deliver his famous speech fighting for Civil Rights for all Americans. Marching alongside Dr. King was Rabbi Joachim Prinz. Rabbi Prinz, a German born rabbi who escaped Nazi Germany in 1937, accompanied Dr. King to Washington to advocate for Civil Rights and to represent the American Jewish community's support for the Black community. Rabbi Prinz's background in Europe before his emigration to America was shaped by his love for Judaism and his involvement with the Zionist Youth Movement.

After earning his Ph.D. in philosophy (at age 21 no less), he was ordained as a rabbi from the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau, and he subsequently began his educational and professional career as a rabbi. Because of Hitler's rise to power and the ever-present threat of Nazism in Europe, Rabbi Prinz immigrated to the United States in 1937 under the sponsorship of Rabbi Stephen Wise. Upon arriving in the U.S. Rabbi Prinz began his activism through fundraising for the Jewish Agency for Israel and advocating for the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine. Rabbi Prinz also served as a congregational rabbi in Newark, New Jersey where he began to preach about the immorality of discrimination in the United States. Later, Rabbi Prinz would be elected to president of the American Jewish Congress and other top leadership positions in the World Jewish Congress and World Conference of Jewish Organizations.

As the religious leader of Temple B'nai Abraham in Newark, New Jersey, Rabbi Prinz dedicated many a sermon to the evils of discrimination and the plight of Black Americans and other minority groups in the U.S. Inspired by his personal experience and through witnessing the Nazi's rise to power, Rabbi Prinz offered compelling arguments about the importance of intercommunity cooperation to fight for equal rights for all. Rabbi Prinz's activism was not limited to the pulpit, and he was often seen attending peaceful protests and standing alongside prominent activists.



Rabbi Prinz and Dr. King

Rabbi Prinz's most notable endeavor was during his service as president of the American Jewish Congress (1958-1966) when he marched alongside Dr. Martin Luther King in Washington D.C. in August of 1963. Before Dr. King took the podium and delivered his famous speech in which he declared, "I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." Rabbi Prinz preceded Dr. King and in his speech, he pleaded, "The time, I believe, has come to work together — for it is not enough to hope together, and it is not enough to pray together." Rabbi Prinz's call to action paralleled Dr. King's call to compassion represented the value which has been and continues to be central to the Reform Movement: social justice.

Rabbi Prinz and Dr. King worked together to take action by upholding the biblical value of all human beings being created B'tzelem Elohim, and by promoting peaceful assembly, education, and the importance of taking action. Rabbi Prinz's legacy marching alongside Dr. King reverberated throughout the lifeblood of the Reform movement and motivates us, even today, to fight for social justice and uphold our legacy as exhibited by historical figures such as Rabbi Prinz who were central to our roots.

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# The Reform Jewish Future Is Bright



Rabbi Evon Yakar

The Jewish world looks a bit different these days. Our faces in zoom boxes rather than arrayed around a sanctuary or board table is an image seared into memory. Yet, this moment of disruption

is not only about what we cannot do, it has also become about possibility. Since the earliest days of our Jewish tradition and our people's memory, we've innovated and responded to disruptive moments with creativity. The same is true today. The global pandemic and subsequent closures of our physical buildings makes our primary purpose of gathering impossible in the traditional format. The inability to share the same space with my fellow community members during moments of grief, at times of celebration and when engaging in study is disruptive for sure. And, it is the motivation to imagine as our people have always done!

I know that I could have never imagined this rabbinate. The work I engage with, the communities I am a part of and the life I am living is certainly not what I envision seventeen years ago when I was accepted to Rabbinical School. Yet, isn't that life? I became a rabbi to engage with and be part of community. I envisioned bringing together my passion for Judaism and my love of the out of doors. I pictured a unique rabbinate that involved bringing young Jews on adventures to wrestle with Jewish ideas and Jewish identity.

That idea quickly evolved as I embraced my student pulpit

experiences while at HUC. That evolution continued after ordination in Phoenix. There I was able to recognize the value of the synagogue model. The beauty of community in that model shines for those engaging. I also learned that for many Jews, there were alternatives and am blessed to benefit from working with the Adventure Judaism community and its founder Rabbi Jamie Korngold. In that context, we use our passion for outdoor recreation and our love of Jewish life and learning to bring them together. That community's ways of engagement provided an additional model as a Synagogue without Walls to deepen my understanding of possibility.

***I pictured a unique rabbinate that involved bringing young Jews on adventures to wrestle with Jewish ideas and Jewish identity.***

Today, after nine years as the Reform Rabbi in Lake Tahoe, serving two Reform congregations, I see this great disruption moment as full of opportunity. Certainly, we have challenges and yearn to once again be together. This circumstance, thought, gives us the moment to try new things, to evolve long standing customs and to re-imagine possibilities. Our Tahoe congregations are now in a true collaborative partnership with Temple Or Rishon in Sacramento. In this way, we broaden our engagement with a larger segment of our Jewish People, we are able to pool our resources of staff, skills and knowledge and we can better celebrate the sense of community because we are Together, Not Alone.

The Reform Jewish Future is bright because we are now faced with the need to inventory our resources. While we wish to be together again in person, we can do as our people always have and use this opportunity to be creative to build that future now, proactively. From my experience in the traditional synagogue model to my work with

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## LIFE AT THE TIPPING POINT AND BEYOND

### Challenges and Opportunities

*Rabbi Devon Lerner*

In 1972, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), made history by ordaining, Sally Priesand, the first woman Rabbi to be ordained in the United States.

I entered the rabbinical program at HUC-JIR in 1974, only two years after Rabbi Priesand was ordained. I was thrilled to be accepted into the program, giving me the opportunity to fulfill my dream of becoming a Reform rabbi! Every woman who entered the program understood that we would not be accepted by everyone. Pushback was inevitable. Some of our male classmates and professors did not support the ordination of women. One of their arguments was their belief that we would never be accepted by congregations. My parents agreed with them. My father said: "How do you know you will get a job (after ordination)." Admittedly a good question, yet I was undaunted, likely due to a large dose of youthful determination.

***In 1972, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), made history by ordaining, Sally Priesand, the first woman Rabbi to be ordained in the United States.***

My parents reluctantly supported me, and were ultimately very proud of my accomplishments.

Every rabbinical student who then attended HUC-JIR was required to serve a student pulpit. Some of these student pulpit congregations initially refused



to accept a woman as their rabbi. The College responded with a strong message. The policy was very clear. Every congregation is required to accept the student chosen for them, whether they are male or female. No exceptions.

When my class, including 7 women, was ordained in 1979, we brought the total number of Reform women rabbis to 13. For my first position, I was blessed to be invited to become an assistant rabbi at the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, commonly known as The Temple, in

Atlanta, Georgia. I cannot say enough about the warmth and grace of this congregation and my wonderful senior rabbi, Rabbi Alvin Sugarman. The Temple leadership took a bold and brave step to hire me, becoming the first congregation in the Southeast to hire a woman rabbi. The Temple has a storied history of being on forefront of social change. The Temple was deeply involved in the 60's Civil Rights Movement and has been on the cutting edge of other social justice initiatives throughout its history. The Temple leadership knew how to handle pushback. That gave me some measure of comfort and safety as I began my rabbinical career.

I was personally interested in getting involved in social action/justice work. Rabbi Sugarman gave me the opportunity to participate in civil rights dialogues and events, including the grand opening of the new the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Change headquarters, where I represented the congregation by participating in the ceremonies. I was also privileged to welcome

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## LIFE AT THE TIPPING POINT AND BEYOND

### Challenges and Opportunities

*Rabbi Rachael Miller*

More opportunities for women rabbis are available, but there is still work to be done.

Standing on the shoulders of so many amazing rabbinic role models, both men, and women, I have found countless doors open to me that may have previously been closed. Whereas many women before me may have experienced interactions with their community in which they were told, "oh, I'm looking for the real rabbi," (aka a man), I find that often people come to me because they are looking for a rabbi who is a woman. Others sometimes see my femininity as an additional positive for their comfort level in learning or speaking with me. As both a positive and in some ways a negative, when I teach classes, the majority of those who attend are, in fact, female.

Whereas some folks used to get upset if the rabbi changed Godly language to be gender-neutral (or even feminine!), this is now less of a discomfort. It is no longer a laughable moment when the rabbi changes the character of the Hasidic story from male to female. Further, I now hear my congregants saying, "Rabbi, we're mostly women studying here; let's make this text feminine!"

Though we have made strides in these conversations, I want to acknowledge that there is still plenty of work to be done. Women in the rabbinate still hear comments about their appearance at an astonishingly higher rate than our male colleagues. Yet each of us is a part of the sisterhood of female rabbis pushing organizations to make sure our voices are on panels, in the paper, and in front of our communities alongside our

male and non-binary colleagues. I am deeply indebted to the work



of the female rabbis who came before me and will continue to be another link in the chain of normalizing powerful female women for our communities.

Women have changed not only the overall look but also the feel of the rabbinate, and not just for women.

When people look at me, I am not sure what they notice first: my gender, my age, my physique, my outfit, or perhaps they are processing all of these things simultaneously, like most of us attempt to do in all of our interactions — it's human nature. Beyond first reactions, impressions, and judgments, the early female rabbis before me created a culture shift that began to normalize that when someone says "rabbi," their first image is not necessarily only a man in a suit, but also a woman dressed in slacks or a professional dress.

***More opportunities for women rabbis are available, but there is still work to be done.***

Then came another wave of female rabbis who said, "Actually we can 'look' and be very rabbinic no matter what we wear." It didn't take long for female rabbis to make the mental note that it is really hard to sit on the floor and nurture the spiritual life of children in dry-clean-only clothes. Rather than never getting down on the floor at the level of a child, a new group of women came into the rabbinate and said, not only will we sit on the floor with these little ones to engage in Jewish learning, but let us be comfortable while we do it, because we will do a better job (and so the men started to do it too!).

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and introduce Coretta Scott King at a special service at the Temple.

Of course, there were members who did not accept me because I am a woman. I changed sexist references in the Gates of Prayer and Gates of Repentance liturgy to gender neutral language. This led to a request from the liturgy committee to defend my position. Perhaps the biggest controversy about my style was not about my clothes, but about my choice of transportation. I owned a motorcycle and often drove it to the Temple, especially for youth group meetings. I know that was a hit with the teenagers!

On a more recent trip to The Temple, I expressed my appreciation of my tenure there, adding that I did not experience much pushback as a woman rabbi. One Temple member responded: "Oh, there was definitely pushback!" That response added to my fondness, admiration, and gratitude to the leadership, with a special thank you to Rabbi Alvin Sugarman.

In 1990, the Central Conference of Reform Rabbis (CCAR) formally changed Hebrew Union College's admissions policy to "permit acceptance

## **In 1990, the Central Conference of Reform Rabbis (CCAR) formally changed Hebrew Union College's admissions policy to "permit acceptance of gay and lesbian candidates for the rabbinate."**

of gay and lesbian candidates for the rabbinate."

As was true for the fight for women to become rabbis, the struggle for equality for LGBT rabbis went on for years before it reached a tipping point. The debate became a flashpoint after Stonewall, the AIDS epidemic, and increased awareness of emotional, economic, and physical toll, that LGBT individuals suffered. Even after this 1990 shift to acceptance, living and working as an LGBT rabbi was not easy. Many gay rabbis hid this part of their identity to get into HUC and then continued to remain closeted for fear of losing their jobs. I was one of those rabbis.

Years after my time at The Temple, I took a short-term position at a congregation. I enjoyed my time at this congregation. Everything was going

well. When my contract was ending, the senior rabbi asked me to stay on. I was flattered, but I had other plans. I wanted to move out of congregational work. Since I had nothing to lose, I decided to come out to him. As soon as he heard that I was gay, he immediately rescinded his offer and said: "I don't think the congregation is ready for this." To his credit, he later apologized. Ironically, a member of that congregation later said to me that it would have been better if I had come out, since they already knew, through the grape vine, that I was gay.

Fast forward - I have been a rabbi for 41 years. It is now a given that women and Jewish LGBT individuals can become rabbis and successfully lead congregations and provide rabbinic leadership in many other roles. One significant sign of how much progress we have made is the 2015 election of Rabbi Denise Eger as the first openly gay person to serve as President of the CCAR. Yet, as in all social justice causes, the struggle continues for full equal rights for all.

As Rabbi Tarfon once said:

*"It is not (our) your responsibility to finish the work [of perfecting the world], but (we) you are not free to desist from it either" (2:16).*

I am proud to be a part of the Reform Movement that continues to strive to fulfill our ideal of making our house a house of prayer for all people.

**Rabbi Devon Lerner** is the Program Director for Roots of Reform Judaism. Rabbi Lerner was ordained in 1979 at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), and earned a Master of Hebrew Letters and a Doctor of Divinity Degree from the same institution. In 1986, she also received a Master of Social Work from Boston University. She has served congregations in Atlanta, GA, Richmond, VA, and Boston, MA, and has been active in social justice issues and interfaith relations throughout her career.

Rabbi Lerner was the Executive Director for the Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry in Massachusetts and is the author of Celebrating Interfaith Marriages.

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Transitions like this in the rabbinate are not just about attire, but also about the spiritual life of the rabbi and all of those whom we serve. The rabbi can play a profound role, not only in the life of the older congregants but there is also the opportunity to be more present for the tiniest in the congregation as well.

## **Women have changed not only the overall look but also the feel of the rabbinate, and not just for women.**

I am now a part of the generation of female rabbis who are changing what the rabbinate looks like not only in-person, but in a digital world as well. Even in the pre Covid-19 world, with social media accounts that share the simplest parts of our lives and our spiritual moments too. We not only specialize in finding the perfect text to succinctly share in a "byte-sized" and digestible manner, but we also find the best natural light for that perfect picture of the challah we just made, hoping to inspire others to bring the smell of Judaism into their homes.

**Rabbi Rachael Klein Miller** is a right-handed, guitar playing, soccer ball juggling, rock climbing, Instagram posting, and Jewish music loving Kansas native. Ordained on the Cincinnati campus of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Rabbi Rachael joined the Temple Emanu-El community in Atlanta in July of 2017.

Rabbi Rachael is passionate about Judaism's ability to make people feel connected to something bigger than themselves — be it God, community, culture, ritual, Israel, or something in between. Judaism provides a template for uncovering and creating meaning in this world, and Rabbi Rachael seeks to share those moments and teachings with all her students. Rabbi Rachael enthusiastically seeks innovative ways for community members of all ages to nurture their innate spirituality.

Rabbi Rachael loves to spend her free time with her husband and fellow Temple Emanu-El rabbi, Max, as well as their new baby girl, Zohara

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the entrepreneurial Synagogue without Walls of Adventure Judaism I know that community is most important. Looking ahead, I see broader and deeper connections among the Jewish people because of the lessons learned during this pandemic and our virtual response. I don't have a trusted crystal ball, but I do have wonderful community around me to stay committed to building towards a Jewish future that is bright with cooperation and optimism. The Jewish future must be about community, as it always has. And, it must be about the whole People of Israel, it must live that true sense of collaboration, working together to bring our values and our perspectives to others. I have learned on the trail and in the synagogue that it is about you, about me and about us - together!

**Rabbi Evon Yakar** was ordained from Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio in 2007. In Lake Tahoe, he is the rabbi of both Temple Bat Yam in South Lake Tahoe, CA and North Tahoe Hebrew Congregation in Tahoe Vista, CA. This joint effort of both Tahoe congregations brings together the Lake Tahoe Basin Jewish Community.

In addition to serving the Lake Tahoe Jewish Community, Rabbi Yakar has been part of the team at Adventure Rabbi: Synagogue without Walls, working with B'nai Mitzvah students, wedding couples, conversion students and those seeking to integrate Judaism with a taste of adventure. During the summer of 2016, Rabbi Yakar joined the newly founded Tawonga B'nai Mitzvah program, which is part of the Camp Tawonga program offerings. In this role, he serves as the rabbi in residence for the retreat component of the program and serves as one of the officiants helping families celebrate their simcha - celebration.

Evon earned a BS from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 2001 where he studied Hebrew and Biological Aspects of Conservation.





## Reflections on Mishkan HaNefesh



Rabbi Edwin  
Goldberg

I grew up with the old Union Prayer Book, which for many reasons I still love. Gates of Prayer and Gates of Repentance never really worked for me. This may explain why I chose as a congregational rabbi around the year 2000 to create a machzor for the synagogue.

It was not great, but it was better for our needs than GOR. It is possible that my carping about GOR was why I was selected to help create a new prayer book for the Reform movement's High Holy Days. I knew what I did not like. Later I discovered that GOR was an Americanized version of a British Liberal prayer book. Indeed, the last official, home-grown, machzor for American Reform Jews was created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century!

***In creating the new book, we understood it was a sacred part of a much larger endeavor, fashioning meaningful High Holy Day worship for Reform Jews.***

In creating the new book, we understood it was a sacred part of a much larger endeavor, fashioning meaningful High Holy Day worship for Reform Jews. We practiced “zero-based machzor building” in the sense that we started with a blank slate. Of course, we knew early on that GOR, the traditional Machzor, and innovations from Mishkan T’filah

would be major influences. The theological broadband of MT was important. We wanted the theology to be integrated, i.e., diverse so that different normative views of God in Judaism would be mixed on the pages.

Along the way other innovations came into our prayer book planning. For instance, we decided to split the shofar service into three different parts of the service, in order to highlight its centrality to Rosh Hashanah morning. We also created new optional Torah readings, such as the story of Joseph and his brothers, and Cain and Abel, in order to offer diverse Torah narratives on the Days of Awe. For Yom Kippur afternoon we created a service with the theme of middot, or moral virtues. We wanted the ending of the Days of Awe to showcase all the things we can do right, after spending hours enumerating all the things we do wrong. Relative to this notion we created a Concluding Service that focused on the image of God holding out the divine hand to welcome us in our repentance.

In conclusion, we saw the book as part of a larger effort to redesign the Days of Awe so that they work as community worship but also individual spiritual growth. Hence the name: *Mishkan HaNefesh*, *The Dwelling Place of the Soul*.



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Rabbi Edwin Goldberg is delighted to serve as the rabbi of Congregation Beth Shalom of The Woodlands. He received rabbinic ordination and a doctorate in Hebrew Literature from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (in 1989 and 1994, respectively).

He enjoys a full spectrum of rabbinic activities, from teaching, to pastoral care, to creating opportunities for deep spiritual engagement.

He is the author of many books, including:

*Midrash for Beginners*

*Heads and Tales: Stories of the Sages to Enlighten Our Minds*

*Swords and Plowshares: Jewish Views of War and Peace*

*Love Tales from the Talmud*

*Saying No and Letting Go: Jewish Wisdom on Making Room for What Matters Most.*

He served as the Coordinating Editor of the new Reform Jewish Machzor, *Mishkan HaNefesh*. He also edited a companion commentary, *Divrei Mishkan HaNefesh* and has published many articles and sermons.

Rabbi Goldberg has taught as an adjunct professor at the University of Miami in the department of Religious Studies and Judaic Studies. He is also a graduate of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality.

## A Statement of Universal Humility: Ernest Bloch's Sacred Service

Rand Burke

*Roots of Reform Judaism Rabbinical Student Intern, Cincinnati*

“You must give it your full attention, and whatever is on your mind will be transformed into something better,” stated Ellen Moryl, as I asked her about Ernest Bloch's Sacred Service. Ellen is one of the foremost experts on Bloch's Sacred Service as she produced many of its performances, she is also a relative of the late Ernest Bloch.

Ernest Bloch was commissioned in 1927 by Cantor Reuben Rinder of Temple Emanu-El of San Francisco, CA, to compose a score set to the Shabbat morning service liturgy found in the Union Prayer Book, the de facto siddur for the Reform Movement at the time. Bloch and Rinder were acquainted because of Bloch's newly appointed role as the Director of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Rinder wanted to create a moving musical composition to transform the synagogue service. Bloch sought to promote a universal piece that could unite humanity through a shared love of music.

***“It has become a ‘private affair’ between God and me,”***

Bloch did not see himself as a Jewish composer; instead, he wanted the Jewish elements of his music to be subconsciously woven through his compositions further to promote a universal message of unity and togetherness. Although his Jewish upbringing was not the primary focus of his musical career, he valued his Judaism and recalled in a note to his friend and mentor Edmond Fleg,:

*“I have read the Bible...and an immense sense of pride surged in me. My entire being vibrated: it is a revelation...I would find myself again a Jew, raise my head proudly as a Jew.”*



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When called upon to compose the Sacred Service, Bloch returned to his native Switzerland to write the work in peace. He stated, “It has become a ‘private affair’ between God and me,” when recalling the importance of the composition. He composed the score specifically to be performed by a full symphony orchestra complete with a percussion section, two harps, and triple wind instruments. These aspects of an orchestra were not common in synagogue services as many synagogues at the time relied on choirs and an organist. However, Bloch’s Sacred Service transcended liturgical music to achieve a grand spectacle of music that sought to elicit deep connection and emotion regardless of the personal convictions of the audience. His Sacred Service was commissioned to be a liturgical rendition of the Union Prayer Book’s Saturday morning Shabbat services but designed to be a statement of universal humility.

In speaking further with Ellen, I could hear in her voice her emotional investment in the work in which she engaged with Bloch’s Sacred Service. She told me in confidence that the music gives you a sense of humility, stating, “one thing you will gain is humility in addition to empathy, kindness, and acceptance of all people.” She described to me that Bloch, from age 10, wanted to create the Sacred Service because that was around the time he began learning the Shabbat liturgy. It took him many years to complete the composition, and when he did, he wanted the performance of it to be sincere and profound. He tried to make a statement of what he thought about the universe and humanity, and through his Sacred Service, he sought to unify his audiences. Ellen even recalled that during some of the choral performances of the piece, some committed Christian members of the choir were so moved that they considered converting to Judaism. The music of the Sacred Service sought to “elevate your whole being to something greater that can sustain you for your entire life,” she added.

Bloch’s goal to unify audiences through his Sacred Service was intrinsic in his score. He specifically designed the solo parts to be sung by a baritone cantor or vocalist. Not only was this Cantor Rinder’s voice type, but this was the preferred mode of American Reform synagogue services.

The baritone and bass-baritone singing separated American Reform Judaism from the Eastern European hazzanim. Because of this, there was a particular sound that Bloch wanted for his vocals: a deep baritone to convey the emotion and meaning in the liturgy.

In 1933, in preparation for the World Premiere of the Sacred Service in London, Bloch wanted to make a statement on what Ellen Moryl described as “universal human brotherhood.” He envisioned the Sacred Service vocals to be sung by Paul Robeson, a baritone, and a prominent African-American singer. However, Robeson could not read music and therefore was unable to prepare the work in time for the World Premiere. Regardless, the motivation that Bloch had to compose the Sacred Service was to unify his audience under the umbrella of universal humility.



Ernest Bloch



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composers of Jewish music, but I am so very worried that, besides

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## Notes to Roots

### About the Spring 2020 Advocate

“Thank you so much for sending us your magazine with David’s wonderful article. We enjoyed the other articles as well. I was disappointed that the Grant us Peace article didn’t mention Herbert Fromm’s rendition. Ben Steinberg was a scholar in residence here several years ago and he told me that whenever he was in Boston, and he would visit the Fromms, they would greet each other with, “Hello Mr. Grant us Peace and hello Mr. Shalom Rav”, since those were their most famous pieces. Since Sam and I were the Fromms’ adopted children, we’re probably the only people who would be offended by this omission.”

-Marianne Aaron, Ann Arbor

“Thanks so much for sending me the Reform Advocate magazine with David’s beautiful article. This was certainly a stellar event and so very meaningful since so many of us were able to attend and for Emily to conduct the work.... Dallas was my first position after serving in the Army and Temple Emanu-El and its people still mean a lot to me. I served the Temple for 14 years, and built the music program. We had a 65th reunion of the choir two years ago and it was quite an event. I left there in 1966 and the choir at that time had 100 members. We had a ball and were able to perform every new Service created in those very creative days.

Sadly most of that music has been forgotten and I am naturally very sad about this. It reminded me of that fact when I read the article by your Scholar in Residence Dr. Sussman about ‘Sim Shalom’ and ‘Shalom Rav’. His article makes it seem as if no one ever set this text before Ben Steinberg. I love Ben’s setting, but I still feel the most beautiful setting of Sim Shalom was the English setting of the text by Herbert Fromm using the translation from the UPB #1 and my father’s setting of Shalom Rav a couple of years after the Fromm setting. If I may say so even I have set Sim Shalom (in Hebrew) and I think it is the only one of my Synagogue pieces still in use. I am all for furthering our ‘contemporary’

the great Service by Bloch, the tremendous musical contribution to the American Reform Synagogue by people like Freed, Schalit, Fromm, Binder, Helfman, Chajes, Berlinski, my father, and quite a few others has been completely forgotten. I hope in the future in a subsequent number of your excellent magazine devoted to music that the great renaissance we had in the music for the Reform Synagogue will get a hearing and perhaps a boost.

I hope you will not take this as a criticism but rather as my sadness about the current situation I find with our Cantors and music directors today regarding the field I have loved all my life to which I think I have contributed a bit.”

-Samuel Adler, Professor Emeritus,  
Eastman School of Music, The Juilliard School

“The latest issue of The Reform Advocate is wonderful and informative. Your leadership has made a huge impact in understanding our “Roots”.”

-Joan Pines, Chicago

### About virtual Shabbat service

“(The virtual Shabbat service is )...Just beautiful, so smoothly put together. Loved the old familiar music and also the melodies I don’t know so well.... The sermon meaningful and of the day. The idea of blessings spreading out is just what we need right now.”

-Victoria Woolner Samuels, Chicago

“I just wanted to let you know that one of my congregants is an avid member of Roots of Reform Judaism and shared with me the Shabbat service you created recently...You did a lovely job and I just wanted to pass along to you just how meaningful and moving the service was for my congregant. This is especially telling as this congregant is not a big fan of online services.”

-Rabbi Iah Pillsbury, Colorado Springs

“LOVE THIS!!!!!! Thank you for sharing!!! Just beautiful!!!!...Mazel tov!!!!!!”

-Cantor Yvon F. Shore, Cincinnati



## Notes to Roots

(continued)

"The services were lovely, calming and familiar. The video itself had high production values. Hopefully many people watched the service and forwarded it on to other family and friends. Yasher koach. Very good work."

**-Rabbi Samuel K. Joseph, PhD, Cincinnati**

"It was great hearing all the old readings and your (sermon) message was right on."

**-Ron Aaron, Ann Arbor**

"I thought the service on Friday night was lovely. It had the real 'Kanter Touch'. I find these virtual services to be less than satisfying. But this one was extremely well done, warm and engaging. I think the whole lovely group of people you had on there...made it special."

**-Joan Pines, Chicago**

"It was very special and inspirational, as well as timely."

**-Harold Eichenbaum**

"It was beautifully done. Very grateful for all you are doing."

**-Les Novitsky, Sarasota**

"Many thanks for sending the service....my kudos to Bates O'Neal, I really enjoyed his voice."

**-Steve Naman, Atlanta**

"This is lovely. Thank you for sharing it....at moments in the service I was sure I was hearing one of the best cantorial voices of his generation (and I'm hoping that's a vocation in Bates O'Neal's plans!)."

**-Fred Roden, New York City**



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often and follow us on social media.



## Sermon from Roots of Reform Judaism First Virtual Shabbat Service May 29, 2020

*Rabbi Kenneth A. Kanter*

*Rabbinical Director*

What a unique, unprecedented time we live in these days- and every day. There is an aphorism that says, "may you live in interesting times." Well, we do. These days have been replete with stories of heroism; first responders, the incredible efforts of doctors and nurses, essential employees in grocery stores, drug stores, factories, shipping companies and the postal service, teachers and administrators, chaplains of every faith and belief.

It has been especially meaningful that we pause to remember the unsung heroes of every profession—whether by the loud banging, shouting, and percussive sounds in New York City at 7:00 PM to thank all the hospital and medical workers, the fly-overs by air force and army pilots, or all the programming on "Facebook" and "You-tube" from members of our arts and entertainment communities who, through song, dance, and speech salute and raise money for the hungry, the unemployed or underemployed, the elderly in nursing homes or the children with no school to attend. For a change, we not only remember the superheroes and medal winners, we remember the tens of thousands who are overcoming these trying days with quiet courage, determination and devotion.

The recognition that every person, great or small, powerful or meek, wealthy or in need, is worthy of recognition. This appreciation reminds me of an old Jewish tale. It is about the simple apple, the one you might have found in your school lunchbox. Before we eat that apple, we say a blessing, a blessing which by its connection also blesses the person who worked in the orchard and picked the apple; it blesses the person who made the box which held the apples on the way to the store. It blesses the grocery stocking person who displays the apple on the grocery shelf. That simple blessing consecrates the person who made the ladder on which the apple picker stood, it blessed

the lumberyard staff and the forester who cut the tree. You get it, our simple little blessing spreads out like the concentric circles created when you throw a pebble in a pond. Our moment of blessing and thanksgiving spreads wider and wider and wider.

One of my favorite quotations comes from the first Vice President and second President of the United States, John Adams, in the letters he wrote his wife Abigail while he was in Philadelphia and she was in Boston during the founding of our United States. Adams wrote "there are only two types of creatures of value on the face of the earth, those with a commitment, and those who require the commitment of others."

On this Shabbat, in these difficult days, Adams's words resonate for us as powerfully as they did 250 years ago when they were written. We seek commitment from others, from our political leaders, our business leaders, our families, our colleagues. And we seek commitment from our faith, our clergy, our Judaism. In Deuteronomy, as our people are leaving Egypt under the leadership of Moses, running from Egyptian bondage, we read "Remember the way the Lord your God has made your travel these past forty years, that God might test you with hardships to learn what was in your heart."

These past many weeks have been our tests. We have seen friends and family suffer, we have lost loved ones and many whom we do not know to this terrible pandemic, and we have learned what is in our hearts.

Our service tonight is a combination of liturgy of our Reform tradition. Some came from the Union Prayer Book written during the days of our grandparents and great grandparents, other prayers came from the Sinai UPB written in twenty-first century words for our contemporary world. The music comes from the great temples of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, all the way to music written in the last few years. They

all have something in common—

they speak to our hearts, they guide us on our life journeys, and they lift our spirits, encouraging us to bring God into our everyday lives.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, the great 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher and hero of the Civil Rights movement wrote: "to attain holiness, we must recognize that we do not accomplish things alone."

We have certainly learned that, every time we put on a mask in our grocery or drug store, waiting in our cars for the doctor or a food pick up. We cannot and do not accomplish things alone. We are responsible for those around us as we hope they are responsible for us. Every person has the spark of God within, and we must protect that spark for all.

The Union Prayer Book reminds us: "May we be grateful for having been granted the strength to endure our trials. And when our ordeal has passed, may we draw comfort from the hope and faith that better days lie ahead." Amen and Shabbat Shalom, a Gut Shabbes.

### **Added text to previously recorded video:**

In these unpredictable times, each day brings change and disruption. The tragic killing of George Floyd, the international protests against racism, police brutality and bias, and the necessity to own these issues, have transformed society and all of us.

This service was recorded two weeks ago, before his death, when our issue of the day was the pandemic and its societal implications. Rather than postponing sharing this service with you, we hope that these comforting words of familiarity and inspiration can play a greater role than ever before. Roots of Reform Judaism is dedicated to the societal justice, prophetic teachings, liturgy, music, scholarship, and history of our Reform heritage. We are building on these deeply held values for our modern world and the future.



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Inspired by the past, embracing today, shaping tomorrow.



# New Board Members

**Dr. Madelyn M. Katz** is a self-professed “child of the Reform movement”; and, as such, her whole life—personally and professionally – has included involvement in the Reform movement, including synagogue, NFTY, and URJ camps. Madelyn chose a career in Jewish education to be able to continue to shape the lives of Reform Jewish children as so many others had done for her.



Dr. Katz has been a Reform Jewish Educator for forty years, as a synagogue educator in San Antonio and as the first director of two Reform Synagogue Day Schools in Los Angeles. Before her retirement in July 2020, for 23 years, she had been the Director of Student Life and the Associate Dean of HUC-JIR’s Skirball Campus in Los Angeles.

As a Reform Jewish Educator, Madelyn has done extensive work in the field of leadership, working with Reform Jewish youth, camp staff and Counselors-in-Training at several of the URJ summer camps, rabbinic students preparing for their rabbinate, and synagogue boards in shaping their leadership.

Upon retirement, she has dedicated her time and energy to three organizations of great importance to her - Roots of Reform Judaism, Women of Reform Judaism, and Jewish Center for Justice.

Madelyn is married to a professional musician, Ricky, and together they have two daughters and two grandchildren.



Reform Judaism has played an important role in the life of **Flossie Weill**. She recalls childhood summers as camper, teenage years in Temple Youth Group, and later camp counselor in the Rockies. As a fourth-generation member of Mizpah Congregation in Chattanooga, Tennessee, she has been actively involved there as a board member, religious school advocate, member of the rabbinical search committee, and trustee.

Ms. Weill has been a practicing attorney for over forty years. She also serves as part time Municipal Judge for the Town of Lookout Mountain, Tennessee.

In the legal community, she has been recognized for her efforts to promote justice through negotiation, mediation and litigation. She has dedicated her energy and skills to advocate on behalf of the underprivileged.

Flossie is the widow of the late Barry Parker, who devoted the last decade of his life to writing and publishing narrative books of the legacies and values of numerous Jewish families. Flossie is the mother of two sons, two stepsons, and three grandchildren.

**Dr. Benjamin Levy** is Division Head of Gastroenterology at Mount Sinai and Holy Cross Hospitals in Chicago where he provides medical care and colonoscopy screenings for underserved patient populations. During the COVID-19 crisis, Dr. Levy started the online series “Concerts & Cocktails” organized by musicians and medical workers on the front lines. Dr. Levy was a TEDx Speaker at Wrigley Field in June 2020. Previously, Dr. Levy created a national health education campaign, “Music Inspires Health,” which teamed up music celebrities, physicians, and public health experts. An avid cellist, Levy founded the Music Suppressed by the Third Reich International Conference exploring music banned in Nazi Germany while in college. He was subsequently awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to continue this research in Paris with advisors at the Sorbonne, the Bibliothèque Nationale, and the Orchestre de Paris. A native of Savannah, Georgia, Levy received a BA in music from the University of Virginia and his MD from Emory University. Dr. Levy has received numerous awards for his innovative community efforts, including the Outstanding New Researcher Award at the CDC’s 2009 National HIV Prevention Conference and Hillel International’s Elie Wiesel Award for Jewish Arts and Culture. Dr. Levy completed the Emerging Leaders Program at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in 2018 and currently serves as Co-Chair of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s Soundpost Series.



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# Board Members

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## Roots of Reform Booklet Project

As Roots of Reform Judaism forges its pathway into a second decade, one of the areas of focus is to offer resources that are accessible and approachable for a wide constituency. Considering audiences of the unserved or underserved among us, we are developing resources that speak to the disenfranchised, the unaffiliated, cultural Jews, and interfaith families seeking to find user friendly ways to celebrate observances and festivals at home with family and friends. In the language of our time, primarily in English, with Hebrew and transliteration for key prayers, we hope these will offer a way for many to find their way into (or back to) the beauty of our heritage.

The initial 6 booklets are available now, with two more currently in productions:

- A Time to Rest - Sabbath Prayers and Rituals for the Home;
- A Time to Mourn – Prayers and Home Service for Mourners;
- A Time to Reflect – A Shabbat Evening Service for Today;
- A Time to Share - Home Observances, Festivals, Blessings and Readings;
- A Time to Rejoice – an abbreviated Rosh Hashanah Service; and
- A Time to Forgive – an abbreviated Yom Kippur Service.

The booklets are being used for individual reflection; lay-led, in-home, and congregational services; congregational member resources; chavurot (self-led communities); hospitals and hospice communities; and senior living communities.

Visit [www.rootsofreform.org](http://www.rootsofreform.org) for more information.

