



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

---

**A Finding Aid to the  
Task Force on Women in the Rabbinate  
Records**

**Manuscript Collection No. 677**

## Collection Summary

<b>Title</b>	Task Force on Women in the Rabbinate Records
<b>Dates</b>	1976-1991 (bulk 1979-1983)
<b>Collection Number</b>	MS-677
<b>Repository</b>	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Task Force on Women in the Rabbinate Kominsky, Neil E., 1944-
<b>Extent</b>	0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)
<b>Language of the Material</b>	English

## Administrative Information

### Biographical Sketch

Following the ordination of the first woman rabbi, Sally Priesand, in 1972 by the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, the Central Conference of American Rabbis passed a resolution "asserting definitively the equality of women in the Reform Movement and their equality in the rabbinate." In 1976 the Executive Board of the CCAR moved that a separate CCAR Task Force on Women in the Rabbinate be appointed "to help implement this resolution." Beginning its work in 1977, the first chair of the task force was Rabbi Priesand. Following her as chair was Rabbi Neil E. Kominsky. Other chairs of the task force have included David S. Hachen and Rosalind A. Gold.

Immediately following the announcement of the task force's creation, Rabbi Kominsky wrote to Joseph E. Glaser, executive vice-president of the CCAR, volunteering his services. Kominsky wrote, in part, that he would bring to his work "not only the perspective of a rabbi interested in equal treatment for his female colleagues but also the experience of ten years marriage to a woman who functions in a 'male' profession."

The early work of the task force focused on issues pertaining to the acceptance and integration of women into the Reform rabbinate. Placed under the authority of the executive board of the CCAR, the task force was, as Rabbi Kominsky wrote, responsible for "the oversight and facilitation of the complete professional and collegial integration of women as rabbis." This responsibility manifested itself in many specific issues, such as the placement of women rabbis, mentoring of female rabbinic students, parenting and maternity leave, and admittance of women into the rabbinic program at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

In February 1980 another organization, the Women's Rabbinic Network, was established. This group was formed with the intention of being an association of women rabbis that would provide, again in Rabbi Kominsky's words, "the kind of support, sharing of experience, and concerns that only those in their unique position were able to offer each other."

### Scope and Content

The records in this collection of the Task Force on Women in the Rabbinate were gathered and compiled by Rabbi Neil E. Kominsky, primarily during Rabbi Kominsky's tenure as chair of the task force from 1979-1983. Kominsky was the second chair of the task force, following Rabbi Sally Priesand.

The Task Force remains a standing committee of the CCAR. The records in this collection reflect the early years of women in the rabbinate - revealing their struggles for acceptance and inclusion among their peers, their congregants, and the larger religious community. The records also reveal the priorities and interests of this new group of rabbis, showing their desire to establish themselves within the institutions of the Reform movement and to direct the work of the CCAR towards the place and rights of women in the Reform rabbinate and movement. It also shows their interests in issues such as family life, child care, women's rights, and social justice. Perhaps most importantly, the records reveal the thoughts and work of women who were pioneers in their field - while also documenting some of the obstacles they faced, including a few lingering doubts and (perhaps unintentional) residual biases directed towards them.

As there were only a handful of ordained women rabbis in the late 1970s/early 1980s, most of these women were active in the work of the task force. These include Sally Priesand, Laura Geller, Rosalind Gold, Myra Soifer, Karen Fox, and Deborah Prinz. As a result, this collection contains much of their correspondence, as well as that of Joseph Glaser, then executive vice-president of the CCAR, together with other Reform rabbis and leaders of the CCAR and HUC-JIR.

The records also contain materials pertaining to the Women's Rabbinic Network, a professional association of Reform women rabbis founded in 1980. These records, which are interspersed throughout the collection, relate to mutual areas of interest and instances of interaction and cooperation between the task force and WRN.

Annual reports of the Task Force on Women in the Rabbinate may be found in volumes of CCAR Yearbook, beginning in 1977.

**Arrangement** The collection is arranged in one (1) series: A. General.

**Terms of Access** The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

**Preferred Citation** Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Task Force on Women in the Rabbinate Records and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:  
[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-677. Task Force on Women in the Rabbinate Records. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

**Provenance** Received from Neil E. Kominsky, Brookline, Mass., 1996.

**Processing Information** Processed by Kevin Proffitt, February 2002.

## Index Terms

**Subjects** Jewish women / Rabbis / Women rabbis

**Corporate Names** Central Conference of American Rabbis. Task Force on Women in the Rabbinate / Women's Rabbinic Network

## Series A. General, 1976-1991

**Scope and Content Note** The final folder, consisting of articles and background materials on the Task Force and women in the rabbinate, is not arranged in any order.

**Arrangement** The series is arranged chronologically.

### Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Correspondence, 1976-1979

Box 1. Folder 2. Correspondence, 1980

Box 1. Folder 3. Correspondence, 1981

Box 1. Folder 4. Correspondence, 1982-1991

Box 1. Folder 5. Background materials/newsclippings, undated