



# HOLY SPARKS

Celebrating Fifty Years of Women in the Rabbinate



**Honoring the Rabbis and Artists of “Holy Sparks”  
on the Jubilee Anniversary of Women in the Rabbinate**



# PROGRAM

## WELCOME

Andrew Rehfeld, Ph.D., *President*

## HONORING THE RABBIS AND ARTISTS

Jean Bloch Rosensaft, *Director, Dr. Bernard Heller Museum;*  
*Assistant Vice President for Communications and Public Affairs*

## FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS OF THE BRAID'S STORY ARCHIVE OF WOMEN RABBIS

Ronda Spinak, *Founder & Artistic Director, The Braid*  
Lynne Himelstein, *Board Co-Chair, The Braid*

## STORIES FROM THE FRINGE

Excerpt of a play written by Rabbi Lynne Appel and Ronda Spinak  
Directed by Susan Morgenstern; Performed by Kate Zentall

## FROM INTERVIEW TO ART

Rabbi Amy R. Perlin '82, *Rabbi Emerita, Temple B'nai Shalom, Fairfax Station, VA*

## FROM THE UKRAINE BORDER

Rabbi Tanya Segal '07, *Founder, Beit Krakow; Senior Rabbi, Jewish Community of Ostrava*

## THE "FIRST FOUR" IN CONVERSATION

Rabbi Sally J. Priesand '72, *Rabbi Emerita, Monmouth Reform Temple, Tinton Falls, NJ*  
Rabbi Sanda Eisenberg Sasso '74, *Director, Religion, Spirituality, and Arts Initiative,*  
*Indiana University-Purdue University*

Rabbi Amy Eilberg '85, *Founder, Bay Area Jewish Healing Center;*  
*Past Coordinator for Faith in Action Bay Area*

Rabbi Sara Hurwitz '09, *Co-Founder and President, Maharat*

Moderator:

Rabbi Andrea L. Weiss '93, Ph.D., *Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Provost, HUC-JIR*

## LAMDEINI (Leah Goldberg)

Composed by Cantor Benjie Schiller '87, *Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman Professor of Liturgy,*  
*Worship and Ritual and Professor of Cantorial Arts*

Performed by Students of the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music Class of 2022:

Sara Anderson, Stefanie Greene, Suzanne Hamstra, Mike Jarvis,

Jenna Mark, Jenna McMillan, Sam Rosen

Professor Joyce Rosenzweig, *Pianist*

Cantor Richard Cohn '92, *Conductor*

## IN GRATITUDE

Sue Neuman Hochberg, *Chair, Board of Governors*

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Rabbi David Adelson '99, D.Min. '16, *Dean*

# FEATURED SPEAKERS

**1972 RABBI SALLY J. PRIESAND**, America's first female rabbi, was ordained in June 1972 by Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute in Cincinnati, OH. From 1981 to 2006, she served as rabbi of Monmouth Reform Temple in Tinton Falls, NJ, becoming rabbi emerita upon her retirement. Nationally she has served on the executive board of both the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) and the Union for Reform Judaism. She also served as a member of the Board of Governors of HUC-JIR, as President of the Rabbinical Alumni Association, and for three years as editor of the CCAR Newsletter. Locally, she is President of Interfaith Neighbors, an organization whose primary purpose is to provide rental assistance and support services for the working poor. A native of Cleveland, Rabbi Priesand lives in Ocean Township, NJ, with her Boston terrier, Zeke. She is a contributor to many books, and her hobbies include photography and abstract watercolor.

**1974 RABBI SANDY EISENBERG SASSO** was the first woman ordained from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in 1974 and the first to serve a Conservative congregation together with her husband, Rabbi Dennis C. Sasso, as the first practicing rabbinical couple in world Jewish history. Following 36 years of service to Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Indianapolis, IN, she is now its senior rabbi emerita. She currently is the Director of the Religion, Spirituality, and Arts Initiative at Indiana University - Purdue University Indianapolis Arts and Humanities. Active in the arts, civic, and interfaith communities, she has written on midrash, women, and spirituality. Rabbi Sasso has, through many nationally acclaimed children's books, pioneered creative literature that engages the religious imagination of children. She earned a Doctor of Ministry from Christian Theological Seminary and is the recipient of awards and honorary doctorates from universities, theological seminaries, and civic institutions. In 2016 she co-founded Women4Change Indiana, a statewide organization of 5,000 focused on creating positive change for women.

**1982 RABBI AMY R. PERLIN** is the first female rabbi to start a congregation, founding Temple B'nai Shalom (TBS) in Fairfax Station, VA in 1986. She was also one of the first women to become a senior rabbi. She served TBS for 32 years, until retiring in 2018 as the Founding Rabbi Emerita. Her rabbinate focused on teaching, counseling, and innovative preaching and worship, all with a goal of establishing a caring community guided by and living its Jewish values. She is proud of sending nine rabbis to HUC-JIR. As another first, Rabbi Perlin was also made Rabbi Emerita of the congregation's sister Lutheran congregation. She graduated Princeton University in 1978, was ordained by HUC-JIR in 1982, and received her Doctor of Divinity from HUC-JIR in 2007. In 2012, she was honored by Jewish Women International as one of its "Women to Watch." In 2013, she was included in The Forward's list of America's 36 Most Inspiring Rabbis. A committed philanthropist and lifelong Zionist, Rabbi Perlin is president of the Perlin Family Foundation, serves on the Board of Governors of HUC-JIR where she co-chairs the Israel Committee, and continues to mentor rabbis in the US and Israel.

**1985 RABBI AMY EILBERG** was the first woman ordained as a Conservative rabbi by the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1985. She serves as a peace and justice educator, spiritual director, and kindness coach. She recently served as Coordinator of Jewish Engagement for Faith in Action Bay Area, a multi-faith, multi-racial, social justice organization in the San Francisco Bay Area. Rabbi Eilberg helped found the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center, where she directed the Center's Jewish Hospice Care Program. Nationally known for her work in Jewish healing, spiritual direction, and peace building, she lectures and writes on issues of spiritual direction, spiritual practice, and the pursuit of peace and justice. She teaches on dialogue and conflict engagement, anti-racism through a Jewish lens, and Mussar in venues throughout the country. She has been honored with awards from the Rabbinical Assembly, the New Israel Fund, and Tru'ah: the Rabbinic Call for Human Rights.

**1993 RABBI ANDREA L. WEISS** is the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Provost and Associate Professor of Bible at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. Rabbi Weiss was ordained at HUC–JIR and received her doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania, with a focus on the Bible in the context of the ancient Near East. In the wake of the 2016 presidential election, she created a multi-faith campaign called American Values, Religious Voices: 100 Days, 100 Letters, which led to a co-authored book by that title and the launch of Values & Voices 2021. She served as associate editor of *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* and authored *Figurative Language in Biblical Prose Narrative: Metaphor in the Book of Samuel*. Her research interests focus on metaphor, biblical poetry, and Psalms, including work in progress on an in-depth study of biblical metaphors for God, entitled *God in the Biblical Imagination: The Mechanics and Theology of Metaphor*.

**2007 RABBI TANYA SEGAL** is a founder of the Jewish artistic Reform community Beit Kraków (2009). She is the first female rabbi of Poland and the Czech Republic and Senior Rabbi of the Jewish community of Ostrava, a community that dates back to the beginning of the 19th century. Having begun her career as an actress in the Moscow Chamber Jewish Musical Theatre, she moved to Israel in 1990 to study Jewish mysticism and theatre arts at Tel Aviv University and later entered rabbinical school at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem. Combining Jewish learning with performance art, Rabbi Segal has transformed and revitalized Jewish life in the historic city of Krakow, where she established the Midrash Lab, teaching Jewish text through arts, and founded the Midrash Theatre (2008).

**2009 RABBI SARA HURWITZ**, Co-Founder and President of Maharat, the first institution to ordain Orthodox women as clergy, also serves on the rabbinical staff at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale. She completed Drisha's three-year Scholars Circle Program, an advanced intensive program of study for Jewish women training to become scholars, educators, and community leaders. After another five years of study under the auspices of Rabbi Avi Weiss, she was ordained by Rabbi Weiss and Rabbi Daniel Sperber in 2009. In 2013 she was awarded the Hadassah Foundation Bernice S. Tannenbaum Prize, followed the next year by the Myrtle Wreath Award from the Southern New Jersey Region of Hadassah. In 2016 she was the Trailblazer Award recipient at UJA Federation of New York and named one of Jewish Week's 36 Under 36, as well as included in The Forward 50's most influential Jewish leaders and Newsweek's 50 most influential rabbis.



Rabbi Sally Priesand's ordination from HUC-JIR as the first woman rabbi in North America opened the way across all denominations and around the globe, setting in motion the first steps toward inclusion, diversity, equity, and empowerment of new cohorts redefining Jewish leadership over the past 50 years.

**HOLY SPARKS** features the works of 24 leading contemporary Jewish women artists evoking the identities and consecrated paths of 24 women rabbis who were "firsts" in their time. This art exhibition is a collaboration between HUC-JIR's **Dr. Bernard Heller Museum** and **The Braid**, and a culmination of The Braid's documentation of nearly 200 pioneering women rabbis' stories, shared online in partnership with the **Jewish Women's Archive**.

The mission of the **Dr. Bernard Heller Museum** is to advance the visual expression of Jewish history, values, and heritage. By supporting contemporary artistic creativity that depicts a historic milestone and pays tribute to individuals who continue to shape the Jewish world, **HOLY SPARKS** exemplifies that mission. This exhibition will be presented next at HUC-JIR's **Skirball Museum** in Cincinnati and then travel to venues throughout North America. [huc.edu/HellerMuseum](http://huc.edu/HellerMuseum)

### **LAMDEINI (Leah Goldberg)**

Teach me, O God, a blessing, a prayer  
on the mystery of a withered leaf,  
on ripened fruit so fair,  
on the freedom to see, to sense, to breathe.  
to know, to hope, to despair.

לְמַדְנִי, אֱלֹהִי, בְּרַךְ וְהַתְּפִלָּל,

לְיַמַּד אֶת שְׁפָתוֹתַי

בְּרַכָּה וְשִׁיר הַלֵּל.

Teach my lips a blessing, a hymn of praise,  
as each morning and night  
You renew Your days,  
lest my days be as the one before;  
lest routine set my ways.

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**"Holy Sparks: Celebrating Fifty Years of Women in the Rabbinate"**

was developed by The Braid, in partnership with the  
**Dr. Bernard Heller Museum at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion,**  
with generous support from Lynne & Phil Himelstein,  
**Ziering Family Foundation of the Jewish Community Foundation, Los Angeles,**  
**Gladys and David Layne, and Ronda Spinak.**

Presented at the **Dr. Bernard Heller Museum** by the **Irma L. and Abram S. Croll Center**  
for Jewish Learning and Culture with the generous support of  
**Mildred Weissman, z"l, and George Weissman, z"l.**



**THE BRAID** educates and builds community by inspiring Jewish stories that connect us all. As the Jewish story company that pioneered the new theatrical art form of Salon Theatre, their growing collection of 75 original productions include seminal shows spotlighting the true stories of women rabbis, Persian Jews, Latinx Jews, Russian

Jews, and Jews of Color. Their commissioned work *Stories from the Violins of Hope* was shared in 30 countries in partnership with the United Nations Outreach Programme on the Holocaust. The Braid's hit shows include *Not That Jewish*, by Emmy Award-winning writer Monica Piper, *Annie Korzen Famous Actress*, *Rain Pryor's Fried Chicken & Latkes*, and Vicki Juditz's *Sacred Resistance*. The Braid's Next Emerging Artists program ensures next generations have an artistic platform and inclusive community to celebrate the diversity in Jewish culture. The Braid performs live across the country and is accessible globally via Zoom performances, the StoryNosh short films, the AudioNosh podcast, streaming on ChaiFlicks, and other online platforms. [the-braid.org](http://the-braid.org)



### **HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION**

is North America's leading institution of higher Jewish education and the academic, spiritual, and professional leadership development center of Reform Judaism. HUC-JIR educates leaders to serve North American and world Jewry as rabbis, cantors, and leaders in education and nonprofit

management, and offers graduate programs to scholars and clergy of all faiths. With centers of learning in Cincinnati, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, and New York, HUC-JIR's scholarly resources comprise the renowned Klau Library, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, museums, research institutes and centers, and academic publications. In partnership with the Union for Reform Judaism and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, HUC-JIR sustains the Reform Movement's congregations and professional and lay leaders. HUC-JIR's campuses invite the community to cultural and educational programs illuminating Jewish heritage and fostering interfaith and multiethnic understanding. [huc.edu](http://huc.edu)

### **"HOLY SPARKS" CELEBRATION CONSORTIUM**

Abraham Geiger College | Academy for Jewish Religion | American Conference of Cantors | Central Conference of American Rabbis | Hadassah Magazine | Hebrew College | Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism | Israel Religious Action Center | Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives | Jewish Art Salon | Jewish Book Council | Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance | The Jewish Theological Seminary | Jewish Women International | Jewish Women's Archive | Leo Baeck College | Lilith Magazine | MARAM: Council of Reform Rabbis in Israel | Moment Magazine | Rabbinical Assembly | Reconstructionist Rabbinical College | Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies | Union for Reform Judaism | Women of Reform Judaism | Women of the Wall | Women's League for Conservative Judaism | Women's Rabbinic Network | World Union for Progressive Judaism | Yeshivat Maharat | Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, American Jewish University