



In the Footsteps of Rabbi Regina Jonas

by Dr. Gary P. Zola

*Executive Director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
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A few months ago, I was standing in the Terezin Memorial in Theresienstadt—the former Nazi concentration camp in the Czech Republic. There, dozens of people had gathered from around the world to dedicate a plaque in memory of the world’s first female rabbi—Rabbi Regina Jonas—who was ordained in 1935, and then murdered in Auschwitz in 1944.

Even after Rabbi Jonas was deported to Terezin in 1942 from Berlin, she continued her ministry there by providing mental-health care to her fellow prisoners — helping them cope with the shock of the horrific experiences that they experienced there daily.

The rediscovery in the late 1980s of Rabbi Jonas’ previously lost papers has given new resonance to her once silenced voice; a voice of wisdom, insight and guidance from which all peoples who cherish equality, justice and freedom can learn much.

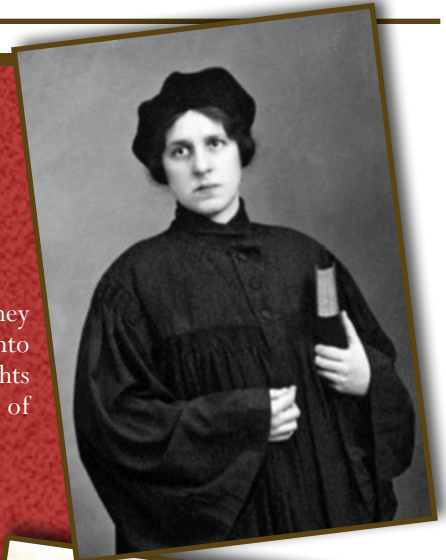
Regina Jonas’ words: “God has placed abilities and callings in our hearts, without regard to gender. Thus each of us has the duty, whether man or woman, to realize those gifts God has given.”

Her legacy constitutes the personification of the lofty ideals that our founders implanted into America’s ethos: “All human

beings have been created equal,” they insisted, and every human being born into this world is imbued with the natural rights of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Dr. Zola conceived of the event in his role as a member of the United States Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad, which works to preserve and protect cemeteries, monuments, and historical buildings associated with the foreign heritage of United States Citizens. President Obama reappointed Dr. Zola to the Commission in October, 2014.

(PHOTOS FROM TOP) Rabbi Regina Jonas; Dr. Gary P. Zola (center) with the three American women rabbis who were the first ordinee of their denominations; and the first Orthodox woman to be ordained “Rabba”: (L-R): Rabbi Sandy Sasso (Reconstructionist)— Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, 1974; Rabbi Sally Priesand (Reform)—Hebrew Union College, 1972; Rabba Sara Hurwitz (Orthodox)— Ordained by Rabbi Avi Weiss, 2009; Rabbi Amy Eilberg (Conservative)— Jewish Theological Seminary, 1985; the dedication plaque.



“To be blessed by God means to give wherever one steps in every life situation blessing, kindness, faithfulness . . .”

Regina Jonas (1902–1944), the first woman rabbi in history, spoke these words in a sermon at Terezin. Born in Berlin, Jonas was ordained in 1935. She served the Jewish community of Berlin in a rabbinical capacity from 1937 through November 1942, when she was deported to Terezin. With extraordinary spiritual strength, she continued to preach uplifting sermons, give lectures, and provide pastoral care to her fellow prisoners. In October 1944, she was deported to Auschwitz, where she was murdered.

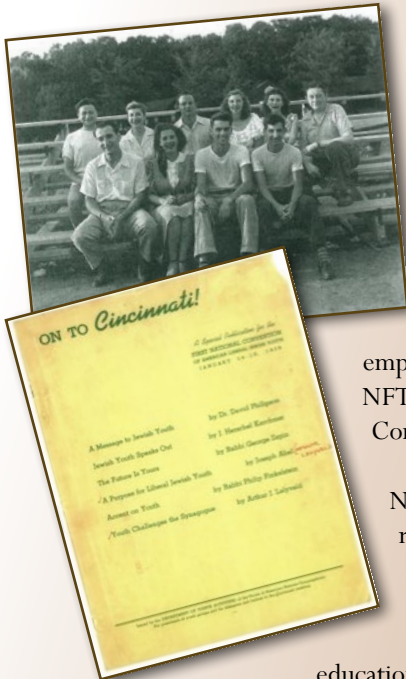
United States Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

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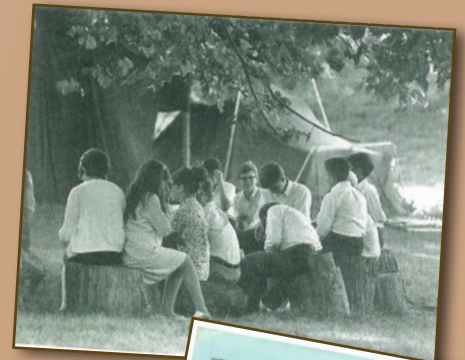


The National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) Records at the American Jewish Archives Showcase an Important Transition in the History of Reform Judaism



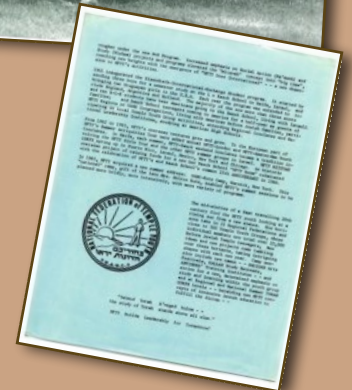
(NOTE: Dr. Gary P. Zola's *Documentary Analysis of NFTY at 75* will be published in the upcoming edition of *The American Jewish Archives Journal*.)

The National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) was formed in 1939 at the urging of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (now Women of Reform Judaism), and under the supervision of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC). NFTY was formed by the Reform movement with the goal of gaining the interest and loyalty of their youth to Judaism and the Reform movement. The result was a collection of high school youths formed into a national organization that emphasized educational religious programming. In doing this, NFTY became a paradigm for similar organizations in the Conservative and Orthodox movements.



NFTY distinguished itself with its innovative approach to religious education, mainly being that their classes did not resemble traditional classrooms. In the 1950s and 1960s NFTY was immersed in the camping movement and later pioneered trips to Israel as an experiential

education tool. The general approach of NFTY was to stress the experiences and emotions of the youths to make the learning experience more personal. It was hoped that this would have a lasting effect on the youth, endearing them to Judaism and the Reform community throughout their lives. Examples of this are the creative liturgy movement, the informal Jewish education, activities that emphasize participation, a lack of structure and authority, a focus on Jewish commitment, and a focus on social contacts among Jewish youths.



Today, over 500 Reform congregations throughout North America sponsor Temple Youth Groups, bringing the NFTY experience to more than 6,000 high school-age young people in grades 9 thru 12. Through involvement opportunities offered by congregations, our 19 NFTY regions, and on the North American level, NFTYites strive to forge an identity in consonance with the goals and values of Reform Judaism.

ABOUT THE AJA'S COLLECTION

The National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) records at the American Jewish Archives showcase an important transition in the history of the Reform movement. The records contain the creative liturgies and teaching styles used by the youths to make Judaism a living and vital aspect of their lives. By incorporating aspects of their own lives into traditional services with guitars, audience participation, and popular songs, they carved a space for themselves within the Reform movement. This is what the founders of NFTY were hoping for, though at its inception in 1939 they had no idea of the shape this would take.

(PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER RIGHT: NFTY teens preparing for Friday evening Sabbath services in the 1960s; A portion of a written history of NFTY; NFTY students today; a page from a newsletter prior to NFTY's first national convention in 1939; and faculty and student leaders meet on Labor Day in the 1940s to discuss acquiring a summer camp for NFTY.)

AJA Photo Exhibit Chronicles the 75-Year Career of Cincinnati Photographer Ben Rosen

*Collection called a “peerless visual record
of 20th century Cincinnati”*

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives’ (AJA) collection of the photographs of Cincinnati photographer Ben Rosen consists of close to 15,000 images and documents. The volume of the collection, which includes prints, negatives, slides and papers that span his career, is not surprising, given Ben’s 75-years as a professional photographer documenting people, scenes and events in Cincinnati.

In conjunction with the Cincinnati’s Neighborhoods exhibit at the Skirball Museum on the Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), the AJA—also on the HUC-JIR campus—has mounted an exhibition chronicling Ben Rosen’s career which began in 1927, when he apprenticed for local freelance photographer Dan Morgenthaler.

For his first notable assignment, Mr. Rosen captured Charles Lindbergh as the pilot made a fuel stop at Cincinnati’s Lunken Airport for his non-stop flight across the Atlantic Ocean (L). Mr. Rosen’s most productive period occurred after World War II, when he captured hundreds of images of sports stars, politicians and dignitaries such as Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King, Jr. Ben Rosen’s photographs also include images he captured for both *The American Israelite* and *The Catholic Telegraph*. These photos candidly document religious life in Cincinnati. His work in real estate photography left a bountiful cache of historic photos of Cincinnati.

The exhibit, originally featured as part of FotoFocus’ November biennial regional celebration of photography and lens-based art, remains open until March 1, 2015. Exhibit hours are Monday – Thursday 9:30 a.m.– 4:30 p.m. and Friday, 9:30 – 2:30 p.m. Special openings for groups can be arranged. Admission is free.

(PHOTOS FROM TOP: The photographer, Ben Rosen and his early camera; Aviator Charles Lindbergh making a fuel stop in Cincinnati; Citizens watch the 1937 flood in Cincinnati; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Cincinnati; couple viewing the AJA exhibit.)



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NO TIME FOR SILENCE:

CONTEMPORARY IMPERATIVES MARKING THE
70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ



Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion honors the memory of the scholars and students rescued by HUC from Nazi-occupied Europe

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25, 2015

Featuring **Senator Sherrod Brown & Dr. Susannah Heschel**

4:00 pm Program

5:30 pm Candle lighting ceremony

HUC-JIR/Cincinnati campus, Scheuer Chapel

Join us as we welcome and engage in dialogue with U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown and Dr. Susannah Heschel, Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College, and family members of the rescued scholars. A moving memorial service and uplifting musical interlude to follow.

RSVP to 513.487.3098 or <http://huc.edu/rsvp/IHRD>



This weekend's activities mark the beginning of the celebration of the 140th anniversary of the historic Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College



Presented by
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
and
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History Matters