



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
**AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES**

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**A Finding Aid to the  
Sandy Eisenberg Sasso Papers  
Manuscript Collection No. 895**



## Collection Summary

<b>Title</b>	Sandy Eisenberg Sasso Papers
<b>Dates</b>	1970-2015
<b>Collection Number</b>	MS-895
<b>Repository</b>	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Sasso, Sandy Eisenberg
<b>Extent</b>	1.2 linear feet (3 Hollinger boxes)
<b>Language of the Material</b>	English

## Administrative Information

### Biographical Sketch

Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1947, is the first woman ordained as a rabbi in the Reconstructionist movement. She attended Temple University, where she received her Bachelor of Arts in 1969 and her Master of Arts in 1972. In 1974, she was ordained by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. In 1996, Rabbi Sasso received her Doctor of Ministry from Christian Theological Seminary. In June 2013, she received a Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*, from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. She is also the recipient of several honorary doctorates from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, DePauw University, Butler University, Franklin College, and Christian Theological Seminary.

After ordination in 1974, Sasso began her career serving as rabbi of the Manhattan Reconstructionist Havurah in New York. In 1977, Sasso moved to Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis, Indiana to serve as rabbi — jointly with her husband, Dennis C. Sasso. She is the first woman to serve as rabbi for a conservative congregation and she and her husband are the first practicing rabbinical couple in Jewish history. In 2013, after 36 years of service at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Sasso retired and became Rabbi Emerita.

Sasso is a past president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, served on the Indianapolis Board of Rabbis, and on the Rabbinic Advisory Board of the national Jewish Fund for Justice. Since 2013, she has served as Director of the Religion, Spirituality, and Arts Initiative at Butler University and Christian Theological Seminary. She continues to write and lecture on women and Judaic spirituality interfaith issues and the discovery of the religious imagination in children.

She is the author of several nationally acclaimed children's books and is the 2004 recipient of the Helen Keating Ott Award for Outstanding Contribution to Children's Literature. Her children's book, *The Shemah in the Mezuzah* won the 2012 National Jewish Book Award for Best Illustrated Children's Book. She has been honored as one of the "Influential Women in Indiana" by the Indianapolis Business Journal and was featured among "Indy's Most Influential Clergy" by NUVO News Weekly. She is the recipient of the "Sagamore of the Wabash," the highest civilian honor awarded by the governor of the state of Indiana. Sasso is also the recipient of the 2013 Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association Lifetime Rabbinic Service Award. She received the Spirit of the Prairie Award from Conner Prairie Interactive History Park, and in 2012, was honored with the Touchstone Award from Girls, Inc. In 2014 she received the Heritage Keepers Award from the Indiana State Museum.

### Scope and Content

The Sandy Eisenberg Sasso Papers document the life of the first woman ordained as a rabbi in the Reconstructionist movement. The collection consists of sermons, speeches, writings, newsclippings, and audiovisual materials. There are extensive materials on Sasso's journey into the rabbinate and her experiences as a woman rabbi including her rabbinic diploma, first rabbinic contract, correspondence, speeches delivered, articles, and creative works. Also included are clippings collected by Sasso on women in Judaism.

The collection also highlights the career of Sasso's husband, Dennis C. Sasso, who jointly served as rabbi at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck. Series B. Sermons, contains High Holy Day sermons given by both Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and Dennis C. Sasso.

### Arrangement

This collection is arranged in two (2) series: A. General, 1970-2015; B. Sermons, 1995-2012.

### Terms of Access

The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

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**Preferred Citation** Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Sandy Eisenberg Sasso Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Sandy Eisenberg Sasso Papers, MS-895, Box [#], Folder [#]. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

**Provenance** Received from Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, Indianapolis, Ind., April 2008 and February 2015.

**Processing Information** Processed by Michelle Smith, June 2016.

## Index Terms

**Subjects** Rabbis / Reconstructionist Judaism / Women rabbis  
**Personal Names** Sasso, Dennis C. / Sasso, Sandy Eisenberg  
**Corporate Names** Congregation Beth-El Zedeck (Indianapolis, Ind.) / Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (Wyncote, Pa.)  
**Media** Sermons

## Series A. General, 1970-2015

**Extent** 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

**Scope and Content Note** This series contains biographical information, speeches, writings, newsclippings, and audiovisual materials. There are extensive materials on Sasso's journey into the rabbinate and her experiences as a woman rabbi including her rabbinic diploma, first rabbinic contract, correspondence, speeches delivered, articles, and creative works. Also included are clippings collected by Sasso on women in Judaism.

**Arrangement** Material in this series is arranged alphabetically.

## Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Biographical information, 2008

Box 1. Folder 2. Birth ceremony for girls, 1972-1977

Box 1. Folder 3. "Celebrating thirty years of women as rabbis." Toronto, 2002 June 10

Box 1. Folder 4. Creative worship and poetry, 1970-1994

Box 1. Folder 5. "Debunking the myths of Judaism" by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, 2009 June 30

Box 1. Folder 6. Documenting the history of women in the rabbinate. Address given at the American Jewish Archives, 2008 April 1

Box 1. Folder 7. Documenting the history of women in the rabbinate. Reconstructionist Rabbinical College resolution, 2008 March

Box 1. Folder 8. First rabbinic contract. Manhattan Reconstructionist Havurah, 1974

Box 1. Folder 9. "The Four Firsts: Women Rabbis in American Judaism" program description, 2015

Box 1. Folder 10. A Guide to Leading Worship for Kol Haneshamah, Shabbat Eve, 1989

Box 1. Folder 11. Honorary degree. Butler University commencement program, 1999 May 8

Box 1. Folder 12. "The Middle East and Youthful Hatred" by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and

Dennis C. Sasso, 2014 August 5

Box 1. Folder 13. Newspaper articles, 1970-1977

Box 1. Folder 14. Newspaper articles, 1972-2014

Box 1. Folder 15. Prayer language. Inclusiveness for women, 1976-1985

Box 1. Folder 16. Published writings, 1974-2007

Box 1. Folder 17. "The Rabbi's role in a participatory community" by Dennis C. Sasso, 1989 June

Box 1. Folder 18. Rabbinic diploma. Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, 1974

Box 1. Folder 19. Reconstructionist Rabbinical College graduation exercises program, 1983 June 5

Box 1. Folder 20. Selected published essays, 1977-2003

Box 1. Folder 21. Speech to the American Jewish Committee, 1972 May

Box 1. Folder 22. Speech to the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association convention, 2010 March

Box 1. Folder 23. Spirit and Place Civic Festival publications, 2001-2002

Box 2. Folder 1. A Tribute to our Rabbis. "Chai-Lites", 1995 November 17

Box 2. Folder 2. A Tribute to our Rabbis in celebration of their 25th anniversary with Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, 2002 December 7

Box 2. Folder 3. Tribute on Sandy Eisenberg Sasso's retirement. Shabbat service, 2013 May 17

Box 2. Folder 4. Tribute on Sandy Eisenberg Sasso's retirement. Gala celebration, 2013 May 18

Box 2. Folder 5. Tribute on Sandy Eisenberg Sasso's retirement. Gala celebration. DVD, 2013 May 18

Box 2. Folder 6. What's My Line, To Tell the Truth, and Straight Talk appearances, 1974-1977

Box 2. Folder 7. Women in Judaism. Newsclippings, 1971-2015

Box 2. Folder 8. YMCA publication "According to Judaism," and correspondence, 1971

## **Series B. Sermons, 1995-2012**

**Extent** 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

**Scope and Content Note** This series consists of sermons given by both Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and Rabbi Dennis Sasso for the High Holy Days at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck. These are primarily in booklets, which include four sermons, two for Rosh Hashanah and two for Yom Kippur.

**Arrangement** Material in this series is arranged chronologically.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

Box 3. Folder 1. High Holy Days, 1995

Box 3. Folder 2. High Holy Days, 1996

Box 3. Folder 3. High Holy Days, 1997

Box 3. Folder 4. High Holy Days, 1998

Box 3. Folder 5. High Holy Days, 1999

Box 3. Folder 6. High Holy Days, 2000

Box 3. Folder 7. High Holy Days, 2001

Box 3. Folder 8. High Holy Days, 2002

Box 3. Folder 9. High Holy Days, 2003

Box 3. Folder 10. High Holy Days, 2004

Box 3. Folder 11. High Holy Days, 2005

Box 3. Folder 12. High Holy Days, 2006

Box 3. Folder 13. High Holy Days, 2007

Box 3. Folder 14. High Holy Days, 2008

Box 3. Folder 15. High Holy Days, 2009

Box 3. Folder 16. High Holy Days, 2010

Box 3. Folder 17. High Holy Days, 2011

Box 3. Folder 18. High Holy Days, 2012