Sisters, but not Twin Sisters: A Comparison between the Union for Reform Judaism and the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism

Master’s Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Brandeis University
Hornstein Jewish Professional Leadership Program
Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts
in
Jewish Professional Leadership and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies

by
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May 2017
Acknowledgments

When I first arrived at Brandeis I came with little knowledge about the American Jewish community. I knew this is the community with which I would like to work in my professional career, but my knowledge was a result of meeting people and hearing their stories rather than a deep understanding of what derives them.

The first two classes I took in the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies department were “American Judaism”, taught by Professor Jonathan D. Sarna, and “The Sociology of the American Jewish Community”, taught by Professor Sylvia Barack Fishman. Taking their classes opened my mind and enabled me to truly learn and understand the American Jewish community. I would especially like to thank Professor Fishman, my thesis advisor and guide, I learned so much from you. I would also like to thank Professor Ellen Smith for all her support. I am forever grateful. I could not have completed this project without the help of Professor Rabbi David Ellenson who helped me with my research, iCenter friends and faculty who gave me an American Reform perspective, and Rabbi Meir Azari, Rabbi Galia Sadan and Rabbi Yehoram Mazor, who gave me the Israeli Reform perspective.

I would also like to express my everlasting gratitude to my amazing parents and family who supported me from afar, and not letting me to give up my hope and dreams. Finally, I would like to thank Lior, my better half, who pushed and encouraged me to stay even when I wanted to leave, who quietly gave me the energy to work so hard. I could not have done it without you.

This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents, Professor Mordechai and Chava Gichon, for being the best grandparents a grandchild could ever ask for and their everlasting love and support,

May They Rest in Peace.
ABSTRACT

_Sisters, but not Twin Sisters: A Comparison between the Union for Reform Judaism and the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism_

A thesis presented to the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

By Tamar Shachaf Schneider

The American Reform Movement – the Union for Reform Judaism, and the Israeli Reform Movement – the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism are sister organizations and both belong to the international umbrella organization of the Reform movement – The World Union for Progressive Judaism. While both are Reform movements, the Union for Reform Judaism and the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism are not identical and are more different than similar. This thesis seeks to provide a thorough comparison between the two movements on key characteristics of Reform Judaism, including egalitarianism, gender and sexual orientation, rituals and liturgy, and the most important question, ‘Who is a Jew?’ The thesis is based on archival research, such as articles, books and responsas. The findings suggest that majority of the differences between the movements are based on the status of each movement in its home-country, the United States of America and Israel. The analysis of these findings suggests that changes in the status of the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism can change its characteristics, which can shift it towards the Union for Reform Judaism. The result would be movements not be as different as they are today.
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... iii
Abstract ............................................................................................................................ iv
Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 1-11
Chapter 1: The Development of the Reform Movement .............................................. 12-30
Chapter 2: Ideologies and Programs/Institutional Structures to Implement Ideologies .... 31-65
Chapter 3: Rituals and Liturgy in Reform Synagogues ............................................... 66-89
Chapter 4: Who is a Jew? Personal Status in Reform Judaism ................................... 90-109
Chapter 5: Issues in Reform Judaism Today – Gender and Leadership ...................... 110-126
Findings and Conclusions .............................................................................................. 127-139
Bibliography .................................................................................................................... 140-149
Introduction

Rabbi David Zvi Hoffmann (1843-1921) was an Orthodox rabbi and Torah scholar in Berlin, Germany. He believed in “Torah im Derech Eretz” (practicing Judaism while being a part of the modern world), i.e., in formalizing the relationship between traditionally observant Judaism and the modern world. In one of his books, “Melamed Lehoil” (teach in order to benefit), where he answers frequently asked questions by Jews, one of the questions is, “In my community, there is a Jewish man who has a son born from a non-Jewish woman, and the son is already nine years old, and is uncircumcised. He is a gentile (and has no Jewish status). However, in the four hours allotted each week for religious instruction, he sits with the Jewish children to study Judaism. When I asked the headmaster of the school why this boy is not taught with the Christian children, he said that the boy had no religion (Yiddish: Konfessionslos), and the father wants his son to learn Judaism. I do not know what to do, though I wished I was able to talk with the father and persuade him to circumcise his son. Should I prevent the son from studying Judaism and let them leave our community, or let the son study Judaism as he does now?”

Rabbi Hoffman’s answer was: “We must decide how to act regarding the instruction of this child. For the Torah of Israel is no mere song or idle rhetoric that one learns only to understand Judaism. Rather, the purpose of Jewish religious instruction is to learn and to do, and one who
learns and does not do, it would be better if he had not learned… Therefore, the boy should stop studying Judaism…”¹

This story is an example of an issue with which Reform movements, both in the U.S. and in Israel, would have dealt differently, though maybe for different reasons/rationales. Stories like this inspire me to search, dig deeper and learn more about the liberal forms of Judaism. As an Israeli, I am not deeply knowledgeable about or often exposed to Reform Judaism. I believe the relationship between Israelis and the American Jewish community is very crucial to Israel’s future, as a democratic and Jewish state. Modern Reform Judaism opens the Israelis’ minds to other forms of Judaism, which are different than the Judaism many Israelis experience in the State of Israel.

The Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) and The Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism (IMPJ), are the umbrella organizations of the Reform communities in the U.S. and Israel respectively. However, due to differences in their evolution and development in each country, each movement could potentially regard specific topics differently, or on the other hand, similarly. While the Union of Reform Judaism is a well-established and legitimate Jewish denomination in the U.S., in Israel the situation is quite different, as there is no separation between religion and state. The Chief Rabbinate, the Jewish authority for all Jewish aspects of life, is the only Jewish religious establishment that is acknowledged by the State and other Jewish movements. Conservative and Reform Judaism, have no legal status. Therefore, the IMPJ needs to fight for its legitimacy and legal status by the State of Israel. This basic difference between the movements is the core of this paper.

Research question: To deepen my knowledge about the Reform Movements, both in the U.S. and in Israel, I will compare, analyze and discuss the following key issues within these movements: the development of each movement; Ideologies; Liturgy and Rituals; ‘Who is a Jew?’; and issues in Reform Judaism today. 1. To what extent are the American Israeli Reform movements different from or similar to each other? How do the differences and similarities affect the relationship between the two movements and their status in their home-country?

2. How were the ideas of the Reform movement introduced and developed in the U.S. and in Israel? The differences between the development of each movement is an important issue to address. Knowing the differences between the development of each movement could help us understand other key differences, such as the status of each movement in its home country.

3. What is the difference in the ideologies of each movement? Both movements are Reform movements and are members in the World Union for Progressive Judaism, which is the umbrella organization that includes all Reform movements around the world. However, each movement has its own ideologies, values, practices and issues they consider as key issues to address. These differences in the ideologies and key issues are result of the differences in their status in each home country.

4. What is the difference in the liturgy and rituals of each movement? Liturgy and rituals can be a mirror that reflects the movements’ key issues and ideologies, and by that to show how different or similar the movements are. Liturgy can address issues like gender, egalitarianism and
inclusiveness, just by having a variety of prayers and blessings, so everyone can find the exact prayer which suits him/her.

5. How does each movement address the question of ‘Who is a Jew’? The question of “Who is a Jew?” is the umbrella question and at the same time, the basic question. Depending on how this question/ or the answers to this question are addressed, the answer to this question can explain issues of personal status, such as conversion, intermarriage, and unaffiliated Jews in Reform Judaism.

6. What are the issues with which Reform Judaism deals today? The relationship each movement has with the LGBTQ community and gender equality, and their support or lack thereof for these issues, is considered. Moreover, questions of egalitarianism between genders in the lay leadership are important, providing an insight about how the movements work, and their priorities and key issues.

**Literature review**

Michael A. Meyer writes in *Bein Masoret Lekidma: Toldot Tnuat Hareforma Bayahadot*, the Hebrew translation of his book *Response to Modernity*, about the processes, events and realities that triggered the establishment of the first Reform Jews in Germany of the 19th century. Meyer provides a thorough history of people and events who influenced and encouraged changes in Jewish lives and eventually in Jewish practice, and claims that both internal and external changes in Jewish lives stimulated these changes of attitudes. He mentions Moses Mendelssohn’s influence

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on the need to be able to be an observant Jew while being a part of the general society.\(^3\) He also writes about the influence of the emancipation of the German and French Jews and their becoming more self-aware, and how that led to changing Jewish practices, i.e., reforms.\(^4\) In *The Way into the Varieties of Jewishness*, Sylvia Barack Fishman dates the origins of the Reform movement to the end of the 18\(^{th}\) century,\(^5\) when Jews began to perceive traditional Jewish worship habits as tied to earlier societies and not binding contemporary Jews.\(^6\) Dana Evan Kaplan discusses in the introduction of *Contemporary Debates in American Reform Judaism*, the key issues and characteristics the American Reform movement deals with in the beginning of the 21\(^{st}\) century, such as going back to tradition.\(^7\) He also addresses changes in gender roles,\(^8\) leadership\(^9\) and outreach.\(^10\) Kaplan also discusses the struggle of the Israeli Reform movement to be recognized by the State of Israel in *American Reform Judaism: An Introduction*, describing the monopoly of the Chief Rabbinate on all Jewish aspects and personal status issues in the Israeli society,\(^11\) and the time and effort the World Union for Reform Judaism has put in order to establish a strong and relevant Israeli Reform movement.\(^12\) Laurence Wolff wrote a research paper on the Israeli Reform Movement, *The Reform Movement in Israel: Past, Present and Future*, where he thoroughly described the development of the movement, first in the 1930’s and the second time in the 1950’s and the challenges it has been facing since then, which have remained consistent. He claims that the Israeli Reform movement should build public support and understanding so the movement would gain its legitimacy from the bottom-up, proving it is relevant and needed in the Israeli

\(^3\) Ibid., 27-28.
\(^4\) Ibid., 31.
\(^6\) Ibid., 111.
\(^8\) Ibid., 12-14.
\(^9\) Ibid., 14.
\(^10\) Ibid., 11.
\(^12\) Ibid., 121.
society and not leaving any choice for the Israeli establishment but to recognize it as a legitimate Jewish movement.¹³

Michael Klein wrote about the ideologies, ideals and values of the Reform movement in *Ha’Ani Hama’amin Shel HaYehudi Hareformi (The principles of the Reform Jew)*, emphasizing gender equality, and value of life and dignity as major issues of Reform Judaism.¹⁴ Rabbi Gilad Kariv, the CEO of the Israeli Reform movement and Michael A. Meyer wrote about the ideologies, values, and challenges of the Israel Reform Movement but also a short history of the movement in Germany, the U.S., and in Israel,¹⁵ in *Yesodot ve Ekroron: Letoldot HaYahadut Hareformit (The origins and principles of the Reform Movement)*. Ephraim Tabory writes a thorough description of the Israeli Reform Movement as well in *HaYahadut Hareformit BeYisrael: Heisegim ve Sikuyim*, the Hebrew version of his paper *Reform Judaism in Israel - Progress and Prospects*. Tabory particularly wrote about the history of the movement in Israel, its educational program, platforms, its hostile surroundings and different sub-organizations.¹⁶ Finally, Sylvia Barack Fishman writes about the American Reform Movement in *Hatnuaa Hareformit Bat Zmanenu: Tsmiha ve Etgarim*, the Hebrew translation of her article *Growth and Challenges in the Contemporary Reform Movement* about the characteristics and challenges the American Reform is currently dealing with.

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¹⁶ The Argov Center for the Study of Israel and the Jewish People: “Sugiyot Beyahasei Arba”v-Yisrael No.6: HaYahadut Hareformit BeYisrael: Heisegim ve Sikuyim” (Bar-Ilan University, 2000) [Hebrew]
She covers going back to tradition, gender issues, Jewish education and practice, intermarriage, and more.

Rabbi Tamar Duvdevani writes about female voices in Reform prayers in Hashmiee et Koleh: Al Kolot Nashiim Batefilah HaYehudin Hamitkademet (Voice Yourself: Female voices in Progressive Jewish prayer), distinguishing between gender equality within Reform synagogues and Jewish history, and gender equality in Jewish texts, neutralizing God and emphasizing texts and prayers written by and for women. Michael A. Meyer writes about the structural, architectural and ritual trends in American Reform synagogues in Tmurot Besidrey Hatefila ve Beofyam shel Batei Haknesset Hareformiim BeArha”v (Trends and changes in American Reform synagogues). He addresses the changes in the internal design of synagogues and the different phases in American Jewish Reform history. Rabbi Dalia Marks writes about the development on the Reform prayer in Hatefila Hareformit Ledoroteiha ve Lemerkazeiha (The Reform prayer throughout the generations). For example, the changes in the language, shortening the prayers and adding female voices. Finally, Rabbi Yehoram Mazor writes about Abraham Geiger’s siddur in Sidduro shel HaRav Avraham Geiger – Keitsad Hitpate’ah Siddur Hatefila Hareformi? (Rabbi Abraham

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18 Ibid., 130-135.
19 Ibid., 135-137.
20 Ibid., 145-147.
21 Tamar Duvdevani, “Hashmiee et Koleh: Al Kolot Nashiim Batefilah HaYehudin Hamitkademet”, in Hoshvim Yahadut Mitkademet: Masa Leheykerut HaYahadut Hareformit, ed. Rabbi Meir Azari (Tel Aviv: Babel, 2005), 91-95. [Hebrew]
22 Ibid., 95-97.
25 Ibid., 312.
26 Ibid., 331.
Geiger’s siddur – How did the Reform siddur develop?). For example, Mazor analyzes the changes and reforms he made in Jewish rituals and practice, in order to modernize them.27

The question of Who is a Jew and other personal status issues such as conversion and intermarriage, were discussed by Shaye J.D. Cohen in Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew28 and The Origins of Matrilineal Principle in Rabbinic Law,29 which discusses the history of patrilineal and matrilineal descent in Judaism. In Why I Officiate at Mixed-Marriage Wedding Ceremonies Hillel Cohn explains his rational of officiating at intermarriage weddings, as this is his way of outreach to unaffiliated Jews.30 Walter Homolka, Walter Jacob and Esther Seidel edited a book that gives a thorough history of conversion,31 from biblical times,32 Antiquity and Talmudic period,33 Middle Ages,34 and Renaissance to the 20th century in Europe and the Ottoman Empire35 and Israel36 and how the attitudes towards conversion to Judaism were different in different times and places. Finally, Michael A. Meyer and W. Gunther Plaut in The Reform Judaism Reader: North American Documents,37 and many Israeli thinkers in Mihu Yehudi Beyameinu? (Who is a

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Jew today?) offer a variety of opinions regarding the questions of personal status and how to determine someone’s Jewish religion.38

Denise L. Eger writes about embracing the LGBTQ movement into the Reform community, in *Embracing Lesbians and Gay Men: A Reform Jewish Innovation*,39 and Hinda Seif writes about Bisexual women in the movement in “*Where Kosher Means Organic and Union Label*: Bisexual Women Reembrace their Jewish Heritage.”40 Ariel Pikar writes about same-sex marriages in the Reform Movement in the U.S. and the history of their inclusion in the American Reform Movement in *HaSiah Hahalahti BaYahadut Hareformit: Nisuin Homosexualim Kemikre Bohan*” (The Halachic discourse in Reform Judaism: homosexual marriages as a case study),41 and Yakir Englender writes about the Reform rabbi’s perception of LGBTQ in *Tefisat Haminiyut Hahad Minit Bekerev Igud Harabanim Hereformim BeArtsot Habrit Bame’a Ha’esrim ve Hashpata al pesikato: Bikoret Kwirit* (The perception of unisexual sexuality by the CCAR in the 21st century and its influence on their rulings: a queer critique).42

Paula E. Hyman writes about egalitarianism and the status of women in the Reform Movement in *Feminism ve Ma’amadan Shel Nashim Batnuaa Hareformit* (Feminism and women’s

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status in the Reform movement),\textsuperscript{43} Karla Goldman writes about the subject as well in \textit{A Worthier Place: Women, Reform Judaism and the Presidents of Hebrew Union College}.\textsuperscript{44} Rabbi Galia Sadan wrote in \textit{Rabot Banot Asu Hail ve Hatalit al Kalena} about women in Jewish liturgy and Jewish liturgy for women and by women.\textsuperscript{45} Finally, Sylvia Barack Fishman, writes about gender roles and women’s roles in Jewish history and in modern Reform thought.\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{Methodology}

This study is based on qualitative research that gathers its data from conversations, liturgy and archival research, on the subject of Reform Judaism in the U.S. and Israel. In the research, I conducted for this paper I read a variety of articles, books and responsas regarding all aspects of Reform Judaism: analysis of Reform liturgy and platforms, rituals and architecture, egalitarianism and Jewish identity debates, as well as on the Jewish history which was the trigger to the movement’s development. In addition to an archival research and in order to receive a rabbi’s perspective on these subjects, I spoke with five rabbis: Rabbi Meir Azari, Rabbi Galia Sadan and Rabbi Yehoram Mazor from the Israeli Reform movement, and Rabbi Prof. David Ellenson and Rabbi Prof. Jan Katzew from the American Reform movement. I also had conversations with rabbinical students from the American chapters of the Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion. After gathering the data for the paper, I formalized a list of categories to be compared, analyzed and discussed, and a total of five broad categories were chosen to be discussed, which

\textsuperscript{45} Galia Sadan, “Rabot Banot Asu Hail ve Hatalit al Kalena”, in \textit{Hoshvim Yahadut Mitkademet: Masa Leheykerut HaYahadut Hareformit}, ed. Rabbi Meir Azari (Tel Aviv: Babel, 2005), 83-89. [Hebrew]
would include several sub-categories within them. The importance of this research is that it provides a comparison between the differences between the movements on a variety of key issues. After conducting the research, formalizing the subjects and analyzing them, I discussed their importance and implications on the relationship between the movements, as well as on the status of each movement in its home-country. All in all, the thesis has five chapters as well as a conclusion, and will address five to six issues within the Reform movement.
Chapter 1: The Development of the Reform Movement

The Development of the Reform Movement in Europe

The Reform movement originally began to develop in late 18th century Germany, when Jews began to perceive traditional Jewish worship habits as tied to earlier societies and not all binding or relevant for contemporary Jews. With increased contact between the Jews and the general society where they lived, the integration of certain components of the European culture into Jewish European culture and the political emancipation of Jews in Germany, traditional Judaism and Jewish practice did not always seem relevant to the Jews’ contemporary status or vision for themselves as members of European communities. Reform Judaism was thus, in large part, a result and response to the Jews’ emancipation and their status in Germany. Jews were studying secular subjects and not just religious studies. Parents sent their children to non-Jewish schools, and students applied to academic studies that were not just medicine. Many Jews consumed secular culture even before being legally emancipated at the end of the 18th century. Many Jewish institutions became weaker and Yeshivas, the institution in which men study the Torah and other scriptures, were closed, one by one. Jewish teachers increasingly came from Poland and were very different from the German Jews. Men’s Jewish education was minimal while women’s Jewish education was almost non-existent. Many German Jews saw their religion as a burden, an obstacle in the way of fulfilling their goals and aspirations.

47 Sylvia Barack Fishman, The Way into the Varieties of Jewishness, 86; 110.
48 Michael A. Meyer, Bein Masoret Lekidma: Toldot Tnuat Hareforma Bayahadot, 25. [Hebrew]
49 Ibid., 24-25.
51 Ibid., 26.
Therefore, when emancipation was offered, many Jews embraced it. Some converted, some remained Jews but secular, and some Jews adopted the ideas of the French Enlightenment movement. The reformers did not face a united Jewish community, but a divided and fragmented one. This fragmentation enabled the adoption of more liberal and modern ideals, especially among the urban Jews.

While living before the formation of the Reform movement, Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) was among the first German Jews to adapt to the modern European culture. Mendelssohn believed Jews should intellectually and culturally be assimilated in the general society, and he proved that being a modern Jew was possible when he did just that. Mendelssohn translated the Bible to German, believing that it would encourage the Jews to speak German rather than Yiddish and to eliminate language barriers. (Also, many German Jews were losing their Yiddish, so having the Bible in German made it more accessible to modernizing Jews.)

Mendelssohn tried to modernize Jewish education and encouraged his students to do the same by adding full secular studies to their religious education. He did not see any contradiction between Judaism and wisdom. While being modern in his ideals and values, Mendelssohn kept observing Jewish laws and rituals and stuck to his belief. He was a “fixer” of the Jewish lifestyle rather than of Judaism, and believed that Judaism did not need to be fully changed to exist. Rather, he argued that Judaism should be interpreted differently by emphasizing its universalistic and rational values. By being an observant Jew who adapted and adopted modern-German-cultural-social characteristics, Mendelssohn became the role model of Modern Orthodoxy, which was

52 Ibid.  
53 Ibid., 27.  
54 Ibid.  
55 Ibid.  
56 Ibid., 27-28.
developed about two generations after his death.\textsuperscript{57} However, Mendelssohn is not considered as one of Reform Judaism’s spiritual father, as did not believe Judaism could evolve or develop. Jews were not free to stop observing Jewish law, and were not allowed to change it, only God.\textsuperscript{58}

In 1781, when the Austrian Caesar Joseph II published the \textit{Toleranzpatent (Patent of Toleration)}, defining civil rights for minorities and other religions such as Judaism, and serving as a source of the Jewish emancipation in Europe, Naftali Hertz Wizel, Mendelssohn’s colleague, called for implementing secular and general studies in the Jewish curriculum. This call encouraged the formation of new Jewish schools in Berlin and around Germany.\textsuperscript{59}

Among the first writers and politicians to argue that for Jews to become fully emancipated, they must critically re-examine Jewish religious belief and practice, was Christian Wilhelm Dohm (1767-1835), who published in 1781 a pamphlet where he called for giving Jews equal rights. As Dohm did not believe in the historical differences between religions, he hoped that prosperity and the modern regime would weaken the influence of religious principles, which he believed separated rather than united people.\textsuperscript{60} Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804), the greatest philosopher of that time, thought that Jews and Christians would be able to overcome their differences and become “brothers” only if Jews would “purify” the principles of Judaism and reject their old and archaic rituals.\textsuperscript{61}

From the 1780’s, some Jews called for changes in their religion, as they were starting to internalize religious and cultural values which contradicted some content of their Jewish heritage.\textsuperscript{62} The Jewish Enlightenment had the patronage of the German one, which unlike the French version,

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
did not object to religion. Instead, the German Enlightenment appreciated religion if it respected the intelligence and autonomy of the individual.\(^{63}\) Some young German Jews began to reject rituals and superstitions that were primitive and not universalistic.\(^{64}\)

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781), a great playwright of the German Enlightenment and a friend of Mendelssohn, claimed that historical Judaism belonged to an earlier stage of the religious development of mankind, a stage that had come to an end.\(^{65}\) Some Jewish reformers adopted Lessing’s claim and concluded that Jewish tradition does not belong to the modern time. Having said that, while Lessing saw Jewish tradition as a part of past heritage and thought that was where it belonged, the reformers believed Judaism should be adjusted to modern times.\(^{66}\) Jews during the end of the 18\(^{th}\) century began to question the spiritual benefits of Judaism, and every Jewish ritual and ceremony that did not contribute to the modern spirit had to be changed or moved aside to give room to those reforms that did. Jewish Enlighteners sought answers in the Bible, rather in the Talmud, the source of the Halacha (Jewish law) which they rejected.\(^{67}\)

Shaul Asher (1767-1822) was an early Jewish theoretician, who discussed the rearrangement of old contents in a reform context. He was born in Berlin to a somewhat wealthy family, but was not a part of the Jewish elite. Asher wrote an article on religion in general with an emphasis on Judaism. His claim was that Judaism was not understood by Christians, who did not recognize its exalted values nor its essence. Asher saw Judaism as a religion, rather than a theoretical-practical entity, composed by theoretical and practical components. As Judaism is a religion, God meant it to provide happiness to the believers. The goal of practical commandments

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\(^{63}\) Ibid.  
\(^{64}\) Ibid., 31-32.  
\(^{65}\) Ibid., 32.  
\(^{66}\) Ibid.  
\(^{67}\) Ibid.
was spiritual education, but not its essence.\textsuperscript{68} Therefore, over the years, the commandments could lose their relevance and role if not updated. Asher called for a reformation in Judaism, which would make Judaism a religion instead of a political entity. Jews would have to believe in God, but would still have their free will.\textsuperscript{69}

In 1796, after the French conquered the Netherlands in 1795, Jews were fully emancipated, much like they were in France itself. It was then when first reforms in synagogues took place.\textsuperscript{70} In 1797, the rabbi of congregation Adat Yeshurun of Amsterdam, Holland, Rabbi Izak Graanboom, a \textit{ger Tezdek} (a person who converted to Judaism) from Sweden, implemented changes in his congregation’s services. A choir sang original \textit{piyutim} (Jewish songs) in Dutch as well as in Hebrew. While they prayed with a traditional \textit{siddur}, the changes Graanboom made in the service itself reflected new orientation. He also added a sermon for each Shabbat service which were dedicated to moral and ethics.\textsuperscript{71}

Israel Jacobson (1768-1828), a Jewish businessman and philanthropist from Germany, is considered a Reform pioneer and a founder of the Reform movement.\textsuperscript{72} Jacobson came from a wealthy German Jewish family, though he never received a formal secular education. However, while his ideals were not different from other Jewish Enlighteners, his wealth and status enabled him to spread them. Despite being an observant Jew, he was influenced by the universalistic values preached by Mendelssohn.\textsuperscript{73} Jacobson was also inspired by the emancipation of the French Jews and sent a letter to Napoleon in 1807 to encourage him to advocate for the benefits of the Jews in

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 36.  \\
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 36-37.  \\
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 40.  \\
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 41.  \\
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 46.  \\
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 46-47.  \\
\end{flushright}
Germany.\textsuperscript{74} He suggested to form an “upper council”\textsuperscript{75} which would oversee all religious aspects of all the European Jews.\textsuperscript{76}

During the first two decades of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, about 3,500 Jews lived in Berlin, but only one synagogue existed. About twelve private \textit{minyanim} were held, despite being illegal, as Jews were not allowed to pray outside the synagogue in those days.\textsuperscript{77} The secularization of many of Germany’s Jews and their antagonism towards Jewish heritage decreased their attendance in the synagogue. While Mendelssohn encouraged Jews to be modern and a part of the German society while observing Jewish law, some Jews merely turned their backs on Judaism.\textsuperscript{78} Jacobson held a Confirmation celebration for his son in the spring of 1815 (not a traditional Jewish ceremony), and due to its success, he continued to host private services at his home. These services were more progressive; an organ was played (by a Christian man) and they prayed both in Hebrew and German. After a few months of secret services, the king heard of them and Jacobson had to shut them down. The Jews who participated in his services had to go back and pray in the only synagogue in town, which was traditional, and they clashed with the traditional members.\textsuperscript{79}

In 1819, the \textit{Verein für die Cultur und die Wissenschaft der Juden}, a society for Jewish culture and science was established in Berlin by Jewish scholars, and among them was Eduard Gans (1839-1879), a doctor of Law and a former student of Hegel, one of Germany’s greatest philosophers. The society’s goal was to connect Jews with the general German society without having to convert to Christianity.\textsuperscript{80} The young Jews who were a part of the society participated in the progressive services. They held services in a synagogue which was built in the house of one of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 48.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Similar to the Chief Rabbinate in Israel and the U.K.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Michael A. Meyer, \textit{Bein Masoret Lekidma: Toldot Tnuat Hareforma Bayahadot}, 48. [Hebrew]
\item \textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 60.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 63.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 65.
\end{itemize}
the congregation’s financial supporters. Men and women were seated separately, though no records of a mehitza (a physical divider) were found,\textsuperscript{81} and the sermons were given in German every Saturday morning.\textsuperscript{82} The services were affiliated with the Sephardic Minhag (practice, Rite), which used a different prayer book and followed different religious practices from the more common German Jewish Ashkenazi practice. The use of the Sephardic prayer service was a bit of a controversy, but a bigger one was the implementation of music in the service and the existence of the organ.\textsuperscript{83}

Eventually, Reform ideas came to Hamburg, then the biggest Jewish community in Germany.\textsuperscript{84} Most of Hamburg’s Jews were secular as a result of the French regime there, and only a small number of Jews participated in services. However, by the second decade of the 19th century, many Jews returned to their roots,\textsuperscript{85} though they were not comfortable with traditional Judaism and were looking for means to express their new Jewish beliefs. They wished to maintain their relations and economic ties with the general society of Hamburg, and practice Judaism in a way that would appear to fit in with German culture. In 1817, the first progressive synagogue was established in Hamburg. The congregation had an organ\textsuperscript{86} and a choir, but and men and women were still seated separately, though without a visible mehitza.\textsuperscript{87} Two board members of the new synagogue, Seckel Isaac Frankel (1765-1835) and Meyer Israel Bresselau (1785-1839) soon began to write the prayer books. The prayer book they wrote became the first complete siddur of the Reform.\textsuperscript{88} The siddur included prayers both in Hebrew and German, opened from left-to-right, and the prayers themselves were far from the traditional ones. They changed, rewrote and cut parts of prayers they

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{81}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{82}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{83}] Ibid., 66.
\item[\textsuperscript{84}] Ibid., 71.
\item[\textsuperscript{85}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{86}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{87}] Ibid., 72-73.
\item[\textsuperscript{88}] Ibid., 74.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
felt were not relevant. For example, they removed the prayers which referenced making sacrifices.\textsuperscript{89} In the following years other progressive congregations were formed in Germany.\textsuperscript{90} This was the first phase of the Reform movement in the Jewish religion.

Northern Germany of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century was the fertile land for Protestantism, which was affected by the German Enlightenment. It was there that religion was defined as private matter and direct relationship between people and their God, without the bridging of religious institutions such as churches.\textsuperscript{91} It was there where Protestant Christianity adopted universalistic and rationalistic values. It was also where Reform Jews were influenced by Protestant ideas.\textsuperscript{92} Reform Judaism was influenced by the Protestant theology, and rejected the old hierarchy and the centrality of the clergy to religion.\textsuperscript{93}

Reform Judaism adopted not only Protestant theological ideas, but also several characteristics of the Protestant church and services, and among them: praying in German rather than in Hebrew, sermons during services, rejection of rituals, and emphasis on the word and meaning in prayer, and shorter services. Reform Judaism also adopted the structure of the Protestant church and the Reform synagogue, i.e., the Temple, had a big organ and choir, which replaced the cantor.\textsuperscript{94}

In 1810, Abraham Geiger was born in Frankfurt am Main, to a traditional family.\textsuperscript{95} While he was not the first to promote the ideas of reform, he has been considered as Reform Judaism’s spiritual father, as he took all the reforms and changes and wove them into a more coherent Reform

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 75.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 168.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{94} “Geiger, Abraham”, \textit{Jewish Virtual Library}, N.D., \url{https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/geiger-abraham} [Accessed: March 17, 2017]
\textsuperscript{95} Michael A. Meyer, \textit{Bein Masoret Lekidma: Toldot Tnuat Hareforma Bayahadot}, 111. [Hebrew]
ideology.\textsuperscript{96} Geiger had deep analytical thinking and wisdom and could overcome many of the dissonances between modernity and Jewish tradition.\textsuperscript{97} Despite growing up in a traditional setting, Geiger was influenced by the German Enlightenment which affected his home town, and took general/secular studies in addition to his Jewish studies. He studied History and Philosophy in the university of Bonn. Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), a German poet, theologian and philosopher, became his role model, and throughout his academic studies, Geiger pondered how Herder’s critical ideas on religion and theology could be applied to Judaism.\textsuperscript{98}

In 1832, Geiger became the rabbi of the small congregation of Wiesbaden. He kept pondering and deliberating the question of Judaism and modernity, and reached the conclusion that leading traditional Judaism to a more progressive way of practice was better than converting to another religion. He preferred making changes in Jewish rituals than forming a new Jewish denomination.\textsuperscript{99} As a student, he saw how Judaism was losing its appeal, while Christianity was adapting itself to modernity. He saw the contempt many Jewish university graduates felt towards Judaism. He believed that the reformer’s role was to find justifications for change in examples from the past and that Jewish leaders should also be more active in contemporary Jewish history.\textsuperscript{100} Eventually, Geiger, as a rabbi and a scientist, could both create a new form of Judaism and maintain an affinity to Jewish tradition. Geiger believed that the Judaism of his time lacked any historical awareness. In his work as a historian, Geiger aimed to shatter the consensus of Jewish history and theology according to the \textit{Talmud}, and later, spent his time rebuilding and creating a new Jewish

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 110.  
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 111.  
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 112.
theology. His new approach to Judaism tried to explain, understand and appreciate each period in Jewish history in its own terms and context.\textsuperscript{101}

In 1837, Geiger initiated the first Reform-oriented convention, which was successfully held in Wiesbaden, despite Geiger being a controversial person who was not much liked by the people. His followers adored and worshiped him, while his enemies hated him.\textsuperscript{102} In his sermons, he wished to show Judaism’s universalistic values and that you can be a modern Jew. His Judaism was “prophetic” Judaism, and the message of the prophets was, from his perspective, the main component of Judaism and not the commands and \textit{Halacha}. Their moral and ethical values were the reasons the prophets remained relevant and eternal. The rituals were merely a vessel to or a tool, and they did not have any essence on their own.\textsuperscript{103}

The services in Geiger’s synagogues were held in Hebrew, even though most of the worshipers did not understand it, because the congregation preferred the familiar rhythm and tunes.\textsuperscript{104} Geiger’s attitude towards Hebrew was ambivalent, as he felt it was an old, dead language, but at the same time, he wrote several beautiful articles in Hebrew.\textsuperscript{105} Hebrew was the language and heritage of Jewish religion and science, and Geiger loved Hebrew very much, and he felt Hebrew was the proper way to pray in public, as opposed to the German Jews who felt it should be used only when praying in private.\textsuperscript{106}

Geiger did not see Judaism as a nation and did not believe in Judaism as peoplehood, only as a religion. He also did not believe the continuation of the Jewish people was a goal, but at the same time he did not support intermarriage, and preferred easing the conversion process for non-

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 114-115.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 116-117.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 117.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 118.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
Jewish spouses.\footnote{Ibid., 119.} He also believed that reforming the Jewish religion should not happen as a tool to enable emancipation, but the opposite: emancipated and free Jews, with a religious autonomy, should be able to reform Judaism.\footnote{Ibid.} Geiger felt that the Judaism of his time was estranged from its inner essence and instead emphasized external signs which were expressed in physical rituals. In 1874, a year after moving to Berlin to teach in the liberal seminary for rabbis, he passed away.\footnote{Ibid., 120.}

In sum, the first reformers rejected most of the \textit{Halacha}, and were influenced by the Protestant movement in Germany. The first Reform Temple looked like a Protestant church; there was an organ at the sanctuary and a choir, and the \textit{siddur} was in German and not in Hebrew. The new Reformers rejected strict observance of the \textit{Shabbat}, and \textit{kashrut} was rejected as a concept. They also rejected the Jewish family laws, such as immersion in a \textit{mikvah}. Moreover, there were no ritual garments, like \textit{Talit} and \textit{Kippa}, as it was forbidden to wear them in the synagogue. The reformers felt that the Jewish people were unnecessarily defined by their obligation to the \textit{Halacha}, which they rejected. The laws to be obeyed, they argued, were the local ones, and not the Jewish ones. The new reformers wanted to prove that you could be Jewish and modern at the same time.\footnote{Sylvia Barack Fishman, \textit{The Way into the Varieties of Jewishness}, 87.}

By the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, about 85\% of Germany’s Jews were Reform.\footnote{Ibid., 88}

\textbf{The Development of the Reform Movement in the United States of America}

When the German Jews immigrated to America in the early and mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century, they brought Reform Judaism with them. However, while American Reform Judaism was intellectually dependent on European Reform Judaism, as this European Reform Judaism was the ideological source of American Reform Judaism, Reform Judaism in America was much more successful in
implementing the Reform agenda. The U.S. did not have many of the barriers which limited European Reform Jews. The relatively young America, was a fertile land which fit the needs of the American Reform movement.\textsuperscript{112} For example, while in Europe, the different rulers and governments limited or intervened in the religious (and specifically Jewish lives) of its citizens. In the U.S., where separation between state and church was a basic value, there was no government supervision and its government did not intervene.\textsuperscript{113} Jews were able to make changes and reforms in the Jewish religion in the U.S., while it was more difficult to do so in Europe.

Most the Jews who settled in America during the 17\textsuperscript{th} century and later were not so much observant Jews, and intermarriage was not a rare event. Jews did not live in communities like they lived in Europe, and if a Jew wished to belong to one, he or she joined a specific synagogue. Judaism was not a heritage, something a person passes to younger generations, and practicing it was an active and conscious decision.\textsuperscript{114} While Classical Reform American Judaism was a product of Europe, it was in the U.S., where it had flourished. One of the main principles of the Reform was the autonomy of the individual over religious aspects of life, and in the U.S., Jews were finally able to live according to this principle. This individualistic value is one of the American foundations.\textsuperscript{115}

The first American Reform religious group in the U.S., the ‘Reformed Society of Israelites’, was formed in 1824 in Charleston, South Carolina. Charleston’s Sephardic Orthodox synagogue, Congregation Beth Elohim, became the first Reform synagogue in the U.S.\textsuperscript{116} The first Reform congregations were more conservative than the German ones, as men and women were

\textsuperscript{112}Michael A. Meyer, \textit{Bein Masoret Lekidma: Toldot Tnuat Hareforma Bayahadot}, 261. [Hebrew]
\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., 261-262.
\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., 262.
\textsuperscript{115}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116}“History”, \textit{Union for Reform Judaism}, N.D., \url{http://www.urj.org/who-we-are/history} [Accessed: March 22, 2017]
seated separately, covering their heads, and no violation of dietary laws or Shabbat were allowed in the synagogues.¹¹⁷

Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, who was the ‘great architect’ of the Reform movement in the U.S.,¹¹⁸ immigrated in 1846 from Bohemia and became the rabbi of Congregation B’nai Yeshurun in Cincinnati, where he remained until his death.¹¹⁹ Wise thought that the Americans could shape a new calling for humanity as the new “chosen” people, and that American Jews would be a meaningful part of this new “chosen” people.¹²⁰ He also believed that Reform Judaism, as a progressive and universalistic religion, would be the religion of all Americans.¹²¹ In 1857, he wrote Minhag America, the first American siddur, and included both Hebrew text and English translations.¹²² During the 1850’s and 1860’s, some changes were made in his congregation, such as mixed seating and banning wearing head covering in the synagogues. In addition, they began banning wearing prayer shawls, and only rabbinic tallitot could be wear by the rabbis.¹²³

In 1885, a second American conference of Reform rabbis took place in Pittsburgh. The attending rabbis created a document, which, among other issues, rejected aspects of the Bible that were reflections of the “primitive ideas of its own ages and times”.¹²⁴ For example, dietary laws, purity and dress codes, as well as the ‘return to Palestine’, were rejected. However, they did put emphasis on social justice and righteousness. These principles and others, which were confirmed by the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the Reform Rabbinic Organization in the U.S., in 1889, remained the accepted guidelines/ positions/ policies of American Reform Judaism until 1937. In 1857, the first Reform rabbinical seminary – Hebrew Union College, opened in

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¹¹⁹ “History”, Union for Reform Judaism, N.D., [http://www.urj.org/who-we-are/history](http://www.urj.org/who-we-are/history) [Accessed: March 22, 2017]
¹²¹ Ibid.
¹²² Ibid., 287.
¹²⁴ Ibid., 113.
Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1894, the new Reform prayer book, ‘*Union Prayer Book*’, was published, and included mostly prayers in English and a few in Hebrew. German was not used anymore. Within ten years, it became the customary *siddur* of the American Reform movement. Removing the German language from the Reform prayer book had symbolized the final separation and distinction of the American Reform movement, from the German one.

In 1917, the British declared their support for a Jewish National Home, and the U.S. acknowledged the concept, so the Reform movement was no longer able to be against the establishment of a Jewish state. Moreover, despite the movement’s official rejection of Zionism, there were leaders who were attracted to the concept of having a Jewish state. One of them was the writer Maurice Samuel. In the 1937 Columbus platform some of the official principles of the movement were changed, such as the acceptance of Zionism.

During the post-World War II decades, Jewish religious and communal institutions spread, and between 1938 and 1956, the number of Reform synagogues increased nationally from 290 to 520. Also, many Reform afternoon schools and Sunday Schools opened. According to historian and sociologist Marshall Sklare (1921-1992), Reform Jews felt closest to the aspects of Jewish culture that matched American values. In the 1960’s the Reform movement was much influenced by second-wave Feminism and the Civil Right Movement. During the 1960’s the movement as a whole became more Zionist. Many Reform rabbis connected the African-American struggle to achieve equality and freedom to the most basic values of Judaism. The support of the African-American struggle raised self-awareness of Jewish heritage – “Jews discovered that if

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125 “History”, *Union for Reform Judaism*, N.D., [http://www.urj.org/who-we-are/history](http://www.urj.org/who-we-are/history) [Accessed: March 22, 2017]
127 Ibid., 115.
128 Ibid., 116.
129 Ibid., 118.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid., 119.
Black is beautiful, Jewish is reasonably attractive.”

There was a renewed interest in Jewish rituals and texts, which was cultivated by Zionism and African-American activism. For example, many young Jews were influenced by Ethnoreligious particularism and this interest enabled them to explore these aspects of life that made Judaism distinctive. Many Reform rabbis began spending more time in Israel after the Six-Day War, became more attached to Hebrew, Israeli music and culture, as well as the Israeli secular connection to the Jewish holidays. The Reform’s rejection of wearing head coverings and prayer shawls moderated. The general trend was modification of many of the principles that distinguished the Reform from the other Jewish denominations. This trend was partially due to the new Reform interest in the State of Israel, its culture and the Israeli secular attachment to the Jewish holidays, who celebrate them despite being secular. Living Jewish lives can happen in a secular space/context, rather than just an Orthodox one, and Reform Jews were able to identify with this concept. Being affected by the Feminism, Reform women had gained more Jewish education. Reform women learned how to read the Torah, began wearing prayer shawls and head covering, and Bat Mitzva ceremonies for girls as well as adult women became more common. A significant milestone for the Reform movement was the ordination of its first female rabbi, Sally Preisand, in 1972.

In addition to being more egalitarian, the movement had adopted more traditional Jewish values and principles, became softer towards the concepts of God and commandments, and in 1975, a new prayer book was published, ‘Mishkan Tefilah’. For example, the new prayer book had prayers both in English, Hebrew and transliteration to English, while the previous one, was

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132 Ibid., 122.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid., 122-123.
135 Ibid., 123.
136 Ibid., 123.
137 Ibid., 124 – 125.
mostly in English with some Hebrew. Another example is the fact that *Mishkan Tefila* had only a Hebrew title, while the previous ones had a translated title to English. In my point of view, these differences are the expression of the re-adoption of the Hebrew language as a centralized language in Judaism by the Reform movement in America, and as a symbol of getting closer to Jewish tradition, which cherishes the Hebrew language as the language of prayer. It also means, in my eyes, that American Reform Jews wish to strengthen their relationship to Judaism while maintaining their Americanness – living daily lives in English, but praying in Hebrew, to prove that they do not contradict one another.

The Reform movement is the largest denomination in America today. In 2003, the ‘Union of American Hebrew Congregations’ (UAHC), which was founded in 1873, changed its name to ‘Union for Reform Judaism’ (URJ). The Reform movement also welcomes LGBTQ members and ordained them as rabbis. At the Biennial 2015 in Orlando, Florida, the movement adopted the Transgender Rights Policy, “urging synagogues and other Jewish groups to be advocates for transgender rights and to take steps like training their staffs on accommodating transgender people.”

**The Development of the Reform Movement in Israel**

The first signs of the Reform Judaism in Israel appeared in the 1930’s, when a number of Reform communities were established by German immigrants (*Olim*, in Hebrew), in Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem. In Haifa, the Reform community opened a kindergarten and school, under the supervision of Rabbi Meir Elk, and named it the Leo Baeck Education Center. However, while

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the education center was rather successful, the communities themselves were not as much, and stopped operating after several years. These congregations did not endure as they were not able to become a constant part of their members’ lives.140

During the late 1950’s, after the establishment of the State of Israel, the communal and religious activities of Reform Judaism were renewed. New communities were formed in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ramat Gan, Haifa and other locations. The leaders of these communities were rabbis who made Aliya from Europe and North America, among them Prof. Shalom Ben-Horin and Rabbi Moshe Zemer. In 1963, the Israeli branch of Hebrew Union College opened in Jerusalem. This establishment was the first Reform establishment in Israel.141 In 1965, the Progressive Rabbi’s Council, which united all the Reform rabbis who worked in Israel, was formed. In 1973, the World Union for Progressive Judaism moved its headquarters to Jerusalem. In 1976, the first Reform Kibbutz was established, Kibbutz Yahel, in the Arava.142

The second half of the 1980’s was characterized by a rapid growth of the Reform community in Israel. One of the reasons for this rapid growth has been the ordination of about 80 Israeli rabbis since the end of the 1970’s, at the Jerusalem campus of the Hebrew Union College (HUC). These rabbis officiated at thousands of Bar and Bat Mitzva ceremonies, as well as other cycle of life events, services and more.143 Another reason is that many “secular Israeli Jews began to realize that a spiritual dimension was missing in their lives… to whom religious and Halachic principles and practices were not binding…”144 As of 2012, the number of Reform communities and congregations was 35, along with about fifty kindergartens and eight elementary and high

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141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
143 Ibid.
schools. In addition, the Reform movement has a youth movement, Telem Youth (Telem – Tnuaa Leyahadut Mitkademet - the name of the Reform movement in Hebrew) and other informal educational programs.\(^{145}\)

Reform services in Israel are usually conducted in Hebrew, with occasional translations for overseas guests. Moreover, some Reform congregations in Israel expect their congregants to wear kipot and tallitot.\(^{146}\) The rules for conversion are the rules of the state of Israel, and therefore, one who is not acknowledged by Israel as a Jew must convert. However, the conversion for those who grew up with a Jewish father, and/or in a Jewish home, is relatively shorter and is called “Zera Israel” (seed of Israel).\(^{147}\) Reform weddings are performed only when the couple is Jewish, meaning that the Israeli Reform movement does not perform mixed marriages.\(^{148}\) However, the Israeli Reform movement does perform same-sex marriages, as long as the couple is Jewish, as the movement welcomes the LGBTQ community as members and ordains them as rabbis.\(^{149}\) Finally, Reform communities in Israel, as in North America, increasingly add modern and other "twists" to the traditional service, some focusing on more up-to-date spiritual music and prayers, some running a nearly 100% musical service, and others focusing on environmental and social issues.\(^{150}\)


In the U.S., there is separation between religion and state, so the legitimacy each Jewish movement has stems from the people themselves, and not from the state. Therefore, as long as the American Jewish community feels there is a need for Reform communities and congregations, the Reform movement in the U.S. would have the legitimacy to exist. However, the situation is Israel is different, as there is no separation between religion and state, and the body in charge of making Jewish decisions is the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. The Rabbinate is recognized by law as the supreme rabbinic and spiritual authority for Judaism in Israel. Due to political pressure of the Ultra-Orthodox parties in the *Knesset* (the Israeli parliament), the Rabbinate has a monopoly on weddings, burials, conversions, *kashrut* and other Jewish aspects of life. Moreover, due to this pressure, wedding ceremonies and conversions performed by progressive Jewish movements, including the Conservative and Reform movements, are not acknowledged by the Rabbinate, though the state itself does acknowledge them. Therefore, although both movements have become more popular within Israel, they are still fighting for legitimacy and acknowledgment as official forms of Judaism and Jewish practice in Israel.
Chapter 2: Ideologies and Programs/Institutional Structures to Implement Ideologies

Ideology is defined as “the set of ideas and beliefs of a group or political party.” In this chapter, I will discuss the ideologies of each movement and the programs designed to implement them. I will compare them to each other, while providing a brief history of past ideologies and their development.

Ideologies and programs of the Union for Reform Judaism

Past adopted platforms

Prior to 1820, six out of the seven Jewish congregations in the U.S. followed the Sephardic ritual. During the 19th century there was a significant Jewish immigration from German speaking areas, some of whom brought with them Reform Jewish practices. However, only two congregations that were formed by these immigrants were designed to be Reform, Har Sinai of Baltimore, Maryland (Founded in 1842) and Emanu-El of New York City, New York (founded in 1843). These congregations kept somewhat traditional ritual practices, such as separate seating, observing Sabbath and Kosher, and the reforms were mostly in the structure of the synagogue (i.e., the organ), rather than substance or ideology.

153 Ibid., 86.
During the following 60 years, the changes became ideological, and were affected by the Civil War (1861-1865), and the rise of social, economic and progressive visions and ideals, which American Jews shared with the greater American society. By 1880, the Reform synagogue had undergone a transformation in substance and not just decorum. Reform synagogues had organs, prayers were in German and English instead of Hebrew, families sat together, and head coverings were banned. Finally, it was during this time that Reform synagogue was referred as Temple.

In 1885, nineteen Reform rabbis from all over the United States met in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania and adopted, among others, the following principles in a document known as The Pittsburg Platform: First, God is within each person. Second, history and science do not contradict the Bible. Third, only moral and ethical laws of the Hebrew Bible should be followed and practiced. Reform Judaism rejects laws and traditions that contradict modernity. Fourth, rabbinic laws of dietary, priestly purity, and dress are rejected. Fifth, the platform rejects the return to Zion. Judaism is understood to be a religion and not a nationality, and therefore there is no role or place for a Jewish state. Sixth, the embracing and reaching out to all monotheistic religions, as well as social justice, is defined as an integral Reform value. The Pittsburg Platform became the central document in the “Classical Reform” era of the American Reform movement, and it reflected all the changes and reforms adopted during the previous years, between 1830-1880.

Between 1880-1937, about 4,250,000 Jews immigrated to the U.S., mostly from Eastern Europe. While the praying language of the earlier immigrants from the German speaking areas was initially German, these immigrants and their descendants increasingly spoke English, and in 1883, when the first class of Hebrew Union College/Cincinnati (HUC/Cincinnati), graduated, the

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154 Ibid., 88.
155 Ibid., 89.
transition from German to English instruction, conversation, and prayer was inevitable.\textsuperscript{158} In the
1880’s, many Reform congregations introduced Sunday services instead of Saturdays, and these
services were significantly Protestantized in structure.\textsuperscript{159} For example, the Bar Mitzva was replaced
by Confirmation of boys and girls and the cantor was replaced by a choir.\textsuperscript{160} These years are
considered as the shaping and formative years of American Reform Judaism. The American Jewish
community was influenced by the massive immigration, but despite the massive immigration, the
Reform movement stayed relatively small and in the margins, as most of the Jews who immigrated
to the U.S. were Orthodox.\textsuperscript{161}

During these years, Zionism was born, and its nationalist outlook and program contradicted
the universalist values of the Reform movement. In 1897, the year the first Zionist Congress took
place in Basel, Switzerland, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) passed a
unanimous resolution which rejected Zionism, and rabbis were forbidden to discuss it in their
Temples.\textsuperscript{162} Another issue the movement faced in the first years of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century was the
question of Jewish continuity. Many members of the Reform movement felt the link to historic
Judaism was weak, and some rabbis and their congregants left Judaism and converted to
Christianity. (This was a small number of people however.)

However, in the years later, Reform Temples were drawn back to Judaism. They
reevaluated their extreme distinction from traditional Judaism. This draw back was the result of
the reexamination of the extreme path they previously chose, which they began seeing as
damaging.\textsuperscript{163} “The disquieting feeling had set in that their earlier breaks had been too abrupt and

\textsuperscript{158} Leon A. Jick, “The Reform Synagogue”, 90.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 91-92.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 92-93.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 94.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 94.
that they must proceed more temperately if they were to relinquish their essential industry…. They began to qualify the damaging extremes of their earlier excisions.”

Moreover, the Reform movement increasingly observed itself as the representative of American Jewry. After the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which affirmed British support for a Jewish home in Eretz Yisrael, the CCAR reaffirmed its rejection of Zionism, though a Zionist sentiment did grow in some Reform congregations and rabbis, including that of Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver in Cleveland. Another change of attitude was towards Jewish education, when in 1924, a Joint Commission on Jewish Education was established. This commission adopted a curriculum for religious schools and textbooks were published.

In the 1930’s, the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Europe and Anti-Semitism both in Europe and the United States, and the Great Depression affected policies and economy. Jews were no longer welcomed in Europe even before Hitler’s rise to power, and American Jews were affected as well, as they had to reconsider full assimilation, for example. Egalitarianism became more prevalent in Reform congregations. By the mid 1930’s Reform Judaism had changed and many adopted Zionism and Jewish peoplehood. These shifts were a result of the experience of sharing a common destiny during these hard days for the Jews in Europe. For example, refugees from Germany and Austria, adults and children, were resettled in the U.S. with the assistance of different Reform congregations, such as the Emanu-El of San Francisco, California.

Following the numerous changes in the modern world, Reform rabbis met in Columbus, Ohio, in 1937, and adopted, among others, the following principles: First, Judaism is the historical-
religious experience of the Jewish people, and progressive Judaism welcomes the truth, either Biblical or scientific. Second, God is the source of the person’s moral ideals. Third, the people are the children of God and they must resist and overcome all evil. Fourth, the Torah keeps Jewish acknowledgment of God as well as the moral laws. It shapes life according to goodness and moral ideals, and adjusts itself to modernity at the same time. Fifth, Israel – while Judaism is the soul, the people of Israel (Am Yisrael) are its body. The Reform movement adopts political Zionism and supports the establishment of a Jewish home in Eretz Israel, which would be a cultural and spiritual center to all Jews. Sixth, the platform affirms the sanctity of life and individualism, people’s rights to freedom and respect, with no exception of race, religion, gender or social status, as well as, social justice, world peace, security and safety to all people of the world.172

In the Post war years Reform congregations grew and many others formed in suburban areas, and by 1975, about 700 congregations were members of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC). Many Jews who moved to the suburbs after the war were either secular or just unaffiliated and the Reform movement worked to recruit them.173 Reform practices and rituals became more traditional as, for example, head coverings were no longer forbidden. Reform congregations tried to attract unaffiliated Jews by becoming social centers, with a lot of child-centered activities and programs for all ages. Jewish education became even more important and Hebrew classes especially. Congregational trips to Israel were introduced as well.174 Ideologically, many congregations emphasized Jewish peoplehood and held services in Hebrew, while home rituals such as lighting a Chanukkiah became much more common.175

174 Ibid., 103-104.
175 Ibid., 104.
Influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, second wave of Feminism, the anti-Vietnam movement, and Zionism (specifically affected by the Six-Day-War) in the late 1960’s and 1970’s, changes were made in the Reform movement’s ideologies. Social action and social justice became prominent values. Many women became actively engaged with the Civil Rights Movement and went to the center of events, the south of the U.S., to help the efforts of African Americans. Rabbis began spending more time in Israel, and rabbinical and cantorial students of the Hebrew Union College were (and still are) required to study in Israel during their first year of rabbinical studies. The first female rabbi, Sally Preisand, was ordained in 1972.

In 1976, in San Francisco, California, Reform rabbis met in celebration of the centennial of the establishment of the UAHC and Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR). There they adopted, among others, the following principles: First, Jews are a union of faith and nationality. Second, the Torah is the result of the relationship between the Jewish people and God. Third, each person should choose the right Jewish ideals, laws and traditions, that fit him or her the most, as well as the State of Israel is an important factor to the wellbeing of the Jewish people around the world. They also demanded legitimate status by and in the State of Israel. Issues of egalitarianism, social justice and Tikkun Olam as well as Zionism and engaging uninspired and unaffiliated Jews became the most important issues the movement has been dealing with, until today.

179 Ibid., 123.
**Tikkun Olam**

Social justice is one of the most important values of Judaism in general and Reform Judaism to be more specific. *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world, in Hebrew) was first introduced by the Jewish Prophets, who saw the Jewish people as the *Light unto the Nations* (Or LaGoyim). According to the Prophets, Jews are to provide moral and spiritual guidance to the world, through social actions and justice.\(^\text{181}\) According to Reform Judaism, justice and *chesed* (kindness) are more important than rituals.

In order to support this cause on a national level, The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, (the “RAC”), was established in 1957.\(^\text{182}\) The RAC has been the center of Jewish political engagement and legislative activity in Washington, D.C. Moreover, the RAC’s aim is to bring the Jewish progressive voice to national conversations, and to help shape social justice and public policy in America.\(^\text{183}\) Within the RAC, there are internships and fellowships for students, as well as consultation on conscience events and conferences.\(^\text{184}\) In addition to the RAC, the URJ promotes the subject of social justice in two additional platforms: congregational activity and youth programs.

**Internships and fellowships**

The RAC has developed three internship and fellowship programs, for undergraduate students, as well as recent college graduates; the *Machon Kaplan* Summer Internship Program, the Eisendrath Legislation Assistant Fellowship, and the Rabbi Balfour Brickner Rabbinic Seminar.

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\(^{183}\) Ibid.

\(^{184}\) Ibid.
These programs are opportunities for young adults, who are interested in Judaism and social justice, to develop professionally. The programs provide students and young adults meaningful social justice internships and fellowships, as well as opportunities to engage in academic study related to their internships. In addition, the interns and fellows learn, through study and action, the relationships between Judaism and American ideals, as well as the interaction of the organized American Jewish community and the U.S. government. Also, they have primary responsibility for monitoring legislation, representing the Reform Movement on Capitol Hill, and to ensure the voice of the 1.5 million members of the URJ, is heard.\textsuperscript{185}

**Consultation on Conscience and other social justice events**

The RAC organizes conferences and seminars, focusing on social justice, direct service as well as legislative and policy.\textsuperscript{186} One conference is the biennial Consultation on Conscience conference, a flagship social justice event. In the conference, activists, Jewish professionals, and others are gathered and take part in high-level briefings with public policy decision makers and other activities. The speakers in these conferences are elected officials, advocacy and activist leaders, journalists, diplomats, and other community leaders.\textsuperscript{187}

In addition to the Consultation on Conscience, the RAC organizes the Bernard and Audre Rapoport L’Taken Social Justice Seminars. In these seminars, thousands of Jewish teens have the opportunity to impact the RAC’s political process, as well as to share their views on social justice topics with decision-makers on Capitol Hill. These seminars are weekend-long, and designed to


\textsuperscript{186} “Social Justice Conferences & Events”, Union for Reform Judaism, N.D., \url{http://www.urj.org/social-justice-conferences-events} [Accessed: March 22, 2017]

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid.
show the participants public policy issues, and to explore the Jewish values that inform the Reform Movement’s advocacy around these issues. These seminars train the Jewish teens to Lobby a Member of Congress, and by that to have a significant impact on the course of legislation.188

**Just Congregations**

In this program, Reform Jewish synagogues are encouraged to act powerfully across lines of faith, class and race, in order to recognize and deal with the root causes of economic and social injustice. The program trains congregations to build meaningful relationships with other Reform congregations, and promotes authentic relationships with other communities who share a vision of a just world.189

**Social Action & Service Travel Programs for Youth**

Influenced by the Civil Rights Movement and numerous calls for social action and social justice within America and within the American Jewish community beginning the 1960’s, Reform congregations and especially their youth became more engaged with social justice causes. Mitzva Corps programs which began in the 1960’s, are the youth’s platform to engage with social justice. In these programs, high school students are trained to develop a meaningful understanding of social justice in the context of Reform Judaism. This is an opportunity for teens to be hands-on with social justice in many national and international locations and to develop a peer community while exploring contemporary social issues, and working together to make a difference in the world.190

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188 Ibid.
Zionism

Up until the 1937 Columbus convention, the Reform movement in Europe and in the U.S, opposed Zionism. They opposed the Zionist ideals, and the special position or place of Eretz Israel/Palestine in Judaism. In 1897, the CCAR had passed a resolution that “we totally disapprove of any attempt for the establishment of a Jewish state” and “we are unalterably opposed to political Zionism”. However, while the 1937 Columbus platform formally accepted Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz Israel, only in the late 1960’s and especially after the Six-Day-War in 1967, was Zionism really adopted by the movement. During a special meeting of the CCAR, on June 21, 1967, they declared their solidarity with the State of Israel and the people of Israel (Am Yisrael), their mutual faith a covenant between the people of Israel in the State of Israel and the Reform Movement, while emphasizing the national aspect in the Reform-Jewish identity. Following this declaration of commitment to the State of Israel, the movement decided to increase its donations and financial support to the State of Israel, and the HUC-JIR, decided to send their first year rabbinical and cantorial students to a year in Jerusalem as a part of their training.

In the 1976 San Francisco assembly, the movement declared further commitment to the State of Israel, acknowledging the Jewish self-expression opportunities it provides. In 1978, the Association of Reform Zionists of American (ARZA) organization was established, as the Zionist arm of the Reform movement. ARZA “brings Reform Judaism to Israel, and Israel to Reform Judaism”. However, while the San Francisco platform separated the spiritual-religious principles and the solidarity with the State of Israel, the ARZA platform binds them together, and by that

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193 Ibid., 79.
194 Ibid., 79.
creates a situation where one movement has two different ideologies regarding Zionism and the State of Israel.\textsuperscript{196}

One of ARZA’s biggest accomplishments is the adoption of the Miami platform from 1997. Celebrating 100 years of Zionism, the Reform movement, the CCAR and ARZA acknowledged that the State of Israel is the greatest Jewish creation of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and strengthened their spiritual and financial commitment to Israel and its citizens.\textsuperscript{197} Since then, the URJ, the CCAR and ARZA, have made several resolutions and published responses on issues regarding the State of Israel, the Israel-Arab-Palestinian conflict and the peace process.\textsuperscript{198} The URJ, CCAR and ARZA share a position regarding the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, and strongly support a two-states-solution which would be a result of direct negotiations between the sides and not by resolutions of the United Nations (UN).\textsuperscript{199-200}

**Unaffiliated Jews**

The Union for Reform Judaism has formed the Audacious Hospitality division, which focuses all the URJ's efforts to engage Jews who are unaffiliated and / or uninspired.\textsuperscript{201} In order to do so, the division partners with the movement’s congregations as well as other movement’s institutions, to remove the existing as well as potential barriers that prevent unaffiliated Jews from being a part of a Jewish community. The movement had already decided to welcome interfaith families and help them find their comfort zone within the Reform community.\textsuperscript{202}

\textsuperscript{196} Haim A. Rehnitzer, "Hateologia Hareformit el mul Hamifal Hatsioni", 80. [Hebrew]
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., 80-81.
\textsuperscript{201} “Audacious Hospitality,” Union for Reform Judaism, N.D., \url{http://www.urj.org/what-we-do/audacious-hospitality} [Accessed: March 22, 2017]
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid.
The Audacious Hospitality division developed five platforms in order to engage with the unaffiliated families; First, PJ Library®-URJ-WRJ Partnership. Second, a Taste of Judaism®. Third, ReformJudaism.org. Fourth, introduction to Judaism classes and Fifth, JewV’Nation Fellowship.

PJ® Library-URJ-WRJ Partnership

The Union for Reform Judaism and Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ) partnered with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, in order to provide subscriptions to the PJ Library® throughout selected congregations across the country. PJ Library® is a national program which sends a monthly gift of free Jewish children’s books and music to families raising Jewish children between six months and eight years old.203

A Taste of Judaism®

A Taste of Judaism® is a course of three free sessions for beginners, either Jewish or not.204 The program explores topics of Jewish spirituality as well as community values, such as God, Torah and Israel. The program was originally created in 1994, and since then, about 100,000 persons have taken it. After the course, many participants choose to continue and participate in the sixteen-to-twenty-week URJ Introduction to Judaism program.205

205 Ibid.
ReformJudaism.org

The URJ had built a website, ReformJudaism.org, which was launched in 2013, to make sure everyone can find and access to Jewish content. Since its launch, more than 3.5 million have visited the website, which in addition to its original purpose, enables the users to connect with Jewish communities across North America. For those who have never been to a synagogue before, the website provides articles and videos with information about what to expect in different Jewish events and worship services.

Introduction to Judaism Classes

The URJ’s Introduction to Judaism program is a course of weekly classes and Shabbat programs for persons who are looking to explore Judaism. The program’s goal is to empower those unaffiliated but interested people. The participants in the classes include singles and couples, Jews and non-Jews, LGBTQ persons, etc.

JewV’Nation Fellowship

The JewV’Nation is a year-long fellowship, which takes place in New York City. The fellowship supports emerging and talented leaders in developing and nurturing innovative Jewish outreach initiatives. These initiatives serve, connect and create community across interfaith and intersectional identities within the Jewish community.

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207 Ibid.
209 Ibid.
These programs take place in synagogues, such as the Introduction to Judaism Classes, at home, such as reading the books received from PJ® Library or in other Jewish campuses such as Jewish Centers. These programs are not designed to increase membership in specific congregations, but to influence people to become part of the Reform community in general.

**Egalitarianism**

In the Reform movement in Germany of the 19th century, equality for women was not an ideology, but another expression of rejecting the *Halacha*, as well as of modernity. I.e., the adoption of women’s equality was not a commitment to women’s rights, but a sign of a Reform rejection of traditional Judaism.\(^{211}\) It was not the first Feminism wave that stood behind their decision to provide mixed seating in the Temples, but social needs, such as having the family sit together during services.\(^{212}\) When the first German immigrants came to the U.S., mixed seating was not common; mixed seating was only introduced in individual congregations during the 1850’s and 1860’s.\(^{213}\) While they supported women’s involvement with Temples matters and committees, the first woman who was ordained to be a rabbi was ordained only in 1972, Rabbi Sally Priesand.\(^{214}\) It was only then, that Feminism began to influence the Reform Movement in America.\(^{215}\)

At the same time, pro-homosexual voices were heard in the movement, and by the end of the 1980’s, the Reform movement decided to reject *Halacha* principles that claimed that homosexuality is a sin.\(^{216}\) Moreover, the Reform Movement supported gay rights from the 1980’s, and rejected gay-discrimination. The American Reform movement began converting gays and

\(^{211}\) Paula E. Hyman, “Feminism ve Ma’amadan Shel Nashim Batnuaa Hareformit”, 509. [Hebrew]

\(^{212}\) Ibid.

\(^{213}\) Sylvia Barack Fishman, *The Way into the Varieties of Jewishness*, 111.

\(^{214}\) Paula E. Hyman, “Feminism ve Ma’amadan Shel Nashim Batnuaa Hareformit”, 512. [Hebrew]

\(^{215}\) Ibid.

\(^{216}\) Yakir Englender, “Tefisat Haminiyut Hadad Minit Bekerev Igud Harabanim Hereformim BeArtsot Habrit Bame’a Ha’esrim ve Hashpaata al pesikato: Bikoret Kwirit”, 236. [Hebrew]
ordaining them since the 1990’s. LGBTQ persons are considered as equal people and equal members according to the movement.217

**Religion and States**

In the U.S., there is a separation between religion and state. When Europeans immigrated to America, one of the things they were looking for was the ability to worship freely. The term “separation between church and state” was coined by Thomas Jefferson, then President of the U.S., in a letter on January 1, 1802, discussing the first amendment to the American Constitution regarding religious freedom.218 According to the U.S. Constitution, and subsequently reinforced by the American Supreme Court, neither the federal nor the state government have the right to make decisions or pass policies regarding the preference of one religion over the other.219 Therefore, while in Israel the State knows each person’s religion and it has to be documented in its records, in the U.S., neither the federal nor the state governments have access to this information and it is illegal to ask people about their religion. As a result, religions in America can decide for themselves how they are to be governed. Some establish central, authoritative bodies. Others, like Judaism in America, do not have one supervising and administering body, such as the Chief Rabbinate in Israel or the U.K. This separation provides American Jews broad religious autonomy and they oversee their own personal status matters, such as weddings, conversions, and burials.

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217 Ibid.
Ideologies and programs of the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism

Tikkun Olam

The Israel Religious Action Center

In 1987, the IMPJ founded the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC). This center is the public and legal advocacy arm of the movement, and it encourages pluralism and causes of social justice. Moreover, the Center seeks state recognition, funding, and equal status for Reform and Conservative rabbis, synagogues and institutions. The Center rejects gender discrimination and the exclusion of women from the public sphere, pursues freedom of choice in marriage, equal rights in divorce, as well as equal opportunity and recognition of the rights of minorities in Israel. The IRAC has achieved several successful rulings from the Israeli Supreme Court on a number of these issues. Its vocal activism has increased public awareness of the Reform movement.220

In 1992, the Legal Aid Center for Olim (immigrants to Israel), a subdivision in the IRAC in charge of providing legal aid for immigrants, was formed. The center was formed in order to provide the Russian and former Soviet Union immigrants, who made Aliya in the 1990’s with legal aid, and to help them with problems they may have encountered. The center gives legal aid regarding issues of their rights to make Aliya and other rights they are entitled to as Jewish immigrants. A specific area of activity is guiding conversions in all denominations in order enable individuals to receive the state’s acknowledgment of their Judaism.221

Keren Ba’Kavod

Keren Ba’Kavod was founded in 2005 as the Reform movement’s foundation of humanitarian help and social responsibility. The foundation runs campaigns for collecting food and clothing for donations, as well as educational empowerment to people in need. The foundation helps the Reform congregations and other educational organization to nurture progressive Judaism social activities. Since its foundation on 2005, thousands of food packages and cloths were donated to people in need.222

Zionism

The Israeli Reform Movement has a similar positive attitude towards ideological Zionism as the American Reform movement. As the American Reform Movement adopted Zionism before the establishment of the State of Israel, and the Israeli movement was established mostly by Zionist immigrants from the U.S. and Europe, it can be assumed that the Israeli Reform Movement is Zionist and pro-Zionism. While Reform Judaism first rejected Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish state, Anti-Semitism and Anti-Semitic actions encouraged Reform Jews in America to support Zionism. After the establishment of the State, David Ben Gurion, Israel’s first and legendary Prime Minister, tried to convince American Jews to make Aliyah (immigrate to Israel), which created antagonism in the American Jewish community towards Israel.223 However, it was the Six-Day-War in Israel that made the final change of attitude towards the Jewish state. The Israeli Reform movement sees the contribution of the American Reform movement to the State of Israel and its society as an important expression of modern Jewish life, both in Israel and in the

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According to Michael Livni, Zionism and Reform are two different Jewish responses to Emancipation and Enlightenment, and they share a few values, such as social justice. However, only after the Six-Day-War did Zionism and Reform began to truly synthetize, which resulted in constant support for the State of Israel, the development of the Israeli Reform movement, and other supportive actions, as previously mentioned.

Unaffiliated Jews

Although there are more than thirty-five Reform communities and congregations across Israel, non-Orthodox Jewish experiences in Israel are not in most of the Israelis’ consciousness. In order to receive the legitimacy from the state, the Israeli movement needs to prove there is a demand for it, its values and services, to prove it is legitimate among the Israelis themselves. Therefore, the IMPJ created programs with the purpose of attracting non-orthodox Israeli Jews to the Reform communities. These programs introduce the Reform community and its activities, with the hope to make the unaffiliated Israelis engage with it.

Bat 12

One of the programs is the Bat 12 Program. The Reform movement is inviting mothers and daughters to a meaningful voyage and Bat Mitzva celebration. The movement is offering three platforms for twelve years old girls to celebrate their Bat Mitzva in a Jewish, egalitarian and

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226 Ibid.
227 Bat 12 in Hebrew, means 12-years old girl.
meaningful way, as well as a late Bat Mitzva for women who did not have the opportunity to celebrate their Bat Mitzva when they were young. Programs include a Bat Mitzva with the community and private tutoring and preparation for the ceremony; second, mother-daughter workshops; and finally, Bat Mitzva within the class.²²⁹

Bat Mitzva with the community and private tutoring and preparation for the ceremony

In the Reform community, the girls can read the Torah and have a parallel ceremony to the Bar Mitzva the boys have when they turn thirteen. The girls go through the same process as the boys, including Bar/Bat Mitzva course and private tutoring, learning how to read the week’s portion with the Te’amim. The end of the process is a Bat Mitzva ceremony with the Reform community.²³⁰

Mother - Daughter Workshops

The Reform movement considers the Bat Mitzva year,²³¹ a special year and as an opportunity for mothers and daughters to go through a joint and meaningful process. The mother-daughter workshops include six-eight meetings, where the participants can learn subjects related to the age of twelve, such as body image, traditions, and values.²³²

Class Bat Mitzva

The Class Bat Mitzva program is an opportunity for the entire class to go through a Bat Mitzva process together, boys and girls. At the end of the process, there is usually a class Bat

²²⁹ Ibid.
²³⁰ Ibid.
²³¹ Between ages 11 and 12.
²³² Ibid.
Mitzva ceremony, where the boys congratulate the girls. The class is in charge of the content and a Reform rabbi and Cantor conduct the ceremony.233

Late Bat Mitzva

The Reform movement offers women who did not have the opportunity to have a Bat Mitzva when they were twelve to have a meaningful moment and read the Torah, even when they are much older. These women can celebrate their late Bat Mitzva with the community, are accompanied by a Reform rabbi and finally have their communal Bat Mitzva.234

Egalitarianism

The IMPJ’s position is that women are equal to men in every aspect of life, tradition, life cycle as well as full participants in services and praying.235 Women are a part of Minyans, bless their spouses under the Chuppa, sign their name on the Ketubah, and say Kadish for their parents when they die.236 They can vote and run for office, be rabbis, cantors, board and committee chairs, wear tallit, read the Tora and give sermons. They sit with the men in the Temple, with no mehitza or separation.237 According to Rabbi Meir Azari, the head rabbi of Beit Daniel and the Daniel Centers for Progressive Judaism in Tel Aviv, Israel, the Israeli movement is more progressive than the URJ when it comes to women and gender. For example, women are positioned in important roles in the movement -- the former president of Maram – Moetset Rabbanim Mitkadmim (the Israeli Reform rabbinic organization) is a woman -- Rabbi Maya Leibowitz. There are more

233 Ibid.
234 Ibid.
235 Galia Sadan, “Rabot Banot Asu Hail ve Hatalit al Kalena”, 87. [Hebrew]
236 Ibid.
237 Ibid.
women rabbis then men rabbis, and in general, the women in the Israeli movement achieved meaningful roles before the women in the American movement.²³⁸

According to a committee of Maram that examined the status of same-sex families and marriages, same-sex families and marriages are equal to heterosexual families and marriages and therefore are supported by the movement and can have Reform wedding ceremonies. However, since Reform wedding ceremonies are not acknowledged by the state of Israel, they should legally get married outside of Israel in order to be acknowledged by the state as a married couple.²³⁹ In general, the LGBTQ persons are equal members of the Israeli Reform movement. They are ordained to be rabbis or cantors as well as sit as heads of communities. Gay Pride month in Israel is annually celebrated by the different Reform communities around Israel in June.

Religion and State

In Israel, there is no separation between religion and state like in the U.S. The Status-Quo agreement was signed in early 1948 between Ben Gurion and the Ultra-Orthodox party Agudat Yisrael in order to have their support in the establishment of the State of Israel. According to the agreement, the Orthodox establishment would have control over every personal Jewish aspect of life: marriage, divorce, burial and conversion. The Orthodox establishment which is in charge of managing the Jewish lives in Israel is the Chief Rabbinate (Rabbanut). Due to this control, the cycle of life ceremonies performed by the Conservative and Reform movements in Israel are not legally binding. While Conservative and Reform conversions are acknowledged by the state, they are not acknowledged by the Rabbinate. Therefore, if a person undergoes a non-Orthodox conversion, he or she would not be able to get married via the Rabbinate, as they are not considered

²³⁸ Rabbi Meir Azari (Chief Rabbi of The Daniel Centers for Progressive Judaism), phone interview, September 7, 2016.
²³⁹ Ariel Pikar, “HaShah Hahalahti BaYahadut Hareformit: Nisuin Homosexualim Kemikre Bohan”, 221-222. [Hebrew]
Jewish in the Rabbinate’s eyes. However, Reform and Conservative converts are accepted by the Jewish Agency and thus can make Aliyah under the Law of Return.

The Reform Movement in Israel is discriminated against by the State. While it does get some funding from the State, the funding it gets is very small compared to the funding the Orthodox establishment gets, and is not proportional or representative of either population (Orthodox nor Reform). Orthodox rabbis are getting paid from the State for performing Jewish ceremonies, while Reform and Conservative rabbis are not getting paid by the State, and therefore, have to request a higher fee from the people they serve. There is an unfair competition between the movements according to Rabbi Azari. From my point of view, since the Israeli Reform movement is identified with the political left parties, especially Meretz (מרazzo) but also with the Labor, it is very difficult to ask for funding from the right-wing parties. The struggle / process to convince the Orthodox establishment and the State of Israel, to recognize the Reform movement should be gradual and respectful, and not too controversial. Therefore, the Reform movement should build support for its legal status from the ground-up, from the society, and through that, from the State. Once there would be a meaningful demand by the society to have the Reform movement become a legitimate and legally binding movement, the movement would be able to deal with more controversial issues, such as intermarriage. For this reason, rabbis who are members of Maram are cautious and deliberate about making reforms that might be considered too radical for the majority of Israeli society, such as, intermarriage ceremonies and rewriting the siddurim, Rabbi Azari says.

240 Dana Evan Kaplan, American Reform Judaism: An Introduction, 120.
241 Ibid.
242 Rabbi Meir Azari (Chief Rabbi of The Daniel Centers for Progressive Judaism), phone interview, September 7, 2016.
243 Ibid.
244 Ibid.
Comparison

The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) and the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism (IMPJ) share similar ideologies and values, though some of them are valued/supported for different reasons. Moreover, due to the status of the IMPJ in Israel, it holds a few viewpoints which the URJ, while supporting them, does not have to deal with or actively pursue.

Both movements share the pursuit of Tikkun Olam, Zionism and the love of the State of Israel and its citizens, egalitarianism (Gender and LGBTQ), as well as their wish to engage with unaffiliated Jews. However, the IMPJ must also deal with the Status-Quo in Israel and its terms, with the monopoly of the Orthodox establishment and Chief Rabbinate over personal Jewish issues, as well as with the State of Israel itself and the Israeli society. The monopoly of the Orthodox establishment is the main reason for the differences between the movements. The URJ supports the IMPJ’s struggle with the Chief Rabbinate and the State for the legal status of the movement. However, due to the separation of religion and state in the U.S., the URJ does not have to deal with these issues at home. The IMPJ believes that the values promised in the Declaration for the Establishment of the State of Israel, such as equal rights to all citizens, with no discrimination because of gender, religion or race, and are not implemented in the Israeli society. For example, secular Israeli citizens are constantly being discriminated against for not being Ultra-Orthodox. The Reform and Conservative movements are discriminated against and do not have a legal status. Only the Orthodox have legal status.²⁴⁵

Tikkun Olam

As mentioned above, social justice is one of the most important values of Judaism in general and Reform Judaism to be more specific. Both the URJ and the IMPJ put a lot of effort to promote the subject within their communities. However, along with the similarities between the attitudes towards the Tikkun Olam subject, there are also differences.

Similarities

First, both movements have established religious action centers, which unify all the Tikkun Olam and social justice programs each movement has and supports. The URJ has the Religious Action Center, and the IMPJ has the Israeli Religious Action center. Second, both movements have congregational programs which train congregations for social activism and awareness, form meaningful relationships with other communities, and encourage members of the community to be more involved in the community. The URJ has the ‘Just Congregation’ program and the IMPJ has established ‘Kehilat Tzedek’.

Differences

From the URJ’s side, first, the RAC puts a lot of emphasis on lobbying, and therefore its headquarters are in Washington D.C. For example, the RAC’s fellowships and internships train the young adults to lobby and advocate for Jewish values, like the Machon Kaplan Summer Internship Program. Also, the RAC organizes events and seminars, such as the Bernard and Audre Rapoport L’Taken246 Social Justice Seminars, where thousands of Jewish teens have the opportunity to impact the RAC’s political process. Second, the URJ puts a lot of emphasis on

246 To fix, in Hebrew
youth, whether through the RAC’s seminaries or through Mitzva Corps programs. No matter the program, the URJ encourages Reform youth to be involved in the community, but also with other communities and not necessarily Jewish ones. RAC Encourages youth to promote social justice as a Jewish value, but not necessarily in a Jewish environment.

From the IMPJ’s side, first, the IRAC is mainly the legal arm of the IMPJ, even though it does some lobbying work. As the lobbying arm, the IRAC puts a lot of emphasis on promoting state recognition, funding, and equal status for all Jewish denominations in Israel. Also, the center pursues freedom of choice in all aspects of Jewish life, as well as recognition of the rights of minorities in Israel. As the legal arm, the IRAC provides legal aid to new immigrants, helping them with receiving their rights as Jewish immigrants (Olim). Finally, the IMPJ puts a lot of emphasis on collecting donations of food and clothes in order to help the less fortunate ones, as well as empowering people in need.

Discussion

While the similarities evolve from the shared values of both movements, the differences evolve from the fact that each movement has a different background, status, and legitimacy. As mentioned before, the URJ is a legitimate and well-founded movement, and the IMJP still fights for its recognition as legitimate movement by the state. Also, the Jews of Israel and America have different needs, partially because American Jews are a small minority and Israeli Jews are a majority. Therefore, the emphasis each movement puts under the subject ‘Tikkun Olam’ reflects the issues each movement is dealing with. The URJ promotes social justice as lobbying for Jewish values and inter-congregational relationships, and the IMPJ promotes social justice as legal work for recognition of the movement, egalitarian values and legal aid for people in need.
Zionism

As mentioned above, both movements are Pro-Zionism and support the State of Israel, though in different ways. However, their Zionist evolution is also different.

Differences

While both movements were originally established by German Jews, the first attempt to establish a Reform movement in Palestine in the 1930's, failed. The second attempt was in the 1950's and succeeded. Moreover, from the beginning, the URJ was not Zionist, and only in the 1937 Columbus conventions did it adopted Zionism and the need to establish a Jewish home in Palestine. Their support of Zionism was reinforced after the Six-Day-War in 1967 and the establishment of ARZA in 1978. Also, while the IMJP is affiliated with the Zionist left party Meretz, the URJ does not officially identify with a political movement or party. Also, for the IMJP supporting Zionism means supporting a liberal and democratic society which supports equality and Jewish pluralism, as well as supporting and equality for other religions. For the URJ, Zionism means supporting the State of Israel, the Jewish home, its importance and meaning to Jewish life and Jewish identity, as well as supporting Jewish equality. However, the URJ takes political positions on Israeli pluralism and the peace process, and while the IMPJ share these positions, they ultimately focus on religious pluralism in Israel in general and less on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finally, while the URJ financially supports the State of Israel, the IMPJ is expecting the State of Israel to support it as a Jewish religious movement as well as the Orthodox establishment.
Discussion

In the Zionist context, the movements have more differences than similarities (only one, the fact that they are both Zionist, i.e., share a support of the State of Israel and its citizens as well as their view of its importance and centrality to the Jewish people), due to the fact that the IMPJ is an Israeli liberal movement which was established by American Zionist immigrants. However, despite the fact that both were established by Americans, the differences are meaningful.

First, the fact that the URJ in its origins was not a Zionist movement (and in fact harshly rejected Zionism) is a huge difference. It was the Nazism and Anti-Semitism in Germany and Europe that changed their minds about a Jewish home in Palestine, as well as other violent actions against the Jews in Europe. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised the Jews a Jewish home in Greater Eretz Israel, also began to shift American attitudes.\(^\text{247}\)

Moreover, the huge victory in the Six-Day-War had reinforced the American Reform Jews’ support for Zionism. While one might expect a very liberal movement to be against wars and respond differently towards them, it seems as if the URJ’s support for Zionism was affected by violent conflicts: Nazi violence and other pogroms around Europe, and wars such as WWI, WWII, and the Six-Day-War. This point is another difference between the movements; the IMPJ does not respond to violent conflicts such as the repeated operations in Gaza or these past conflicts in ways that the URJ did and still does, which is expressed in sending money to support Israeli causes such as planting new forests, medical and financial aid to families who were hurt by the war. Finally, while at the end of the day both movements actively support Zionism, the evolution of this support is the core of the differences between them regarding Zionism.

\(^{247}\) Haim A. Rehnitzer, “Hateologia Hareformit el mul Hamifal Hatsioni”, 75-77. [Hebrew]
**Engaging with unaffiliated Jews**

As mentioned above, both movements seek to engage with the unaffiliated Jews, and both the URJ and the IMPJ put in a lot of effort in order to attract these people to their communities. However, each movement seeks to engage with the unaffiliated Jews for different reasons and in different ways.

**Similarities**

Both movements seek to engage with unaffiliated Jews, and both movements have created programs in order to attract families through their children. The URJ is doing so through the partnership with PJ® Library, and the IMPJ is doing so through the Bat 12 program.

**Differences**

First, while the URJ seeks to engage unaffiliated Jews in order to prevent them from affiliating with other religions, the IMPJ seeks to engage the unaffiliated Jews in order to strengthen its legitimacy by the State of Israel and become a meaningful denomination within the Israeli society. Second, while the URJ formed a division especially for this cause, the Audacious Hospitality division, the IMPJ has not formally declared the Bat 12 program as a strategy to engage with the unaffiliated Israelis. Third, the URJ is mainly trying to attract young adults (either Jewish or not) and in order to do so, created programs, such as ‘A Taste of Judaism’ or Introduction to Judaism Classes. However, the IMPJ is trying to engage with the unaffiliated Jews only. Nevertheless, it is important to mention the Israeli Reform movement provides other services which could interest the unaffiliated, but usually the people who need them contact the movement and not the other way around.
Discussion

While the similarities evolve from the shared understanding that attracting families with children could happen by creating programs and providing services for the children, again, the differences evolve from the fact that each movement has a different background, status and legitimacy. As mentioned before, the URJ is a legitimate and well-founded movement, and the IMJP still fights for its recognition as a legitimate movement by the state. Therefore, the emphasis each movement puts on engaging and attracting unaffiliated Jews reflects the issues each movement is dealing with. The IMPJ seeks to engage with the unaffiliated Jews in order, among other reasons, to receive the state’s recognition, and the URJ seeks to engage with the unaffiliated Jews in order to strengthen the American Jewish community.

Egalitarianism

As mentioned above, both movements are egalitarian and support gender equality, which includes equal rights and respect to LGBTQ persons.

Similarities

Both movements, the URJ and the IMPJ, actively support gender equality, which means that women can be ordained as rabbis and cantors and can hold any position within the movement and different communities. Moreover, men and women sit together in the Temple, and both can wear head covers and tallitot during prayers. Finally, everyone can read from the Bible, not just men, and not just ordained rabbis or cantors. In the LGBTQ context, both movements have accepted and embraced the LGBTQ community. LGBTQ persons are equal members, can be ordained as rabbis or cantors, and can officiate and get married with a Reform rabbi.
Differences

The only difference between the URJ and IMPJ is that in the Israeli gender context, women held high positions within the movement and its different arms before the URJ opened these positions to women, as the IMPJ was established in times where women were a part of the workforce and had more rights, while when the URJ was established the times were when women were not equal to men just yet. In Israel, women were the chair of the IMPJ, secretaries of Maram, chairs and heads of communities, both as rabbis and as members of the board, from the 1950’s. However, the process of the acceptance of LGBTQ persons into the movement is different and is influenced by the state of mind of the non-Jewish American society. In fact, LGBTQ persons were always accepted as equal members in the IMPJ, since its establishment in the late 1950’s, while they were accepted as equal members in the URJ only after establishing their own congregations, in the early 1970’s.

Discussion

While the similarities evolve from the shared values and origins that all people are equal in front of God, and therefore should be treated as equals, the differences evolve from the fact, that the URJ existed more than 100 years before the IMPJ was established. Their home-countries also differ significantly. Both movements were influenced by the social contexts at the time of their founding. First, the State of Israel had always supported women and made sure to protect their rights. Women were able to be drafted to the IDF from the beginning, were able to vote, had “women’s rights” regarding working hours, maternity leave, and other social rights. Although these rights were basic, it was better than what American women had a century ago. The IMPJ was established in a society that already supported women’s rights (even if the rights could be been
better developed), and did not have to go through the same process the URJ had to go through in the American society. Therefore, in my eyes, the IMPJ was open from its beginning to advance women in the different roles and positions in the movements, as well as establishing equal treatment of them in services with mixed seating and wearing head covers and prayer shawls.

The same is true for the LGBTQ persons. While the Israeli establishment was and still is not very supportive of the LGBTQ movement, the majority of the Israeli society itself was accepting almost from the beginning. Therefore, the IMPJ embraced the LGBTQ persons from its inception, performs same-sex marriages, converts their children, and ordains them to rabbis and cantors. As with gender equality, the URJ was influenced by processes in the American society – Civil Rights Movement, Second-Wave Feminism, and other movements for social equality. It was in the 1980’s when the URJ opened its gates to LGBTQ persons, more or less the same time as the American society began opening itself to LGBTQ persons and to treating them as equal members of the movement. However, the URJ is affected by three major factors in the decision making process: what the members of the community think; how the Orthodox and Conservative movements think; and what the non-Jewish society think. The URJ did not and still does not want to create a rift between the different societies and movements and therefore takes into consideration their opinions when making opinions regarding “controversial” issues, such as the equality of LGBTQ persons.248

These differences in the processes of identifying egalitarianism as a basic value of the movements are connected to the development of each movement in its home-country and the state of mind of that society. The fact that the IMPJ was born into a more egalitarian world is important to the understanding of the differences between the movements.

248 Yakir Englender, “Tefisat Haminiyut Had Minit Bekerev Igud Harabanim Hereformim BeArtsot Habrit Bame’a Ha’esrim ve Hashpaata al pesikato: Bikoret Kwirit”, 236-237. [Hebrew]
Overall discussion

In this chapter I compared the main ideologies of The Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism (IMPJ) and Union of Reform Judaism (URJ). The main issues were *Tikkun Olam*, Zionism, engaging uninspired and unaffiliated Jews, and egalitarianism. However, the IMPJ has a few other ideologies or pursues goals, which the URJ does not deal with, which go under the umbrella of religion and state.

Regarding *Tikkun Olam*, both movements put emphasis on the subject due to the shared values of both movements – social justice, egalitarianism, and Zionism. Since social justice is a shared and important value, both movements have established religious action centers, which unify all the *Tikkun Olam* and social justice programs each movement has and supports. The URJ has the Religious Action Center (RAC), and the IMPJ has the Israeli Religious Action center (IRAC). Of course, the IRAC’s establishment was based on the RAC’s structure. The religious action centers created, among other programs, congregational programs which train congregations to social activism and awareness, form meaningful relationships with other communities, and encourage the members of the community to be more involved in the community. The differences, however, are in the content and the services each movement is providing under the umbrella subject of *Tikkun Olam*. The differences are due to the different development process, status, and legitimacy each movement has. The URJ is a legitimate and well-founded movement, and the IMJP still fights for its recognition as a legitimate movement by the state. The URJ promotes social justice as lobbying for Jewish values and inter-congregational relationships, and the IMPJ promotes social justice as legal work for recognition of the movement, egalitarian values and legal aid for people in need.
Regarding Zionism, both movements are pro-Zionism. However, the URJ was not always pro-Zionist and in fact, actively and harshly rejected it up until 1937. Moreover, the change in their attitude towards Zionism was due to violent actions towards Jews in Europe, and not a change in ideology and the role of a Jewish state in Palestine. This is an important point. Only in the 1960’s and 1970’s the URJ’s attitude towards Zionism changed to an ideological one. Moreover, it seems as if the URJ’s changes of attitude towards Zionism was due to violent actions against the Jews, at the beginning in Europe and then in the State of Israel, rather than a real ideological change. Their support of the establishment of the State of Israel was a protective action to save the Jews, rather than an ideological one. In the 1930’s and 1940’s they still did not believe Israel is a center of the Jewish world. Only in the 1960’s and 1970’s they ideologically accept the State of Israel.

Regarding the goal of engaging uninspired and unaffiliated Jews, both movements emphasize the importance of engaging unaffiliated Jews. Both movements try to do so by creating and providing programs for families with children. Both try to attract these families through activities and services provided for the children. However, while the URJ has established a special division to manage the subject and declare the reason for its establishment, the IMPJ did not officially declare the Bat 12 program as a strategy to increase the legitimacy of the movement in the eye of the Israeli society, and by that to force the State to legitimize it. Nevertheless, my paper shows that in order to have the legitimacy of the State, the movement has to prove that their services and programs are desired by the public and are legitimate in their eyes.

Regarding egalitarianism, both movements are egalitarian. All people – members and non-members are equal, regardless of their gender or sexuality, and are accepted with equal status. However, the egalitarianism process was different in each movement. While the IMPJ was established into a more tolerant society, and therefore, egalitarianism issues were basic from its
inception, the URJ was very much influenced by the American society and the other major Jewish denominations – Orthodox and Conservative. The URJ made choices to prevent a rift between these different Jewish groups. Therefore, it took longer for the URJ to be as tolerant and egalitarian towards women and LGBTQ persons. However, both movements believe that all people are equal in front of God.

Regarding religion and state, since the IMPJ is the only movement which has to deal with issues of religion and state, I explained the status of the movement and the delicate process it has been going through in order to get the society’s legitimacy, as well as from the State itself and the Orthodox establishments. There was no comparable political situation for the URJ. The URJ does support the Reform efforts in Israel to achieve legal recognition and rights.

These differences and similarities of the ideologies of each movement can be explained by the different evolution of each movement, as well as the state of mind of each society, which established these movements. The issue of religion and state is a basic one, which explains many of the differences between the movements. These differences cause troubles to the relationship between the movements, as well as between each movement and the State of Israel. For example, the State of Israel began to acknowledge Reform conversions from abroad only in 1989 (for the purpose of making Aliyah) and Israeli Reform conversions only in 2002, in order to be acknowledged as Jews by the Administration of Border Crossings, Population and Immigration. However, the Chief Rabbinate does not acknowledge these conversions and therefore, Reform converts and their offspring are not considered as Jews and cannot use the religious services the rabbinate offers, such as marriages, burial, Bar Mitzvahs, and divorces. Israelis, who are tired of the Orthodox establishment’s monopoly over personal Jewish issues are looking for more
egalitarian options, such as the IMPJ’s marriages, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, conversion and burial services, hoping to make them legally and legitimate by all.

In this chapter, I described, compared and analyzed the similarities and differences between the ideologies of each movement and their influence on the relationship between the movements as well as the relationship between each movement and the State of Israel. In the next chapter, I will describe, compare and analyze the similarities and differences between the rituals and liturgy of each movement.
Chapter 3: Rituals and Liturgy in Reform Synagogues

**Classical (European) Reform Rituals**

Classical Reform Judaism dates to the days of Reform Judaism’s inception in the 19th century, when the reformers rejected Jewish prayers, blessing and practices that contradicted the modern values about which they cared. They removed elements of the liturgy and rituals that they believed were antithetical to the modern mind. The services were to be quiet and dignified, parallel to the practice in the Protestant services of their era.²⁴⁹

The first German Reform Temple, was built on the site of a Jewish-Christian school in 1810 in Seesen. Both were established by Israel Jacobson (1768-1828), a German Jewish businessman and philanthropist. The Temple had an organ and a choir, much like the contemporary Protestant churches. There is no proof of either mixed or separate seating. The Temple also included choral and instrumental performances.²⁵⁰ Many of these changes were adoptions of contemporary Protestant practices.

**American Reform Rituals in the Synagogue**

Reform Judaism changed when it arrived in America. The first congregations were a bit more traditional than the German Classical Reform ones: men and women were seated separately, covered their heads, and the Temples observed Shabbat and kosher dietary practices.

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²⁵⁰ Ibid., 87.
The Reform “changes” were more aesthetic than ritualistic/idealistic, and affected the architecture of the synagogue more than the way people worshiped inside the building.\textsuperscript{251} In the first two decades of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, young Jews from the then two largest Jewish communities in America, Charleston South Carolina and New York New York, who were born after the American Revolution, began a religious revolution of their own. These young Jews were influenced by the Second Great Awakening, and they felt that the then contemporary synagogues did not meet their needs.\textsuperscript{252} The Second Great Awakening was a Protestant religious revival movement in the U.S.,\textsuperscript{253} which created an “atmosphere of freedom, democracy and religious ferment.”\textsuperscript{254} As religion in the U.S. was voluntary, these young Jews were seeking to regenerate their faith. In New York, the changes they were looking to make related the Sephardic tradition the synagogue followed, as most these young Jews were Ashkenazi, but they also wished it to be less formal and more open to changes. This congregation was called B’nai Jeshorun, and it was incorporated in November 15, 1825.\textsuperscript{255} In Charleston, they were also looking to challenge the local synagogue and they were much more influenced by Unitarianism, which was spread there in those days.\textsuperscript{256} They were much more radical in the changes they were looking to make than their New York counterparts, and advocated for a weekly sermon, vernacular prayers and shortened services, among other things.\textsuperscript{257} At the beginning of 1825, after their petitions were denied, they established a new independent Jewish religious society and named it the Reformed Society of Israelites for Promoting True Principles of Judaism According to Its Purity and Spirit.\textsuperscript{258}

\textsuperscript{251} Ibid. 111.
\textsuperscript{252} Jonathan D. Sarna, \textit{American Judaism: A History}, 54-55.
\textsuperscript{254} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{255} Ibid., 57.
\textsuperscript{256} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid., 58.
In the late 1830’s, Gustavus Poznanski, an Orthodox Cantor of congregation Beit Elohim of Charleston, SC, who was born in Poland and spent some time in Germany, began adopting Reform customs, and he asked to put an organ in the synagogue. Following this request, Beit Elohim became Reform and the Orthodox members formed a new congregation.259 In 1841, a new synagogue was built which had an organ and a choir. However, the prayer itself maintained its traditional character, i.e., it took place mainly in Hebrew. Later Poznanski offered other changes, both in theory and practice, as he changed the main principles of Maimonides. Among other changes, Poznanski rejected and replaced resurrection of the dead with immortality of the soul.260 Between 1843-1846, more reforms were gradually implemented including prayers in English, cancelation of the second day of Passover and cancelation of the Haftara.261,262

American Reform congregations were further influenced by Rabbi David Einhorn and became more radical. Rabbi Einhorn was born in Bavaria in 1809,263 where he studied and then obtained his morenu diploma under Rabbis Wolf Hamburger and Joshua Moses Falkenau, at Fürth Yeshiva.264 Later, he studied at Universities of Würzburg and Munich, where he was influenced by the secular-academic world, and which shaped his liberal views regarding politics, philosophy and religion.265

Einhorn was a rabbi in Birkenfield in 1842 and in Budapest in 1849. Einhorn immigrated to the U.S. in 1855 and became the rabbi of Har Sinai Verein in Baltimore, Maryland. He rejected the Cleveland platform, which was approved in 1855. His rejection marked the beginning of a rift

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259 Michael A. Meyer, Bein Masoret Lekidma: Toldot Tnuat Hareforma Bayahadot, 270. [Hebrew]
260 Ibid., 271.
261 Sections from the writings of the prophets, read on Sabbaths and festivals after the reading from the Torah
262 Ibid.
264 Ibid.
265 Ibid.
in the Reform Movement.\footnote{Ibid., 18} According to Einhorn, God was a part of all humans and talked with them from within their souls and not as an external entity, so when God spoke to Moses, for example, it was his spirit who spoke with Moses’s spirit. Einhorn also emphasized the Jews’ mission as God’s emissaries to the rest of the world.\footnote{Michael A. Meyer, Bein Masoret Lekidma: Toldot Tnuat Hareforma Bayahadot, 284-285. [Hebrew]} Einhorn’s values and ideologies were implemented in the siddur he published in 1872, Olath Tamid, which will be analyzed later in this chapter.

Between 1860 – 1870 more than 70 Reform synagogues were built all over the U.S., and the new buildings and congregations were followed by more changes and reforms. While in 1860 about twelve synagogues had organs; in 1868 more than thirty had organs. In the 1850’s and 1860’s mixed seating was introduced to Reform Temples, but congregants kept wearing prayer shawls and head covers.\footnote{Sylvia Barack Fishman, The Way into the Varieties of Jewishness, 111.} These new rituals reflected the values of the Reform movement and they were formally expressed in the Pittsburgh Platform from 1885. In the 1880’s, while not directly affected by mass immigration from Eastern Europe, Reform Temples began to ban the wearing of head coverings and prayers shawls.\footnote{Ibid., 112.} The ban of wearing head coverings and prayer shawls was the boundary marker for the Reform movement and it distinguished them from East European Jews, who were much more traditional and mostly Orthodox in their practices, and poor. Since the Reform movement was the largest founded American Jewish religious movement in those days,\footnote{Ibid.} American Judaism became wealthier and more Reformed very quickly.\footnote{Ibid.}

During the last decades of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Reform Judaism distanced itself dramatically from Jewish tradition. It was important for them to
emphasize their German roots, as they were very different in their culture and social-economic status from the East European Jews who began to massively immigrate to the U.S. in those days.\textsuperscript{272} It was during those years that American Reform Judaism had shaped and molded itself and its identity, and the distinction between Reform and Orthodox Judaism was clear. Reform Judaism was radical and sometimes resembled other non-Jewish movements, such as Unitarian Christianity, especially when American Reform leaders thought about moving the day of public praying from Saturday to Sunday.\textsuperscript{273} Intermarriage was discussed during those days, and issues of social justice became prominent issues in Reform Judaism. Reform rabbis wanted to be more than just religious leaders, but also a moral compass to their congregants, and emphasized these issues of social justice over Jewish rituals. Consequently, Jewish education emphasized Jewish morals and ethics rather than Jewish rituals. Reform conventions reflected the mindset of American Reform Judaism at the time, regarding many issues, such as theology, liturgy and rituals.\textsuperscript{274}

In the 1920’s many children from Reform families had no Jewish education. Those who did get Jewish education did so through fairly basic Sunday school classes.\textsuperscript{275} The Hebrew language was barely taught. Youth groups and clubs were Reform leaders’ way of conveying a sense of Jewish identity to children, and in 1939, the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) was established.\textsuperscript{276}

In the decades that followed WWII, family togetherness was emphasized in the general society and Americans got married, had children earlier and had more children compared to the Depression and war years.\textsuperscript{277} These trends were true for American Jews as well, who got married

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[272]{Ibid., 304.}
\footnotetext[273]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[274]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[275]{Sylvia Barack Fishman, \textit{The Way into the Varieties of Jewishness}, 117.}
\footnotetext[276]{Ibid., 118.}
\footnotetext[277]{Ibid.}
\end{footnotes}
and had children earlier than in the prior decades. At the same time, Jews emphasized the importance of higher education as they believed this was a mean to improve their quality of lives and the lives of their children. Jews achieved education levels higher than the American average. Many Jews could gain academic education partly because of the GI Bill, which offered free college for all war veterans, including Jews.

During the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, many Reform Temples featured greater numbers of traditional activities. The use of Hebrew in worship services increased and the new *siddur* included traditional liturgy in addition to the modern, inclusive liturgy. Many Reform Jews began keeping kosher, and observance of Jewish holidays, such as *Sukkot* (Tabernacles) were revived. During worship services, some women and men wore prayer shawls (*tallitot*), as well as head coverings, such as *kippot*, which some brought from Israel. Instead of the formal choir, some rabbis began playing the guitar in services. Since the U.S. of the 1950’s viewed religion in positive light and used it as a mean of strengthening family values, Reform Temples, which were affected by the Protestant churches, withdrew from the traditional separation between men and women, and the family sat and worshiped together,\(^{278}\) as “The family that prays together stays together.”\(^{279}\) According to Sylvia Barack Fishman, by the 1970’s, “the services as well as the general ambience of the Reform Temple had been substantially Protestantized”.\(^{280}\)

The Reform movement also began ordaining women as rabbis and performing Bat Mitzvah ceremonies for girls and adult women. Reform Judaism has embraced a broad spectrum of Jewish activities, and these rituals represent the “back to tradition” trend in American Reform Judaism.

\(^{278}\) Ibid., 106-107.
\(^{279}\) Ibid., 118.
\(^{280}\) Ibid., 114.
But there are also Reform Temples that have a lot of non-Jewish members, who are usually children and spouses of Reform Jews, that do not accept the traditional trend in the movement.

**Israeli Reform Rituals in the Synagogue**

The Israeli Reform prayer and services are shorter than the Orthodox ones and are adjusted to life in present days, modern days. The *siddur* is very inviting and the audience -- the worshipers -- can participate in the prayer. During services, men usually were head covers – *kippot*, which are offered at the entrance. Although Israeli women are permitted to wear *kippot* and *tallitot*, only women rabbis or especially engaged women wear them. The services are often musical and happy, and families can sit together, as seating is not separated by gender. Although there is no organ in the synagogue, sometimes there are guitars or other musical instruments. Also, girls and adult women can have a Bat Mitzvah.\(^{281}\) These rituals and practices reflect the egalitarianism the Israeli Reform Movement embraced and adopted, but also, the adjustment to modernity and the adoption of contemporary American Reform values, such as the head covering during prayers.

**Classical (European) Reform Liturgy**

One of the major tasks of Reform Judaism in its inception in Europe of the 19\(^{th}\) century was to emphasize the *meaning* in praying.\(^{282}\) While the more traditional Judaism emphasized looking for meaning in traditional prayers and adding liturgy such as *piyutim*, to the mandatory prayers, Reform Judaism changed, cut, and dropped prayers that they found archaic or

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\(^{281}\) The Argov Center for the Study of Israel and the Jewish People: “Sugiyot Beyahasei Arha”v-Yisrael No.6: HaYahadut Hareformit BeYisrael: Heisegim ve Sikuyim” (Bar-Ilan University, 2000), 27. [Hebrew]

\(^{282}\) Dalia Marx, “Hatefila Hareformit Ledoroteih ve Lemerkaizeha”, 308. [Hebrew].
theologically and ideologically problematic, and then added new prayers which reflected their beliefs and hopes.\footnote{Ibid.}

The first Classical Reform \textit{siddur} was written in 1849 by Rabbi Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), who is considered the spiritual father of the Reform Movement.\footnote{Michael A. Meyer, \textit{Bein Masoret Lekidma: Toldot Tnuat Hareforma Bayahadot}, 110. [Hebrew]} Geiger grew up in an Orthodox family. However, as a young man he already believed that Judaism has a right to exist, as long as it accepts and adopts modern values.\footnote{Yehoram, Mazor, “Sidduro shel HaRav Avraham Geiger – Keitsad Hitpate’ah Siddur Hatefila Hareformi?”, 167. [Hebrew]} If Judaism would not adapt itself to modernity, changes are to be made.\footnote{Ibid.} When writing the Reform \textit{siddurim}, the editors asked themselves repeatedly ‘What is the appropriate proportion between needs of time and place, and keeping some basic elements which reflect the history of Jewish liturgy and its relationship with Am Yisrael?’ \footnote{Dalia Marx, “Hatefila Hareformit Ledoroteiha ve Lemerkazeiha”, 308. [Hebrew].} Geiger and other leaders of the early Reform movement believed that liturgy is not just an expression of beliefs, but also an expression of theology and ideology.\footnote{Ibid., 309.} The liturgical changes usually reflected the Reformers’ mood, so one could say that the \textit{siddur} accompanied the development rather than created or encouraged it. In my point of view, the authors of the \textit{siddurim} anticipated a constant change in Reform practices and did not believe their expression of Judaism as they wrote it in the prayer books were the final step. While Wise called his \textit{siddur} ‘\textit{Minhag America}’ hoping it would serve all American Jews, Geiger’s prayer book did not have such a binding title. As a matter of fact, I could not find the title of Geiger’s \textit{siddur} in any of the readings. Maybe the fact that his \textit{siddur} did not have a title was a sign for Geiger’s sense of pioneering, being the first out of many, rather than the only one? The \textit{siddurim} were written in a way that

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}
would express their theological conception and their approach towards the Halacha and meaning of prayer.  

As said by Rabbi Jakob Josef Petuchowski (1925-1991), a researcher of Jewish theology and liturgy at the Jewish Institute of Religion, at Hebrew Union College/Cincinnati, the earlier and classic Reform siddurim shared the following characteristics, among others: First, shortening the traditional prayer. Second, praying in the native tongue of the state where they lived (for example, in Germany the siddur and the prayers would be in German). Third, erasing the mentioning of the angles. Fourth, obliterating the particularism and Am Yisrael being the “chosen”. Fifth, erasing prayers for the return to Zion. These characteristics express the state of mind of the Classical Reformers during those days. As mentioned above, the meaning in and of prayer was a top priority, and when they decided to pray in German rather than in Hebrew, it was so the worshipers would understand what they pray for, and thus could genuinely mean what they pray for. According to Geiger, praying should be held in the mother tongue of the worshiper, as it is also the language of his/her heart. Other changes were made to adapt Judaism to modernity, i.e., the forces and trends in the contemporary, secular, local world, as some of the prayers were understood to no longer be relevant to that time, such as making sacrifices to God and resurrection.

Geiger did not believe in Sheivat Zion (Returning to Zion, i.e., Eretz Yisrael), as he believed that Germany was good for the Jews and they had no reason to immigrate to Eretz Yisrael. However, he did emphasize Zion and Jerusalem as sacred places for the Jewish people, as that was where Judaism came from. Therefore, the importance Zion and Jerusalem were as spiritual and sacred places, rather than geographical ones. Geiger’s attitude towards Zion made blessings and

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289 Ibid.  
290 Ibid., 311.  
prayers for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and immigrating to Eretz Yisrael as irrelevant and were cut out of the *siddur*.\(^{292}\) There are many other prayers and blessings that were cut out of the *siddur* due to their perceived irrelevance to the modern times and his view of Judaism.

Geiger’s *siddur* reflected the ideologies of the Reform Jews at that time – 19\(^{th}\) century Germany. Judaism should adapt itself to modernity, which means that archaic prayers and blessing were not relevant anymore. The American Reform *siddur* and the Israeli one are much different, in many ways, which will be explained later in the chapter.

**American Reform Liturgy**

**Minhag America (1857)**

Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, the ‘great architect’ of the Reform movement in the U.S.,\(^{293}\) wrote *Minhag America* (the American custom), the first American *siddur*, in 1857. This *siddur* included both Hebrew text and English translations.\(^{294}\) Wise, along with others, was asked at the Cleveland Conference in 1855, to prepare a uniform liturgical text that would unite all Reform communities in the U.S. Their goal was to prevent the prevalent multiplicity of customs and rituals, which they felt had endangered the new Reform community in the U.S.\(^ {295}\) However, eventually it was Wise alone who wrote the first American *siddur*.\(^ {296}\)

Wise hoped that *Minhag America* would represent all American Jews. However, Wise had a conservative and traditional attitude, but at the same time was influenced by Geiger’s Classical Reform *siddur*. Wise kept the Hebrew in the *siddur*,\(^ {297}\) but also changed some Hebrew words,

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\(^{292}\) Ibid., 174-175.


\(^{294}\) Ibid.


\(^{296}\) Ibid.

\(^{297}\) Dalia Marx, “Hatefila Hareformit Ledoroteiha ve Lemerkazeiha”, 314-315. [Hebrew].
changes that reflected ideological changes such as the removal of references to a personal Messiah. While preserving many portions of traditional Hebrew text, Wise added concise and accurate translation in English. Moreover, *Minhag America* rejected all calls for a return to Zion and rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem, which reflects the Classical Reform notion of rejecting Zionism. The *siddur* removed all references to the reinstitution of sacrifices, the restoration of the priesthood, and the Davidic dynasty and resurrections, as they were not modern and rational values, much like the Classical Reform *siddur* of Geiger.

**Olath Tamid (1848, 1856, 1872)**

In 1848, Rabbi David Einhorn published his *siddur, Olath Tamid*, in Germany, and published it again in the U.S. in 1856. However, only in 1872, it was finally translated to English. *Olath Tamid* *siddur* was much more liberal and modern than *Minhag America*. The pagination of the *siddur* was left-to-write, and included services for daily services, Shabbat and holidays, which were revised and envisioned differently than the classical and traditional *siddurim*. Additional blessings and prayers were added that related to cycle of life events, such as weddings, mourning and burials and Confirmations. The Hebrew language was still used in some of the prayers, but was reduced or eliminated in others. The elimination of Hebrew was due to Einhorn’s belief that Reform could only find authentic expression through the German language. For this reason, this prayer book was translated to English only in 1872. Since the *siddur* was originally written and

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301 David Phillipson, *Century Papers and Others*, 22.
published in Germany, it was influenced by other German Reform siddurim. It also reflected Einhorn’s view of Reform Judaism. The siddur was more than a shortened version of the current service (like Wise’s siddur), but a creative expression of universal human values. The siddur provided a modern approach to religious practice and it did not emphasize the status of Eretz Yisrael (much like the other Reform siddurim, which rejected the return to Zion).  

More so, as in Einhorn’s point of view, the siddur had to express “Jewish religious ideas in their contemporary state of development…” he had to remove prayers such the return to Zion, the restoration of the sacrificial cult, and bodily resurrection, which did not fit a modern way of thinking. Einhorn’s liberalism is expressed in the Olath Tamid siddur, which became the model of the following American Reform siddurim, from 1894 till today.

Union Prayer Book (1894)

In 1894, the new Reform siddur – Union Prayer Book was published, and was edited by, among other rabbis, Rabbi Kaufman Kohler, who was Rabbi Einhorn’s son-in-law. This siddur had three editions and was used until 1975, when Gates of Prayer was published.

Union Prayer Book was formally adopted in 1895, and was an achievement of Einhorn’s wing of American Reform Judaism, over Isaac Mayer Wise’s more moderate position. The siddur was influenced by the Olath Tamid siddur and resembles it in its lack of Hebrew, the briefness of its services, and its general approach to liturgy. The siddur is opened from left to right, and is written mostly in English, while Hebrew was reduced to the minimum. Other changes,

306 David Ellenson, Between Tradition and Culture: The Dialectics of Modern Jewish Religion and Identity, 192.
307 Ibid.
308 Dalia Marx, “Hatefila Hareformit Ledoroteiha ve Lemerkazeiha”, 315. [Hebrew].
309 Ibid.
310 David Ellenson, Between Tradition and Culture: The Dialectics of Modern Jewish Religion and Identity, 197.
311 Ibid., 198.
were made not only to eliminate repetitions for theological and ideological reasons, but also to make room for modern readings. The traditional order of the services was maintained, but the traditional services were given a modern purpose.\textsuperscript{312}

Einhorn’s liberal ideology, which he shared in \textit{Olah Tamid} and then in the \textit{Union Prayer Book}, established the liberal pathway of the American Reform for the next several generations.\textsuperscript{313} While there were meaningful changes in Reform ideology in the years between 1894 and 1975, such as going back to tradition, Zionism, Feminism and Civil Rights, they were only reflected in the Reform liturgy in the new Reform siddur \textit{Gates of Prayer}, which was published in 1975.\textsuperscript{314} The \textit{Union Prayer Book} marked the uttermost moment of Reform’s “drift to radicalism”, as Rabbi David Ellenson sees it.\textsuperscript{315}

\textbf{Gates of Prayer (Shaarey Tefila 1975)}

In 1975, the \textit{Gates of Prayer siddur} was published, which was influenced by the creative prayers and blessings that were created, adapted and used by Reform communities during the 1960’s and 1970’s. The \textit{siddur} reflects many of the changes the Reform movement had been going through and the influence of movements and events such as Civil Rights Movement, Second-wave Feminism, the Vietnam war and the flourishing relationship with the State of Israel after the Six-Days-War in 1967. For example, the Hebrew language became more central, as well as the connection to Israeli culture.\textsuperscript{316} \textit{Gates of Prayer} includes services and prayers for Israeli

\textsuperscript{312} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{313} Ibid., 199.
\textsuperscript{314} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{315} Ibid., 202.
\textsuperscript{316} Dalia Marx, “Hatefila Hareformit Ledoroteiha ve Lemerkazeiha”, 315. [Hebrew].
Remembrance Day and Independence Day, as well as a prayer for the safety of Israel and some Israeli-Hebrew poetry and liturgy.\textsuperscript{317}

The new siddur reflected appreciation of pluralism,\textsuperscript{318} as per Chaim Stern, the siddur’s editor: \textquoteleft\textquoteleft Therefore in this prayer book, we have followed the principle that there are many paths to heaven’s gates, that this prayer and that one, this service and that one, may both have the power to lead us to the living God. Faithful to this view, we have tried to provide room for as many ways of worship.’’\textsuperscript{319} To reflect this position the siddur was published in two editions. The first one opens as any book in English does, from left to right and the other one opens from right to left, like the traditional siddur (and any book in Hebrew).\textsuperscript{320} Moreover, there is a variety of options available to choose from, such as themes, services, prayers and blessings, so each person would feel comfortable reading from it and worship. For example, there are six different liturgies for Saturday morning.\textsuperscript{321} Finally, Gates of Prayer reflected the \textquoteleft\textquoteleft return to tradition\textquoteright\textquoteright\ trend of the Reform movement,\textsuperscript{322} and the religious diversity, as the pluralistic characteristics of the siddur echoed the relationship the Reform movement had with Jewish traditions and laws during that time.\textsuperscript{323}

While both the Union Prayer Book and Gates of Prayer reflected the liberalism and pluralism of the Reform movement in the U.S., the difference between them stems from the \textquoteleft\textquoteleft return to tradition\textquoteright\textquoteright\ of the movement during the days before the latter was published. The Union Prayer Book was a very liberal prayer book, which created a fine separation of the movement from other Jewish movements in the U.S. While Gates of Prayer was liberal and pluralistic, its goal was for all Jews to feel comfortable with it, even Jews from other denominations. The more traditional

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 338.
\item David Ellenson, Between Tradition and Culture: The Dialectics of Modern Jewish Religion and Identity, 202-203.
\item Gates of Prayer (New York, 1975), xii.
\item David Ellenson, Between Tradition and Culture: The Dialectics of Modern Jewish Religion and Identity, 203.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., 204.
\item Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
elements and reintroductions in *Gates of Prayer* were influenced by the religious revival in America after the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel.\textsuperscript{324} As David Ellenson puts it, “It reveals that contemporary Reform has moved, in certain profound senses, far from the sectarian position espoused by its leaders at the beginning of the 1900’s.”\textsuperscript{325}

**Mishkan Tefila (2007)**

“The main goals for the new *siddur* are to both move toward tradition and away from tradition, to take seriously the feminist critique and to create a *siddur* which truly speaks to the variety of ways in which prayer is taking place in the Reform movement”,\textsuperscript{326} said Rabbi Peter Knobel, who was the chair of the Siddur Editorial Committee and of the Liturgy Committee for the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR). While there is a tension between moving towards tradition and away from tradition, this move reflects the state of mind of American Reform Jews today. According to Rabbi Dalia Marx, the need for a new *siddur* stemmed from the need to make changes in prayers. It took almost twenty-five years to write *Mishkan Tefila*, and there were about ten drafts throughout the years.\textsuperscript{327} The editing process of the new *siddur* was a public process, where side by side, rabbis, cantors and congregation members worked together. Rabbi Elyse Frishman and Rabbi Judith Abrams were elected as editors.\textsuperscript{328}

The *siddur*, which was published in 2007, reflected the challenges and characteristics of those times. For example, the inner pages of the siddur look like a web page.\textsuperscript{329} The *siddur* is reflecting new principles of the Reform movement, which were adopted in the 1999 Pittsburgh

\textsuperscript{324} Ibid., 206.
\textsuperscript{325} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{327} Dalia Marx, “Hatefila Hareformit Ledoroteiha ve Lemerzakeiha”; 326. [Hebrew].
\textsuperscript{328} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{329} Ibid., 327.
Convention. In this convention, the CCAR reaffirmed its support for the State of Israel, as well as its commitment to an ongoing study of commandments and social justice.\textsuperscript{330,331} For example, there is a combination of traditional and new liturgies, like in the previous \textit{siddur, Gates of Prayer}.\textsuperscript{332} Also, \textit{Mishkan Tefila} provides a variety of prayers for each theme or subject. Each prayer is written in English, Hebrew and transliteration to English, and historical interpretations and explanations are provided.\textsuperscript{333} This was the first time an American Reform \textit{siddur} provided full versions of the Hebrew prayers,\textsuperscript{334} and this move reflects the Reform movement’s wish to deepen the Hebrew knowledge of its members and their authenticity in praying and worshiping. The \textit{siddur} opens from right to left, unlike the previous \textit{siddurim}, which opened from left to right. Moreover, the \textit{siddur} only has a Hebrew name, without a translation to English. Also, the new \textit{siddur} is much more Zionist, as it reflects the Zionist attitude of the movement, and it brought back \textit{Sheivat Zion}, as well as the support for the State of Israel.\textsuperscript{335} This \textit{siddur} has been trying to welcome every one by being very inclusive, and providing ways to worship as they please, in ways most meaningful to each reader.\textsuperscript{336} According to Marx, the Reform prayer is more traditional today in its use of Hebrew and the returning to Zion, but at the same time is very liberal and innovative regarding gender and different wordings of prayers, which reflect the state of mind and principle of the Reform movement today.\textsuperscript{337}

Another characteristic of the \textit{siddur} is the feminine voice of the prayer, removing or changing prayers and blessings that sound misogynous, adding women’s voices and rituals, and

\textsuperscript{330} Ibid., 329.
\textsuperscript{332} Dalia Marx, “Hatefila Hareformit Ledoroteiha ve Lemerkazela”, 327. [Hebrew].
\textsuperscript{333} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{334} Ibid., 329.
\textsuperscript{335} Ibid., 331-340.
\textsuperscript{336} Ibid., 340-341.
\textsuperscript{337} Ibid., 346.
making it more comfortable for women to read and identify when they worship. God is no longer referred to as male, but gender neutral, the Four Mothers are mentioned next to the Four Fathers and there are many payers, blessings and rituals that celebrate feminine events, such as getting the period for the first time, getting pregnant, and more for-women-by-women liturgy. One such example, while not being a part of the siddur is The Torah: A Women’s Commentary, which is “the work of more than 100 of the world's leading Jewish female Bible scholars, rabbis, cantors, theologians, historians, philosophers, sociologists, poets, and archaeologists, whose collective efforts resulted in the first comprehensive commentary on the Five Books of Moses to be authored only by women…. was published in 2007 and includes individual Torah portions as well as the Hebrew and English translations, giving dimension to the women's voices in our tradition.”

While Mishkan Tefila is the official siddur of the American Reform movement, there are many Reform communities who created and printed their own siddurim, which reflect their personal communal values. This fact is an example of the decentralization of authority in the URJ. Another such example, as will be described in chapter 4 of this thesis, is the authority each rabbi has in the Reform conversion process.

**Israeli Reform Liturgy**

HaAvoda SheBalev (Work of the Heart), is the Israeli Reform siddur, and it was published in 1982 after almost a decade of work, experimenting, and editing. It was written and edited by a committee of rabbis and cantors that included Rabbi Yehoram Mazor, Rabbi Moshe Zemer, Rabbi Reuven Samuels, Cantor Shlomo Cohen and others. The siddur was published about forty

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338 Ibid., 332.
years after the Israeli Reform movement was successfully established. Beforehand, Reform congregations in Israel used temporary *siddurim* they printed themselves but before that, they used the American Reconstructionist *siddur* and *mahzor*. However, as the movement flourished and grew rapidly in the 1980’s, the fact that the *siddur* was published during this time is another expression of the growth of the movement, and the need for it in the Israeli society. According to Eric Friedland, “… As prayer books go, this one is lean and compact, yet substantial. Without presuming to aim all-inclusiveness, it all but reaches the point of being a *Kol-Bo*, an all-purpose book of ready liturgical reference.”

*HaAvoda SheBalev* is mostly written in Hebrew, with no translation to English, but includes prayers in Aramaic and their translation to Hebrew. The *siddur* expresses its Israeliness and the Israeli experience, and, for example, includes prayers and blessings for *Yom HaZikaron* (Israeli Memorial Day). According to Rabbi Meir Azari, the Israeli *siddur* is more traditional, as the Israeli society is traditional and they want them to feel comfortable using it. The Israeli *siddur*, according to Rabbi Azari, has a hint of Orthodoxy. For example, God is still considered to be male, rather than female or neutral. Currently there is an ongoing work on a new Israeli *siddur*, which is edited by Rabbi Dalia Marx.

The prayers and the blessing in the *siddur* are more accessible both in reference and in modern language, so all people would and could feel comfortable reading from it while praying, making them more liberal and adjusting them to the state of mind of the Israeli Reform movement. The *siddur* also reflects universalism, which is also a Reform value, to encourage the readers to feel a part of a bigger group, of *Am Yisrael*. In addition, the *siddur* is more modern

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341 Prayers and blessings for holidays.
342 *Kol Bo* means it has everything, in Hebrew
344 Ibid., 115.
345 Rabbi Meir Azari (Chief Rabbi of The Daniel Centers for Progressive Judaism), phone interview, September 7, 2016.
346 Rabbi Yehoram Mazor (Chair of Conversion Beit Din, Maram), email exchange, February 8, 2017.
and feminist and expresses the Israeli Reform movement’s state of mind regarding these values.\textsuperscript{348}

The \textit{siddur} offers prayers for Bat Mitzvah, for the birth of a girl, including women in every aspect of worship, prayer and observance. The \textit{siddur} offers literature and poetry which reflects the current feelings towards issues such as history, self-identification, events such as the Holocaust, \textit{Tisha Be’Av} and other mourning days as well as happy days and holidays, which all reflect the values of the Israeli Reform movement.\textsuperscript{349} Moreover, according to Rabbi Yehoram Mazor, one of the authors of the Israeli \textit{siddur}, while the authors adjusted ancient prayers to Reform theology, they did write several prayers themselves.\textsuperscript{350} Finally, as the Reform movement was originally established in Germany, its prayers are mostly Ashkenazic in their origins and core. However, the \textit{piyutim} are mostly Sephardic in their core, since in general the Ashkenazi rite (not just the Reform one) adopted Sephardic \textit{piyutim} hundreds of years ago, because the Ashkenazi \textit{piyutim} are more complex and hard to understand.\textsuperscript{351}

\textbf{Comparison}

The American Reform movement and the Israeli reform movement share the same basic values of modernity, egalitarianism, and liberalism. One way of expressing these values is through rituals, religious actions and practices. Another way is through liturgy, prayers and blessings.

\textbf{Similarities}

From reading and analyzing the rituals and \textit{siddurim} from the Classical time in Germany up to today, I found that the main common trend, both in the U.S. and in Israel, is the fact that all

\textsuperscript{348} Ibid., 186.
\textsuperscript{349} Ibid., 188.
\textsuperscript{350} Rabbi Yehoram Mazor (Chair of Conversion Beit Din, Maram), email exchange, February 8, 2017.
\textsuperscript{351} Rabbi Yehoram Mazor (Chair of Conversion Beit Din, Maram), email exchange, March 15, 2017.
siddurim and rituals reflect liberalism, in accordance to what liberalism meant in the time they were written and published. The wish was to adjust Judaism and Jewish practices to modern times and values. Writing, adding, cutting out, cutting short and changing liturgies is the hallmark of Reform Judaism across two centuries and the two nations. Another similarity is that although Reform liturgy in general, even the German one, is based on both Ashkenazi and Sephardic roots, today none of the movements affiliate themselves exclusively with either the Ashkenazi or Sephardic rite.

**Differences**

**Rituals**

The differences between the rituals of each movement are varied and relate to the prevalence of traditional practices, the architecture of the Temple, the seating, the resemblance to Orthodox Judaism and/or Protestantism, the use of prayer shawls and head coverings, and the observance of kosher dietary laws and Shabbat, and other traditional Jewish practices. In the Classical Reform congregations, the German Reform rituals were traditional, but at the same time, the synagogues aesthetically resembled Protestant churches, as there were a choir and an organ. The German Reform communities kept kosher, observed Shabbat, and wore prayer shawls and head coverings. Finally, there was no mixed seating. In America, on the other hand, even in the American “Classical” Reform era the rituals themselves were more Protestant and American-like. In the 1850’s and 1860’s mixed seating was introduced, and the movement banned prayer shawls and head coverings. These rituals reflected the mind-set of the Reform movement in those days and the platforms they approved in the conventions throughout those years. From mid-20th century, the American Reform rituals became more traditional, some members began keeping kosher again,
and both men and women could wear head coverings and prayer shawls. This combination of moving back to tradition and at the same time being more liberal reflects universalistic values, and the values and principles of the movement, which were approved in the mid-and late 20th century Reform conventions.

The Israeli rituals on the other hand, reflect egalitarianism and an all-inclusiveness. At the same time, the service itself is a bit more traditional to prevent antagonism in the Israeli society. Men wear prayer shawls and head coverings and women can do so as well, though usually only men and women rabbis wear them. Men and women sit together in the synagogue as there is no separation, and everyone is welcomed to take part in the services.

Liturgy

The differences between the siddurim of each movement are varied and relate to the number of traditional prayers, language and amount or lack of Hebrew, rejecting or praying for Zion and the State of Israel and the pagination. The Geiger siddur rejected the values of Zion, was liberal, was mostly in German rather than in Hebrew, and reflected the values of Classical Reform Judaism. The first American Reform siddur, Minhag America from 1857, was more traditional, as it was written by Rabbi Isaac Wise, who was a traditionalist (though he was influence by Geiger as well). It had both English and Hebrew, though not a lot of Hebrew, and rejected the return to Zion as well. These were the values and ideologies of the Reform movement in its first days in America, in mid-19th century. The second American Reform siddur – Olath Tamid from 1872, was written by Rabbi David Einhorn, who opposed the more traditional path in which Wise was trying to take the movement. The siddur was first published in German and then translated to English
and was more liberal, modern and universalistic than *Minhag America*. The pagination was left-to-right, and included shorter and modern prayers and blessings.

The following *siddur* was the *Union Prayer Book* from 1894, and was used for about eighty years. It was written by Kaufman Kohler, the son-in-law of Rabbi Einhorn. This *siddur* was very liberal, and barely had any Hebrew in it. Many changes in values and ideologies happened during those eighty years, and they were reflected in the following *siddur* – *Gates of Prayer*, from 1975. *Gates of Prayer* reflected values and ideologies which regarded the Civil Rights Movement, Second-Wave Feminism, the Vietnam war and Zionism. This *siddur* was the first Reform *siddur* to include prayers for the return to Zion, for the safety of the State of Israel, as well as other prayers that relate to Israeli events and Israeli poems. At the same time, some aspects of the *siddur* reflected going back to traditional Judaism, such as providing the prayers in Hebrew in addition to English, and it is read both from left-to-right and right-to-left.

In 2007, the current *siddur* was published and accepted – *Mishkan Tefilah*. This *siddur* includes feminine voices in prayers, as well as prayers that would make every member of the movement and even non-members, welcomed and comfortable, such as LGBTQ persons. It looks more modern, like an internet page, is read from right to left, like Israeli-Hebrew books and includes prayers in Hebrew, English and transliteration, as well as historical explanations. The *siddur* also includes Zionist voices, prayers for the safety for the State of Israel, as well as Israeli poems and liturgy. Finally, this *siddur* is the only Reform siddur whose title was not translated to English. These *siddurim* reflect and represent the changes in ideologies and values of the reform movement throughout the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries.
The Israeli siddur – HaAvoda SheBalev was published in 1982, some thirty years after the Reform movement in Israel was established. As the siddur was published at a time where in the U.S. the movement was more liberal and yet traditional, it reflects the same values. The siddur is written mostly in Hebrew, and includes prayers in Aramaic and their translation to Hebrew. The siddur is more traditional so the Israeli society would not feel antagonism and would feel more comfortable reading from it. However, while in the U.S. it is common that communities print their own siddurim, in Israel all Reform communities use the same siddur.

**Overall Discussion**

In this chapter, I analyzed the rituals and the siddurim from the Classical time in Europe throughout the development of the movement in the U.S. and in Israel in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. The main issues which were reflected both in the rituals and in the siddurim, were values and practices such as the language of prayer and meaning, Zionism and its rejection, liberalism and egalitarianism and the wish to modernize and adjust Judaism to current times, to make it more accessible to all. The changes throughout the years expressed the changes in those values, though they were always liberal and became even more in our days. The siddurim in both the U.S. and Israel began to give voices to women and universalistic human values. The rituals also expressed the same values in areas of personalization of choice in worship and prayer, mixed seating, wearing prayer shawls and head covering by all worshipers and the ban of wearing them, keeping kosher and not keeping kosher, and how affected the movement was by Protestantism and how it was expressed in the Temples. I found that the rituals, the liturgies, the prayers and even the aesthetics of the Temples all reflect the platforms and the ideologies of the Reform movement in each county. Finally, I found that as the movements became more liberal, they also adopted traditional Jewish
values and adjusted them to its current ideologies. In that sense, the Reform movement today is how Abraham Geiger or even Moses Mendelssohn had visioned how Judaism should be – traditional yet modern.
Chapter 4: Who is a Jew? – Personal Status in Reform Judaism

The question of “Who is a Jew?” is an umbrella question which covers and determines many matters of personal status. This question is being debated in many Jewish circles – politically, religiously, legally and socially. Some answers to this question are based on the concepts of matrilineal and patrilineal descents, and date to the biblical days.

Historical Development of Patrilineal and Matrilineal Descents

In the Bible, it was patrilineal descent that determined the religion of each individual. Therefore, children of kings of Israel who married non-Jewish women were indisputably Jewish. Patrilineal descent also determined the children’s’ belonging to social groups, such as being Cohens (of the priestly caste), or belonging to certain tribes. Mishnaic and Talmudic authorities changed the Biblical laws of matrilineal and patrilineal descent and declared that the faith of the people was determined by the mothers rather than the fathers. They discussed the events of Deuteronomy 7:3-4, where God forbids the Israelites from marrying people from other nations, which means that intermarriage was forbidden in the Bible. In Kidushin 68b Tractate, of the Babylonian Talmud, Rabbi Simeon Bar Yochai (~67-160 A.D) is quoted to have said that a child of Israelite women is considered an Israelite as well, while a child from non-Israelite women and Israelite father is not considered an Israelite.

353 Ibid.
It means that one’s religion was determined by the mother’s faith rather than the father’s faith. And indeed, according to the *Halacha*, which was coded long after the Biblical period, religion was determined by the mother’s faith as well.\(^{356}\)

The origins of this change date back to the Talmudic times, when the Yavnean\(^ {357}\) rabbis departed from biblical practice. According to Shaye J.D. Cohen, a Second-Temple-period historian from Harvard University, there are two explanations for the change, one internal and one external. The internal explanation says that matrilineal principle accords with the Mishnaic laws regarding the mixture of diverse kinds (*kilayim*). Intermarriage is forbidden, the same as the union between a horse and a donkey is forbidden. The *Mishna* judges the offspring of both unions per matrilineal principles.\(^ {358}\) The external explanation says that the terminology, ideas and conclusions of *Kidushin* 3:12, which discusses *Mamzerut* (children of non-married couples, who were born out of wedlock), apply. If one of the parents does not possess the capacity to contract a legal marriage (in this case it was the father), the offspring follows the mother. If an Israelite woman married or had children with a non-Israelite, her children would have the status of non-citizens (as the father was not a citizen) but the religion of the mother, who was an Israelite/Jewish.\(^ {359}\)

For two thousand years Judaism was determined by the mother. Since 1983 (though informally since WWII),\(^ {360}\) Reform rabbis and the URJ also consider children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers as Jews, if they live up to certain obligations, commandments and practices.

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\(^{357}\)From the city of Yavneh, Eretz Yisrael.


\(^{359}\)Ibid.

**Who is a Jew?**

In Orthodox and Conservative Judaism as well as Reform Judaism in most of the countries where you can find Reform movements, there are three ‘ways’ to be Jewish: first, by having two Jewish parents; second, by having a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father; and finally, by converting to Judaism. However, the American Reform movement provides a fourth “way” to be Jewish.

‘**Who is a Jew?**’ *According to the Union for Reform Judaism*

The American Reform movement, the Union for Reform Judaism, is the biggest Jewish denomination in the United States and the most inclusive and welcoming to Jews by choice. In 1983, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) voted to acknowledge the Jewishness of children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers, and regard them as if they were children of Jewish mothers, which is the *Halachic* law. This acknowledgment has increased the number of interfaith Jewish families who are members in Reform communities around the U.S. This is the fourth answer to the question of “Who is a Jew?”.

The background to this decision dates to the first decade of the 20th century, when in 1909, the CCAR had acknowledged patrilineality and reaffirmed this decision in 1961, in the *Rabbi’s Manual*. However, it was after WWII when almost every Reform rabbi acknowledged patrilineal descent, thought it was only tolerated and not a principle. In 1983, this decision became a formal principle and public, thus provoking a communal debate. While patrilineal descent benefits individuals, Orthodox and Conservative rabbis, who view the *Halacha* as a binding Jewish law,

361 Jews who identify as Jews even if they are not Halachic Jewish.
feel that the benefits of patrilineal descent happen at the expense of peoplehood and unity. Patrilineal descent was argued as gender equality and inclusiveness by the Reform community, but many critiqued the decision as putting personal interests of individuals over the collective welfare of the Jewish people. If children of Jewish fathers are Jewish as well, conversion is no longer needed (not of the non-Jewish mother nor of the child). Moreover, as these children are not acknowledged as Jews according to Orthodox and Conservative movements, this issue causes lots of problems, especially with the State of Israel and the Chief Rabbinate.365

‘Who is a Jew?’ According to The Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism

The answer to the question “Who is a Jew?” per the Israeli Reform movement is the answer as that was given by the Orthodox and the Chief Rabbinate. A Jew is someone who was born to a Jewish mother or converted according to the Halacha. Due to political matters, the Israeli Reform movement does not consider offspring of Jewish fathers as Jews. Since the Israeli Reform movement does not have an equal/ legal status in the State of Israel, and since the Israeli society is somewhat traditional in its views, declaring that offspring of Jewish fathers are Jews as well would cause great controversy, which could hurt the efforts of the movement to become legal and legitimate in the eyes of the State and its citizens. However, while children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers are not considered Jewish, they are still allowed to have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah in the movements’ synagogues.

The question of “Who is a Jew?” has been discussed since the establishment of the State of Israel. In 1958, only ten years after the establishment of the State, there was a political and legal dispute over the question of the religious status of offspring of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish

365 Ibid., 144.
mothers. Yisrael Bar Yehuda, then Minister of Interior, decided to use a sociological rather than Halachic definition of Judaism. Anyone who defined him/herself as a Jew was considered to be Jew. By doing so he set a precedent, as in the Jewish state Judaism was not determined according to the Halachic law, but according to one’s subjective sense of belonging to the Jewish people. The Mafdal religious-right-wing party left the government after this rule was set. David Ben Gurion asked a group of fifty Orthodox and Liberal rabbis from Israel and the Diaspora to give their point of view on the status of offspring of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers, and their answers were bound into a booklet. Eventually, in July 1959, Ben Gurion overruled the new guidelines Bar Yehuda had set and the Mafdal rejoined the government. Since then and legally since 1967, a Jew is someone who was born to a Jewish mother or converted per the Halacha, which meant that offspring of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers are not Jews, according to the State of Israel.

Conversion, Historically and Today

While having a Jewish mother (and/or a Jewish father according to the URJ) is one way of being Jewish, converting is another way. The idea of converting to Judaism was introduced during the exile period, when the Israelites/Jews were spread around the nations. At first, conversion was an option only for men, and the ritual was circumcision, as a gentile woman who married and lived with her Israelite/Jewish husband had converted just by marrying him. Later a conversion ritual for women was introduced as well -- the immersion in the mikvah. This ritual was also introduced as a part of the men’s conversion ritual during those days.

367 Ibid., 8.
Since the act of conversion was introduced much later than the biblical times, when looking retrospectively, conversion in the biblical times happened without a formal ceremony when a non-Israelite was accepted into the Israelite community.\textsuperscript{369} According to Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (1040-1105), who is best known as Rashi and who is considered the greatest Bible commentator of all times,\textsuperscript{370} Abraham and Sarah were the first converts to Judaism. While Abraham converted the men, Sarah converted the women: “The souls that they had made. The souls that they have brought under the wings of the Shechinah [i.e., conversion to the Jewish god].”\textsuperscript{371} As it was patrilineal and patriarchal society, once a man converted to Judaism, his entire household converted as well.\textsuperscript{372}

In the days of King Solomon, there was a legal distinction between ezrach ‘native born’ Israelite; ger ‘resident alien’ who had taken up permanent residence; and nochri ‘foreign national’, who only lived there on a temporary basis.\textsuperscript{373} The same law applied both the ezrach and the ger, with one distinction – while both groups were forbidden to eat ‘leaven’ during Passover, the ger was not allowed to eat from the Passover sacrifice unless he was circumcised.\textsuperscript{374,375} It appears that the last step required to a full acceptance into the Jewish religion and society (the conversion process), was circumcision.\textsuperscript{376} In the Book of Ruth, which was thought to set in the Judges period, Ruth said “Your people [are] my people and your God [is] my God.”\textsuperscript{377}, which means she identified herself with the Jewish nation and people. Later, when she looked to establish her place in her new

\textsuperscript{369} Jonathan Magonet, “Your God is My God: Conversion in the Hebrew Bible”, 11.
\textsuperscript{370} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{371} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{372} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{373} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{374} Ibid., 12-13
\textsuperscript{376} Jonathan Magonet, “Your God is My God: Conversion in the Hebrew Bible”, 13.
society, she considered herself as nochria, a foreigner,\textsuperscript{378} and Boaz negated this and integrated her into his household.\textsuperscript{379}

It was the destruction of the Temple and the first exile to Babylon that is considered to be the event that changed the nature of the Israelite identity. Both the homeland and the religious center were lost, which resulted in the creation of a new system of Jewish practice, including the establishment of the synagogue as a place for worship and assembling. Another change was the transmission from a national community based on a territorial base to a faith community.\textsuperscript{380} In the Talmudic period, the nochrim were called ger toshav, ‘denizen’, and the ger became ger tzedek, ‘righteous alien’, a status which enabled an individual to become a part of the Jewish community due to his life and work, i.e., a convert to Judaism.\textsuperscript{381} The conversion process had to be voluntary, and the ger tzedek had to express his/her free will to convert, by addressing a few issues, related to their seriousness and devotion to the conversion process and becoming Jews.\textsuperscript{382} The conversion process was a combination of a voluntary and unconditional acceptance of the divine commandments of the Torah, circumcision for men and, immersion for both men and women. The final conversion ceremony had to be in the presence of three rabbis in order for it to be valid.\textsuperscript{383} This ritual for conversion and its conditions were laid down by the Tannaim, who were rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah,\textsuperscript{384} after a long process of debate, some times between the first and second centuries, in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{385}

\textsuperscript{379}Jonathan Magonet, “Your God is My God: Conversion in the Hebrew Bible”, 13.
\textsuperscript{380}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{381}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{383}Ibid., 17
The middle ages were characterized by clashes between Judaism and Christianity in Eastern Europe, and the ‘Golden Age’ under the Islamic rule in the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal), between the 5th and late 15th centuries. Despite conversion to Judaism being illegal by the ruler, and Jews being persecuted for their religion, conversion from Christianity to Judaism still took place. However, these converts did not usually live long, as the punishment for conversion was death. The same attitude came from Islam towards Judaism, after the latter refused to acknowledged Muhammad as the last prophet.

Conversion during and after the Renaissance, around Europe between the 15th and the 20th centuries, was still forbidden, but despite being persecuted, conversions to Judaism continued to take place. Much like the during the middle ages, the converts who were caught were usually burnt to death. However, the Ottoman Empire’s policy towards the Jews was often more tolerant and there were Christians who converted to Judaism just to benefit from the privileges that the Jews got from the Sultan, who had great respect for the Jews who had major political and economic roles as mediators between Muslim and Christian communities. Only towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century did attitudes of non-Jewish rulers towards conversion to Judaism changed, from rejection to toleration. The conversion process itself remained the same since the Tannaim laid it down thousands of years before. While an Orthodox conversion demands adopting an Orthodox way of life and a Progressive conversion demands just the adoption of a Jewish way of life, the process itself (the different stages) is the same for all denominations.

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386 Esther Seidel, “From the Golden Age to Inquisition: Conversion During the Middle Ages”, 24-25.
388 Ibid., 30.
390 Ibid., 41.
391 Ibid 48.
Conversion in the Union for Reform Judaism

Conversions in the URJ are different from the requirements of Orthodox conversion, both in the U.S. and in Israel. While the stages of the conversion process are the same, the level of religious observance or sticking to the Halacha are different. The URJ requires extended study and familiarity with the varied Jewish sources and law, tradition, and the commandments. The conversion process includes an initial interview with the rabbi, an introduction to Judaism and Hebrew classes which take between six to eight months, as well as one-on-one lessons with the rabbi. At the end of the conversion process, there is the Beit Din and immersion. The Beit Din is a committee with at least three members – dayanim, who interview the prospective converts to learn about their commitment to the conversion process and eventually to their lives as Jews. Not all three dayanim must be rabbis, sometimes there is only one or two and the rest are lay people. This is because Reform Judaism is not bound or obligated to the Halacha, and only advised by it. If the Beit Din is persuaded that the conversion students are devoted to the cause and their Jewish lives it will approve the conversion, which would be finalized with immersion.

However, each rabbi has the autonomy in his or her community to decide who can convert and how it would be, especially when it comes to small communities and/or cities. When the community is one out of several Reform communities in the region, there can be regional classes. Moreover, the Beit Din could be personal and convene just for one convert. Until the past twenty or so years, circumcision was done for most if not all male newborn babies in the United States for health reasons. Therefore, those who were circumcised with no regards to the conversion process do the symbolic ritual of Hatafat Dam instead. Hatafat Dam is the “Ritual taking of a drop of blood from the penis of a circumcised male prior to conversion to Judaism”, and is meant to

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392 Rabbi Jan David Katzew (Reform Rabbi and Professor at HUC/Cincinnati), personal interview, January 3-5, 2017.
393 “Ceremony for Hatafat Dam Brit Ha-ben”, ritualwell: Tradition and Innovation, N.D.,
replace the actual ritual of the Bris, for boys and men who were already circumcised for reasons other than conversion to Judaism. However, if the male is not previously circumcised, he is required to go through the circumcision procedure, prior to the final Beit Din, as one of step of conversion. Finally, immersion takes places as well.  

**Conversion in the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism**

Conversion in the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism requires an extended study and familiarity with the varied Jewish sources, Jewish law, tradition, and the commandments, similar to the requirements of conversion from the URJ. The regular period of study is one year and mostly depends on the amount of time the candidates can dedicate to their studies and the candidates’ previous knowledge. There are several steps in the conversion process including interview with a Reform rabbi, a year of study where the students meet on a weekly basis, immersion, Beit Din interviews, and circumcision for men.

The year of study is intended to provide the candidates the full experience of the Jewish yearly cycle. Conversion students are required to regularly participate in the prayer services of the synagogue and perform the rituals done at home. During this period, different topics are studied, such as: the Jewish yearly cycle, the Jewish life cycle, prayer and customs of the synagogue, Jewish history, the world of Jewish thought, and the difference between Judaism and other faiths. After completing their studies the candidates must again meet with the Beit Din for an interview. Upon passing the interview, the formal processes of conversion are carried out and the converts receive a Jewish/Hebrew name. Afterwards, the immersion takes place, usually in the sea, as there aren’t

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395 Rabbi Jan David Katzew (Reform Rabbi and Professor at HUC/Cincinnati), personal interview, January 3-5, 2017. 

any Reform mikvaot in Israel. There is one pluralistic mikvah, in Kibbutz Hannaton, in northern Israel, and Reform converts are invited to immerse there, but there aren’t any other pluralistic mikvaot in the center or south Israel. Men are required to be circumcised before the final interview. As oppose to the URJ, the dayanim at the Beit Din of Maram must be rabbis. This could be a result of the agreement the IMPJ has reached with the State of Israel, which in order to legally acknowledge Reform conversions, had to stick to some more traditional guidelines.

As mentioned in the ‘Who is a Jew’ section, children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers are not considered Jewish according to The Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism. Therefore, if they wish to become Jewish they must convert like any other non-Jews. However, the IMPJ offers a shorter process for individuals with Jewish fathers, who grew up Jewishly, live their lives as Jews, and are familiar with Jewish practices and learning. This type of conversion is called “Zera Israel” (Israel seed), and the difference is in its length (a few months, comparing to about a year).

Finally, only those with a specific residency status in Israel can be converted, regardless of the converting authority. The converts must be Israeli citizens or to be currently undergoing the process to receive citizenship (visa 5A). The Reform conversion is acknowledged by the State of Israel and converts can register in the Ministry of Interior as Jews. However, the Chief Rabbinate does not acknowledge Reform conversion and therefore, converts who wish to get married cannot do it in Israel and must go abroad in order to do so and to be acknowledged by the state as married. This applies to all non-Orthodox marriages, even of Jewish couples who do not want an Orthodox

396 Ibid.
ceremony. The need to go abroad is not mandatory, but a recommendation so these couples would enjoy all benefits wedded couples (either Jews, Muslim, Christian, etc.) receive from the State.

**Marriage and Intermarriage**

Orthodox and traditional Judaism forbid intermarriage. Deuteronomy 7:3-4 states that God forbids the Israelites from marrying people from other nations, which means that intermarriage was forbidden in the Bible.\(^\text{398}\) It was also forbidden by some of the Christian denominations who cite the same biblical source.\(^\text{399}\) However, since the Jews always lived among other people and other nations, there was some contact with them throughout the Jewish history. And many biblical figures were intermarried, such as Moses and King Solomon. With the emancipation of the Jews, their contact with the local community increased and so did the number of intermarriages. Throughout most of Jewish history, Jews who intermarried were often excluded from the Jewish community. However, Reform Judaism does not reject intermarriage anymore and today, some Reform Rabbis do perform intermarriage, under certain circumstances.

**Marriage and Intermarriage in the Union for Reform Judaism**

Reform rabbis who belong to the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), are discouraged from performing interfaith weddings. However, the URJ does not prevent Reform rabbis from doing so. Ultimately, rabbis are given autonomy in such matters and each rabbi comprehends Jewish tradition according to his/her own understanding. Some Reform rabbis reach

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the decision after much study, that a greater good is served by officiating at interfaith weddings. Often Reform rabbis require that the couple or non-Jewish partner take an Introduction to Judaism class and commit to creating a Jewish home and raising Jewish children.\textsuperscript{400} The rationale behind conducting interfaith marriages, is that it is an outreach, a way for the community to keep these families as members and making sure they will raise their children as Jews. Refusing to conduct such ceremonies is a sign of rejection and these Jews would never go back to the congregation if they feel rejected by the community because they chose to marry non-Jews.\textsuperscript{401}

As a part of their unquestionable support of the LGBTQ community, Reform rabbis perform same-sex marriages.\textsuperscript{402} Finally, in the general American Jewish community, the rate of intermarriage is more than 50\%,\textsuperscript{403} according to the 2013 Pew study on American Jewry, and the number keeps rising. Also, about 53\% of men who married during the first two decades of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, married non-Jewish women and only about 19\% raise their children Jewish.\textsuperscript{404} About 50\% of Reform Jews are married to non-Jews.\textsuperscript{405}

\textit{Marriage and Intermarriage in The Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism}

A Progressive Jewish wedding ceremony is a traditional ceremony in which all the obligatory elements of a \textit{Halachic} wedding are included. These ceremonies include the \textit{Chuppa}, under which the ceremony takes place as a symbol for the home the couple will begin to build


\textsuperscript{401} Hillel Cohn, “Why I Officiate at Mixed-Marriage Wedding Ceremonies”, 164-167.


together; *Erusin* (engagement) blessings; exchange of wedding bands, *Sheva Brachot* (the Seven Wedding Blessings); and breaking the glass.\(^{406}\) However, there are two main differences between the traditional wedding ceremony and the text of the Progressive wedding ceremony. First, the Progressive service acknowledges the equality of the sexes as a basic value of the Progressive Jewish way of life. For example, the *Ketubah* (marriage contract) is written in Hebrew and not in Aramaic, and there is no act of buying or ownership. The mutuality is also expressed when the couple is mutually blessing on the rings and breaks glasses together. The second difference is the involvement of the couple in the planning of the ceremony. The IMPJ and the rabbis encourage the couple to shape and plan the ceremony so it reflects the nature of their relationship and values.\(^{407}\)

The IMPJ invites all Jewish couples to marry in an egalitarian and equal ceremony. Reform rabbis can perform same-sex marriages as long as the couple is Jewish. However, since Reform weddings do not have a legal status, the movement recommends that couples have civil weddings outside of Israel, which the state is bound to acknowledge, to receive all the benefits to which married couples are entitled to have. At the same time, the movement does not perform intermarriage, for the same reasons it does not consider children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers as Jews, due to political and social issues and pressures in the Israeli society. There is no central registry of intermarried couples, as these couples cannot get married in Israel, only outside of it. At the same time, there is no central registry of Progressive wedding ceremonies that are being conducted in Israel. From my experience working in a Reform synagogue, I can say that hundreds of couples get married with the Reform movement every year. Finally, since reform


\(^{407}\) Ibid.
weddings are not supported and subsidized by the state, the price of the ceremony is higher than the price of an Orthodox ceremony and includes the ceremony, the meetings of the couples with the rabbis, the rabbis’ preparations and the driving fare.

It is important to mention that Israeli couples who wish to marry with the Reform movement or with any other egalitarian movement, such as the Conservative movement, are not denied of any civil legal rights or privileges. The same is true for couples who got married with these movements outside of Israel and later make Aliyah. Since Israeli Reform ceremonies only have spiritual status, not a legal one, those couples are recommended by the IMPJ to get married in a civil ceremony outside of Israel, as the State of Israel is required to acknowledge the legitimacy of these marriages. For this reason, any couple who makes Aliyah is acknowledged as a married couple by the state. These couples, both Israelis who get married in a civil service outside of Israel and couples who make Aliyah, are entitled to the same social and legal rights as couples who get married via the Chief Rabbinate, and are not limited socially or economically. Only couples who do not sign a legal document which affirms their legal status as a couple (whether a Ketubah, a marriage license or a legal contract signed by the Family Court or a lawyer) are not entitled to the rights that married couples are entitled to. However, the Chief rabbinate can cause troubles to children of these couples and refuse to marry them, although they are not supposed to do so.

Comparison

The Union for Reform Judaism and The Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism share basic values of egalitarianism. However, due to internal political disagreements within the Israeli society, the IMPJ views and deals with the question of ‘Who is a Jew?’ differently
that the URJ. Conversion and marriage/interrmarriage are all affected by the answer to this question.

**Similarities**

Both the American URJ and the IMPJ define Judaism according to matrilineal descent or conversion. Moreover, both movements will marry any Jewish couple whether it is a heterosexual or same-sex couple. [However, some Reform rabbis in the U.S. will officiate at interfaith weddings, whether it is a heterosexual or same-sex couple, while Israeli Reform rabbis cannot officiate at interfaith weddings, as this a policy of Maram.] These are the expressions of their liberal vision and values. Finally, both Reform weddings in the USA and Reform weddings in Israel require civil recognition of a marriage, separate from a religious certification, though for different reasons.

**Differences**

The differences between the URJ and the IMPJ stem from internal political matters within the Israeli society, as well as from the size of the United States and the fact that the Reform communities are spread over thousands of miles, which could be a reason for the decentralization of the URJ. For example, while the URJ acknowledges patrilineal descent, the IMPJ does not. Moreover, many American Reform rabbis will officiate intermarriage ceremonies and Israeli Reform rabbis will not do so. Finally, the conversion process in the URJ and in Israel is somewhat different, as Reform rabbis in the U.S. have much more autonomy than Israeli Reform rabbis.
‘Who is a Jew?’

While both movements determine people’s Jewish status according to matrilineal descent and/or conversion, the URJ acknowledges children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers under certain circumstances, which include declaring a commitment to living Jewish lives and practicing Judaism. The IMPJ does not consider children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers Jewish due to internal political reasons. The Israeli society is somewhat traditional and since the IMPJ is trying to gain legitimacy in its efforts to get a legal status from the state, supporting such a controversial issue would hurt their efforts to have a legal status in the state.

Conversion

Since there is a separation between religion and state in the U.S., peoples’ religion is not recorded or documented in any state or federal office. Therefore, when people convert to Judaism (within the Reform movement or any other denomination), there is no state/federal office that would need to change their records. However, since there is no separation between religion and state in Israel, peoples’ religion is recorded and documented within the Ministry of Interior. Therefore, when people convert to Judaism within the Reform movement, they would need to change their records in the Ministry of Interior, which is legal process. Nevertheless, the State of Israel does acknowledge Reform conversions (though the Chief Rabbinate does not).

Another difference regards the process of conversion in each movement. The conversion process in the URJ is a combination of guidelines and the rabbis’ autonomy. It is a combination of classes and personal lessons with the rabbi, a Beit Din (where the dayanim are not the same dayanim every time), immersion and circumcision or Hatafat Dam if the convert was already circumcised as a child. However, the conversion process in the IMPJ usually occurs within a group,
a class and not private meetings, that meets once a week for about a year, as well as interviews with Beit Din and immersion, circumcision is also a critical step in the conversion and must happen before the Beit Din. Israeli Reform rabbis have no autonomy and they must follow the guidelines of the movement. Moreover, not every person is eligible to convert with the IMPJ, as only citizens or residents with a certain residency status (i.e., visa A5) can convert.

Marriage and Intermarriage

While both movements can marry any Jewish couple, both heterosexual and same-sex couples, and while both movements’ weddings are not legally binding by the state, the reasons are different. In the U.S., there is a separation between religion and state and therefore, religious weddings have no legal status, while in Israel, only the Orthodox rabbis, via the Chief Rabbinate, can officiate Jewish weddings which are legally binding. Moreover, many Reform rabbis in the U.S., though not all of them, will officiate interfaith marriages as a way of keeping the couple within the Jewish community (a way of outreach). Israeli Reform rabbis who are members of Maram will not officiate interfaith marriages, for the same reasons the movement does not consider children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers as Jews – internal political issues and the traditional character of the Israeli society, which would not see this matter in a positive way, which would hurt the Israeli movement’s efforts for getting a legal status from the state.

Overall discussion and conclusions

In this chapter, I tried to answer the question “Who is a Jew?” and used the answers to this question in analyzing personal status issues in each movement. I provided a historical background
on patrilineal and matrilineal descents, as well as on conversions, in order to analyze these personal status issues.

I found the question of “Who is a Jew?” as both umbrella question and a basic question, from which matters of personal status arise. In Judaism, there are three ‘ways’ to be Jewish: to be born to two Jewish parents, to be born to a Jewish mother, and by conversion. However, the Union for Reform Judaism considers children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers as Jews if the parents are committed to raise them as Jews. The answer to the question of “Who is a Jew?” and these ‘ways’ to be Jewish affect personal status issues such as conversion, marriage and intermarriage, and religious status of potential children. Since there is a separation between religion and state in the U.S., religious status is not a federal issue and therefore, the URJ (as well as the rest of the Jewish denominations in the U.S.) has autonomy to decide on these personal status matters: on who is a Jew in Reform Judaism; on the conversion process; who needs conversion in order to be considered as Jewish; who may be married under Jewish auspices; and on how to officiate marriages.

However, there is no separation between religion and state in Israel and the Reform movement has no a legal status. Since the Orthodox establishment, via the Chief Rabbinate, has the monopoly over personal status of Jews in Israel, they are the only Jewish body that can officiate Jewish weddings that are legally binding. Due to that, Reform weddings are not legally binding. Moreover, Reform conversions are acknowledged by the State, but are not acknowledged by the Chief Rabbinate. Finally, according to Rabbi Galia Sadan, Secretary of Maram Beit Din and Associate Rabbi at Beit Daniel, the Reform congregation in North Tel Aviv, due to the traditional character of the Israeli society and for political purposes, it is important for the IMPJ to convert children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers as well as not to officiate at interfaith wedding
ceremonies. However, it does not mean that the IMPJ does not ideologically support these principles of the URJ.

In conclusion, there are differences between the attitudes of the Reform and Progressive movements in the U.S. and Israel towards the question of “Who is a Jew?” and other personal status matters, such as conversion, marriage, and intermarriages. At the same time, the similarities stem both from shared values and the different status each movement has in its home country. However, from my experience, it appears to me that the many in the IMPJ do agree with the URJ’s ideologies, and are waiting to gain its legal status in the state in order to declare its support and beliefs.

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Rabbi Galia Sadan (Secretary of Maram Beit Din and Associate Rabbi at Beit Daniel, the Reform congregation in North Tel Aviv), personal interview, August 11, 2016. 
Chapter 5 – Issues in Reform Judaism Today - Gender and Leadership

**Historical Development of Women’s Leadership in the Union for Reform Judaism**

From the moment the Reform movement was established in Germany of the 19th century, the status of women was one of the challenges with which the reformers had to face.\(^{409}\) When the reformers abolished certain Halachic limitations on women, some scholars say it was not an expression of ideology, but rather an act of rejecting the *Halacha*, which they felt did not reflect the modern world.\(^{410}\)

When Jewish immigrants came to the U.S. before the mid-19th century, mixed seating was not practiced in Jewish congregations. When Reform rabbis did initiate mix seating in individual congregations during the 1850’s and 1860’s,\(^{411}\) this change was not an act of a Feminist ideology, but a response to social needs, such as having the family sit together during services.\(^{412}\) However, even before the emergence of the Reform movement in the U.S., American synagogues were affected by the general American society, which had its own understandings of female religious agency.\(^{413}\) American culture demanded women’s presence at public worship.\(^{414}\)

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\(^{409}\) Paula E. Hyman, “Feminism ve Ma’amadan Shel Nashim Batnuaa Hareformit”, 509. [Hebrew]

\(^{410}\) Ibid.


\(^{412}\) Paula E. Hyman, “Feminism ve Ma’amadan Shel Nashim Batnuaa Hareformit”, 509. [Hebrew]


\(^{414}\) Ibid.
Reform Judaism was not the first to introduce gender equality in the U.S. In 1848, the first women’s rights convention took place in Seneca Falls NY, where a set of twelve resolutions, regarding equal treatment of women and men under the laws, as well as voting rights for women, was adopted.\textsuperscript{415} Colorado in 1893 was the first state to adopt an amendment granting women the right to vote.\textsuperscript{416} Other states such as Utah followed Colorado in granting women the right to vote and slowly but surely, gender equality in the U.S., evolved.\textsuperscript{417}

Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, the father of Reform Judaism in America, founded the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC, later the Union for Reform Judaism, URJ) in 1873. Hebrew Union College (HUC, later Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion, HUC-JIR) was founded as the Reform movement’s seminary in 1875 in Cincinnati, OH, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) was established in 1889.\textsuperscript{418} Wise supported gender equality and in 1851 his congregation in Albany, NY introduced mixed seating. This action was the beginning of “women’s emancipation” in Reform Judaism. When Wise was looking for support for the rabbinical college, he advocated for a women’s theological seminary as well.\textsuperscript{419} While a women’s seminary was never established, women did begin taking classes in the HUC in the early years of the school, though none advanced very far in her studies.\textsuperscript{420} In 1874 Wise suggested that women should be given a voice and the right to vote, making them full members of their congregations. He believed that Reform will not be complete “until women were considered

\textsuperscript{416} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{417} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{418} Karla Goldman, “Women in Reform Judaism: Between Rhetoric and Reality”, 112.
\textsuperscript{419} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{420} Ibid.
members of their congregations and allowed to serve on congregational governing boards."\(^{421}\)

However, in his lifetime, his congregation never discussed such a reform.\(^{422}\)

Through the local congregational Sisterhood branches that were founded in the 1880’s, women could take part in a broad range of social welfare work, education, childcare, and teaching at vocational schools. This work inspired women to be more active both at the local and national levels. At the local level, synagogues became dependent on the women’s work, which were responsible for attending to much of the physical, social and charitable needs of the community. Women graduates of the HUC expanded their work beyond the narrow scope of worship and offered services in whatever ways the congregations would allow them to take part.\(^{423}\)

Through their charitable, educational, and communal work, women gained recognition from their communities.\(^{424}\)

However, while women supported and strengthened the Reform movement in many ways, took part in services and other events at the synagogues, including fundraising money for their congregations, at the same time they were limited and were able to express their independence or leadership only in their local Sisterhood chapters.\(^{425}\)

It was the formal establishment of The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS), which later changed its name to Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ), the Reform women’s organization in 1913, that created a meaningful change in the Reform women’s status, and advocacy was a large part of its philosophy during those days.\(^{426}\)

Today, the organization’s mission is to “strengthen the voice of women worldwide and empower them to create caring communities, nurture congregations, cultivate personal and spiritual growth, and advocate for and promote

\(^{421}\)Ibid.
\(^{422}\)Ibid.
\(^{423}\)Ibid., 113.
\(^{424}\)Ibid., 113-114.
\(^{425}\)Paula E. Hyman, “Feminism ve Ma’amadan Shel Nashim Batnuaa Hareformit”, 510. [Hebrew]
\(^{426}\)“WRJ Through the Years, 1913-2013”, Women of Reform Judaism, N.D., https://www.wrj.org/wrj-through-years
progressive Jewish values.”[^427] The founding of NFTS encouraged the establishment of local branches throughout the U.S., encouraging women to take part in the congregational life at the local level as well as in broader ways.[^428] Sisterhood groups took upon themselves a wide range of responsibilities, sometimes responding to suggestions from the national leadership. The creation of a national Jewish women’s organization helped transform women’s political status within their congregations, and prompted the recognition of women as full members in the synagogue life. Women finally began to serve on the governing boards of their congregations, even as presidents.[^429] According to NFTS, religious equality became the synonym of the recognition of women’s political status as voting members and potential leaders within their communities.[^430]

In 1920, Martha Neumark, a student at HUC and the daughter of one of the professors there, asked to take a religious leadership part in a high holiday service as a student rabbi. While her request was denied, the faculty agreed that ordaining women was consistent with the inclusive and progressive principles of the Reform movement. At the 1922 CCAR convention, women were invited for the first time to take part in the discussion on ordaining women.[^431] While both the faculty of HUC and the CCAR supported the change, the HUC’s board of governors rejected the proposal.[^432] Women continued to pursue their studies within the Reform rabbinical institutions during the 1920’s and the 1930’s and in 1939, Helen Levinthal completed the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) curricular requirements for ordination, but eventually received a Bachelor of Hebrew letters degree instead of being ordained.[^433] Moreover, the NFTS promoted the “Sisterhood Sabbath”, services for women, by women, which was an opportunity for women’s public religious


[^429]: Ibid.

[^430]: Ibid., 116.

[^431]: Ibid., 116.

[^432]: Ibid., 117.

[^433]: Ibid.

[^434]: Ibid.
expression as they delivered sermons, led the women’s services and/or partook in guiding some of the readings.434

At the same time, the Bar Mitzvah for boys and Confirmation ceremonies for girls became popular, and the differences between the two rituals/ceremonies emphasized the inequality in Jewish worship. In 1922, Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan, the founder of the Reconstructionist Movement, performed his daughter’s Bat Mitzvah ceremony as a female equivalent to the Bar Mitzvah. Kaplan had two rabbinical ordinations and was both an Orthodox and a Conservative rabbi. Even though Kaplan grew up in a traditional but liberal household that supported women’s Jewish education, when he felt he could no longer follow traditional Halacha, he joined the Conservative movement and later established the Reconstructionist movement. Kaplan kept supporting women’s rights throughout his rabbinical career, from his first days as a young Orthodox rabbi.

While the Conservative Movement adopted Bat Mitzvah ceremonies in the 1930’s and 1940’s, the Reform Movement adopted them completely only in the 1960’s, though with changes. The Bat Mitzvah ceremony took place in the Friday evening service and the girl would read parts of the weekly Torah readings as well as giving a sermon. The Reform Bar Mitzvah ceremony took place on Saturday morning and the boy would read the traditional readings from the Bible.435 Only by the mid-1970’s would the Reform Bat Mitzvah ceremony be completely identical to the Bar Mitzvah ceremony.436 During the 1950’s and 1960’s, progress was made towards incorporating equality for women in the lay and clerical leadership. For example, Paula Akerman, the widow of the Reform rabbi of the congregation in Meridian Mississippi, was appointed by the congregation

434 Ibid.
435 Ibid., 119.
436 Ibid.
to serve as their spiritual leader from 1951-1953.\textsuperscript{437} The rhetoric of gender equality, egalitarianism and equality of opportunities also became more familiar in the general American culture and in the Reform movement.\textsuperscript{438} Women served as religious and spiritual leaders as well as lay leaders, without being ordained.\textsuperscript{439} In mid 1960’s, the then-president of the HUC, Nelson Glueck, made it clear that he would “ordain a female candidate when the opportunity arose.”\textsuperscript{440} His successor, Alfred Gottschalk, ordained Sally Preisand in 1972,\textsuperscript{441} and she was the first woman rabbi to be ordained in the Reform Movement in the U.S.\textsuperscript{442} In 1975, Barbara Ostfeld Horowitz graduated as the first seminary-trained female cantor.\textsuperscript{443}

While embracing equality for women at all levels of leadership and life became a principle of the Reform Judaism, institutional realities within the movement often failed to match the movement’s commitment to gender equality.\textsuperscript{444} Central institutions and leadership remained exclusively male. The changes around women’s roles instituted during the last quarter of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century created many tensions at both national and congregational levels. As women began to enter positions that formerly were occupied by men, they struggled to get the approval, respect and job security. Women faced hostility as the movement did little to prepare the communities for the arrivals of women rabbis and cantors.\textsuperscript{445} In 1980, women rabbis founded the Women’s Rabbinic Network (WRK) for the purpose of advocating issues faced by women and to help address the broader context of their struggles, including such issues as balancing work and life, congregational responsibilities and the roles of their husbands.\textsuperscript{446} At the same time, by the 1980’s the number of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{437} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{438} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{439} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{440} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{441} Paula E. Hyman, “Feminism ve Ma’amadan Shel Nashim Batnuaa Hareformit”, 512. [Hebrew]
\item \textsuperscript{442} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{443} Karla Goldman, “Women in Reform Judaism: Between Rhetoric and Reality”, 121.
\item \textsuperscript{444} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{445} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{446} Ibid., 123.
\end{itemize}
female rabbinical students at the HUC-JIR almost equaled the number of male students. Influenced by their emancipation and their new positions and equality, women rabbis wished to adapt and reform the Jewish liturgy. In some congregations, the Four Mothers were mentioned along with the Four Fathers. God was sometimes characterized as neither male nor female and in 1993 a more gender inclusive and sensitive liturgy was published as a supplement to *Gates of Prayer siddur*, which was originally published in 1975. The new *siddur*, *Mishkan Tefilah*, was published in 2007, reflected the changed in the language to a gender-equality language. Today, women serve in high positions in congregations, synagogues, the URJ and other Reform organizations, though their numbers are still less than men. Women continue to face issues of work and life balance and being women leaders in what used to be exclusive male environments.

**Historical Development of Women’s Leadership in the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism**

While being first ordained only thirty years after its foundation in 1963, Reform female rabbis in Israel have the same status as male rabbis. They face the same problems and challenges, which stem from the fact that the Reform rabbis are not acknowledged by the Israeli state government, nor by the Chief Rabbinate. However, they also face similar issues to those faced by their colleagues in the U.S. Being a woman rabbi is not easy, having to struggle with work-life balance, and often being treated as less authoritative. While gender equality has been supported by legislation since Israel’s establishment in 1948 it has not necessarily been translated to reality. Though there are only few positions in Israel that are exclusively reserved for men, such as the
Israel Defense Forces’ (IDF) Chief of Staff, women in the Israeli workforce have been suffering from salary inequality and are underrepresented in the different sectors and professionals. For example, while women are the majority in Israel and have been serving as Members of Knesset, Ministers and even Prime Ministers since the first elections, there are still fewer women in the Knesset.

Nevertheless, due to the young age of the Israeli society and despite its traditionalist characteristics, being a woman rabbi, according to Rabbi Dalia Marx, is not so difficult. Women rabbis working in relatively small communities and having women-labor laws that protects their rights as working mothers, can balance their private life with their work as rabbis in synagogues and congregations, perhaps more easily than they can in the U.S.\footnote{Dalia Marx, \textit{Women rabbis in Israel}, 2013, \url{http://www.academia.edu/26016982/Women_Rabbis_in_israel}, 283. [Accessed: March 23, 2017]} The informal and nonhierarchical work environment in Israel enables women rabbis to have their work done on more flexible schedules.\footnote{Ibid., 284.} The fact that the Israeli society is a bit patriarchal gives women Reform rabbis more legitimacy than male rabbis as women rabbis are perceived as less threatening, and it makes it easier for Israelis to “listen” to women rabbis rather than male rabbis, and by that, learn about the Reform movement. At the same time, some would say that less threatening also means less authoritative, thus making women rabbis work harder to be taken seriously. While not practicing clerical roles in Israel, Rabbi Joy Levitt, a Reconstructionist rabbi who has been serving as the CEO of JCC Manhattan for the last twenty years, said that being a woman rabbi in a time when not a lot of women were taking clerical roles made her work hard and lose life-work balance, in order to gain and maintain her legitimacy as a congregational rabbi.\footnote{Rabbi Joy Levitt (CEO of JCC Manhattan), conversation with students and faculty of the Hornstein Jewish Professional Leadership Program at Brandeis University, Milender Seminar, March 5, 2017.}
The first woman rabbi to practice in Israel was Rabbi Kinneret Shiryon. Rabbi Shiryon was born in the U.S., ordained at HUC-JIR/New York, and made Aliyah in 1981. Rabbi Naamah Kelman was the first women ordained at the Jerusalem campus of HUC-JIR, in 1992, some twenty years after the Rabbi Sally Priesand. Today, Rabbi Kelman serves as the dean of that same Jerusalem campus. The first Israel-born woman rabbi to be ordained in Israel is Rabbi Maya Leibowitz, who served as the chair of Maram, between 2011-2014. Today, there are about seventy-five women rabbis in Israel who serve in a variety of roles, from leading congregations to serving as educators. While women rabbis are still minority in Maram, they were the majority of graduates/ordained rabbis between 2013-2015. According to Rabbi Marx, it is easier for women rabbis in Israel to achieve leadership positions than it is for their colleagues in the U.S. In my opinion, since the IMPJ was established in a time when women got more and more legitimacy and opportunities to lead spiritually and religiously communities, and since these issues had been dealt with by their counterparts in the U.S., it makes sense that gender equality in the IMPJ was present from its establishment.

**LGBTQ Persons in the Union for Reform Judaism**

Three social movements in the American society of the 1960’s, 1970’s and 1980’s changed the way the URJ approached the issues of gay and lesbians in Jewish life: the women’s rights movement, the Civil Rights movements, and the involvement and the groundbreaking research of Dr. Evelyn Hooker regarding homosexual males. Dr. Hooker was a psychologist whose 1956 research...

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455 Ibid.
456 Ibid.
457 Ibid.
458 Ibid., 281.
460 Ibid.
study with the title “The Adjustment of Male Overt Homosexual” was revolutionary and controversial. She found that gay men were as well-adjusted as straight men, in contradiction to the earlier belief that classified homosexuality as a type of mental illness, psychopathology, and criminal offense.\textsuperscript{461}

While it was in the 1940’s that movements supporting gay and lesbian rights began to flourish, equality for gay and lesbian persons was introduced to the URJ in the early 1970’s,\textsuperscript{462} after Gay rights began to gain major grip in the general American society. Influenced by the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), a Christian church for and by gays and lesbians, Jews in Los Angeles of 1972, established the Metropolitan Community Temple (MCT, later Beth Chayim Chadashim), a Reform Temple for and by gay and lesbians.\textsuperscript{463} In 1973, the UAHC accepted Beth Chayim Chadashim as a full participating congregation in the Reform movement.\textsuperscript{464} In 1977, a Reform rabbi named Allen B. Bennett came out publically as a gay man, but even beforehand, in the 1975 UAHC biennial convention, a resolution calling for full civil rights for homosexuals in the civic arena was passed.\textsuperscript{465} By 1977 a few more gay congregations were established and became members of the UAHC.\textsuperscript{466}

More pro-homosexual voices were heard in the movement, and by the end of the 1980’s the Reform movement decided to reject Halachic claims that homosexuality is a sin.\textsuperscript{467} Moreover, the Reform Movement supported gay rights from the 1980’s, rejected gay-discrimination, and the UAHC Commission on Social Action promoted equal employment opportunities without regard to sexual orientation.\textsuperscript{468} The Reform movement and its different organizations continued their

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ib., 181.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., 182.
\item Ibid.
\item Ariel Pikar, “HaSiah Hahalahti BaYahadut Hareformit: Nisuin Homosexualim Kemikre Bohan”, 216. [Hebrew]
\item Denise L. Eger, “Embracing Lesbians and Gay Men: A Reform Jewish Innovation”, 183.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
support for equality of the rights of gays and lesbians throughout the 1990’s, and the first two decades of the 21st century. In 1992, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, the then president of the UAHC, challenged the Boy Scouts of America for its stand against homosexuality and in 1993, the Commission on Social Action participated in the Gay and Lesbian March in Washington. The UAHC created a Task Force on Lesbian and Gay Inclusion, that published in 1996 a workbook for all UAHC congregations. Since the beginning of the 1990’s, ordaining gay and lesbian rabbis and cantors by the HUC-JIR has become an official policy.

In 1996, the CCAR endorsed civil marriage for lesbians and gays. However, the question of whether to officiate a Reform same-sex wedding ceremony became a controversial subject, as two committees, the Ad Hoc Committee on Human Sexuality and the Responsa Committee of the CCAR reached two different conclusions. The Committee on Human Sexuality concluded “that kedusha (holiness) may be present in committed same-gender relationship between two Jews” and that gay and lesbian relationships could serve “as the foundation of stable Jewish families, thus adding strength to the Jewish community” and therefore, are “worthy of affirmation through appropriate Jewish ritual.” However, the Committee left the decision to individual rabbis to decide for themselves whether to officiate such a ceremony or not. At the same time the Responsa Committee concluded that a rabbi should not officiate such a ceremony. After much discussions in the following years and after the involvement of the Women’s Rabbinic Network (WRN) and a disagreement with the IMPJ, a resolution on same-sex ceremonies passed overwhelmingly in March 2000, during the CCAR conference. According to this resolution,

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469 Ibid.
470 Ibid., 182-183.
471 Ibid., 184.
472 Ibid., 185.
473 Ibid.
474 Ibid.
Reform rabbis have the option to perform same-sex ceremonies, though there were rabbis who were already officiating such ceremonies.\textsuperscript{475} Today, LGBTQ persons are integral members of the Reform movement, as members as well as lay and clergy leadership.

**LGBTQ Persons in The Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism**

According to the websites of the IMPJ and the Israel Religious Act Center (IRAC), the movement has always been committed to gender equality and civil rights for all, including heterosexual and LGBTQ persons, and rejects discrimination based on sexuality and sexual orientation.\textsuperscript{476} However, due to the delicate political situation in Israel, the original policy until 2002 was not to officiate same-sex marriages. When the CCAR approved same-sex marriages in March 2000, the IMPJ, its sister organization, was not able to do the same in Israel. During those days, the movement was negotiating with the State of Israel to acknowledge of Reform conversions and did not want to harm these efforts by voting for a controversial issue such as same-sex marriages.\textsuperscript{477} In January 2002, just four years after the Ad Hoc Committee on Human Sexuality’s report was presented, an Israeli committee of Maram examined the status of same-sex families and marriages. The committee decided that same-sex families and marriages are equal to heterosexual families and marriages and therefore are supported by the Israeli movement and can have Reform wedding ceremonies. However, since Reform wedding ceremonies are not acknowledged by the State of Israel, they must legally get married outside of Israel, in order to be acknowledged by the State.\textsuperscript{478} From my personal experience from my days at Beit Daniel, a Reform synagogue in Tel

\textsuperscript{475} Ibid., 186.
\textsuperscript{477} Denise L. Eger, “Embracing Lesbians and Gay Men: A Reform Jewish Innovation”, 187.
\textsuperscript{478} Ariel Pikar, “HaSiah Hahalhti BaYahadut Hareformit: Nisuin Homosexualim Kemikre Bohan”, 221-222. [Hebrew]
Aviv, I know that LGBTQ persons are equal members of the Israeli Reform movement, they are ordained to be rabbis and cantors as well as serving as head of communities. Moreover, a Pride month in Israel is celebrated by the different Reform communities around Israel every year in June. In this matter, the IMPJ’s attitudes reflect the attitudes of the Israeli society, as political and social processes for accepting and granting rights to the gay and lesbian community in Israel were under way since the early 1960’s, not long before the IMPJ was established. The positively evolving attitudes and acceptance of LGBTQ culture by many in the Israeli society have been implemented in the values of the IMPJ, who warmly embraced its LGBTQ members.

**Comparison**

The Union for Reform Judaism and the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism share basic values of egalitarianism and gender equality. However, while egalitarianism was always a value to follow and live upon, the URJ itself was not completely egalitarian from the beginning. And since the IMPJ was founded in times where gender equality was already an important value, the differences stem from the ages of the movements and the different historical development of these egalitarian and gender equality values.

**Similarities**

Both the Union for Reform Judaism and The Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism support and encourage gender equality and reject discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation. Both movements have women rabbis in different leadership positions, as clergy and as educators. Moreover, both movements support and welcome LGBTQ persons to be
rabbis, cantors, full members in the different communities, to officiate and/or be married in same-
sex ceremonies, and to encourage them to pursue different leadership positions.

As both movements are a part of the general American and Israeli societies, their attitudes
towards gender and LGBTQ equality are affected by the attitude of the general society to these
issues. However, while being liberal in many ways, both societies at large have strong traditional
aspects and therefore, in my eyes, the two Reform movements are ahead of their general societies
when it comes to gender and LGBTQ equality. For example, Reform rabbis in the U.S., began
officiating same-sex marriages about twenty years before it became legal at the state level and
recognized at the federal level. The same is true in Israel, as same-sex marriages take place only
in Progressive Judaism auspices. In short, both movements are affected by the mood in the general
society – the URJ was and still is affected by the general American society and the IMPJ is affected
by the Israeli society.

**Differences**

The differences between the movements and how each movement dealt with or deals with
gender equality and welcomes the LGBTQ community stems from the age of each movement and
the changes in ideology and processes within the movements.

**Women's Leadership**

While both movements value gender equality, each movement had a different process
institutionalizing gender equality. While the URJ had a long public process, which began in the
late 19th century, the IMPJ had a shorter process. For example, the HUC-JIR/Cincinnati ordained
the first women rabbi in 1972, more than 100 years after the movement was established in the U.S.
However, the HUC/Jerusalem ordained the first women rabbi in 1992, about 30 years after its establishment, and not because women were not allowed to go to rabbinical school, but because they did not want to. The attitudes regarding women’s rights and gender equality were already present in the general Israeli society and in the World Union for Reform Judaism (WURJ) when the IMPJ and its institutions were established in the 1960’s, so gender equality was obvious to the Israeli reformers, while the URJ and its institutions “lived through” these changes in the American society and had adjusted themselves to them. Another example is the development of women’s leadership. Women in the URJ gradually reached leadership positions, starting with volunteering, then becoming accepted as lay leaders, such as chair and presidents of congregations or educators, and eventually became rabbis and cantors. In Israel, you will not find this kind of process. From the beginning women were fully involved in congregational lives as full equal members, head of communities and educators, though the first female rabbi was ordained only in 1992. Finally, while in general there are more rabbis that are members of CCAR than the number of rabbis that are members of Maram, the percentage of women rabbis in Maram is 48% while the percentage of women rabbis in the CCAR is 32%. These numbers, according to Rabbi Marx, show that the IMPJ is more egalitarian than the URJ.479

LGBTQ persons

Both movements support and encourage gender-equality and LGBTQ rights. The histories of this support generally parallel the development in the movements around women’s rights. While there was a timeline, a process for the LGBTQ persons to become fully members in the URJ, there was no parallel process in the IMPJ. For example, the process in the U.S. began with gay

congregations that gradually became members of the URJ in the 1970’s and 1980’s when the movement supported civil rights and civil same-sex marriages. Then in the late 1980’s, the HUC-JIR began ordaining LGBTQ persons to be rabbis and cantors, and in 2000 the CCAR and the URJ supported officiating same-sex Reform ceremonies. However, there is no such timeline in Israel. LGBTQ persons were always welcomed in the Reform communities and could be ordained in the HUC/Jerusalem, though only in 2002 were they finally able to get married in a Reform ceremony.

In my eyes, these differences are due to the young age of the IMPJ and the fact that by the time it was established, civil rights and gay rights, much like gender equality and Feminism, were already “in the air”, even in young Israel.

**Overall Discussion and conclusions**

In this chapter, I provided and discussed the historical development of women’s leadership in the Reform movement, both in the U.S. and in Israel. I found that due to the different ages of the movements, the historical development of each value – both gender equality and LGBTQ equality, is different. While in the U.S. there was a long process for women to become lay and clerical leaders (which began in the late 19th century), there was no such process in Israel. The same is true regarding LGBTQ equality – in the U.S. there was a process that began in the late 1960’s and in Israel I could not find a process at all.

I also found that while the Israeli establishment has not been deeply supportive of the LGBTQ movement, many in the Israeli society itself have been accepting them almost from the beginning. Therefore, the IMPJ embraced the LGBTQ persons from its inception, converts their children and ordains them to be rabbis and cantors and since 2002, performs same-sex marriages. The same is true for the URJ. As with gender equality, the URJ was influenced by processes in the
American society – the Civil Rights movements, second wave-Feminism, and the gay rights movement itself. In the 1980’s the URJ opened its gates to LGBTQ persons, more or less at the same time as the American society began opening itself to LGBTQ persons and treat them as equal members of the movement.

The URJ was and still is affected by three major factors, in the decision making process: what the members of the community think; how the Orthodox and Conservative movement think; and what the non-Jewish society thinks. The URJ did not and still does not want to create a rift between the different societies and movements and therefore takes into consideration their opinions when making opinions regarding “controversial” issues, such as the equality of LGBTQ persons.\footnote{Yakir Englender, “Tefisat Haminiyut Hadad Minit Bekerev Igud Harabanim Hereformim BeArtsot Habrit Bame’a Ha’esrim ve Hashpaata al pesikato: Bikoret Kwirit”, 236-237. [Hebrew]} The same is true of the IMPJ – since same-sex marriage is a controversial issue. Back in 2000, when the CCAR and URJ were discussing the issue, the IMPJ did not want to harm their efforts to gain legal recognition for Reform conversions, and therefore had to reject the decision to perform same-sex marriages.

In conclusion, due to the “mood” of the general society, as well as the age difference between the movements, the development and acknowledgment gender equality, LGBTQ equality and women’s leadership, is different in each movement, each country. However, at the end of the day, both movements share the same values and ideology. Women fill high level positions in both movements, in big congregations, and institutions and the same is true for LGBTQ persons.
Findings and Conclusions

In this thesis, I analyzed and compared the Union for Reform Judaism and the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism. I focused on five main issues: development of the movements; ideologies; liturgy and rituals; the ‘Who is a Jew?’ question; and issues in Reform Judaism today. I conducted qualitative research, with data gathered from conversations with rabbis and rabbinical students, from reading books and articles, and from reading responsas and publications of each movement. I found that while both movements share basic values of egalitarianism, gender equality and social justice, they express and implement these values differently. I also found that there are ideologies and/or values that I expected to be actualized by both movements, but only one actualizes them, usually the URJ. Finally, I found that these differences in ideologies, how and if they are implemented, stem from one basic fact – the legitimacy each movement has in its home country. The source of the differences between the URJ and the IMPJ is the fact that the IMPJ does not have a legal and/or enough social legitimacy in Israel. Since there is no separation between religion and state in Israel, the lack of legal/social legitimacy affects the ability of the movement to support or follow certain ideologies, such as mixed-marriages or determining Jewishness based on patrilineal descent.
Findings

The Development of Each Movement

A Reform movement was introduced to the Israeli/Jewish society in Palestine twice, first by German immigrants during the 1930’s but was not able to put down roots in the Jewish society of Palestine, and then by American and European immigrants in the 1950’s. While the American Reform movement has been developing and changing since its founding at the beginning of the 19th century, the Israeli Reform movement has been successfully developing since the 1950’s, and has been promoting similar goals, such as gender and LGBTQ equality and social justice.

I found that the separation between religion and state in the U.S. is the fact that creates the basic difference between the URJ and the IMPJ, and most if not all the differences in ideologies and practice stem from this political reality. The relationship between religion and state negatively affects the ability of the Reform movement in Israel to grow. The Israelis are used to being “Orthodoxy secular”, which means that the synagogue they do not go to is the Orthodox one. Moreover, Israelis with origins from Middle Eastern and North African countries are not as aware of Reform Judaism as are the immigrants from North America and other European countries. Therefore, the Israeli Reform movement is not as big or as powerful as the American Reform movement and the possibilities for its development and its ability to impact are limited.

The development of the Israeli movement has been happening while struggling and conflicting with the Israeli establishment and the Chief Rabbinate, which is recognized by law as the supreme rabbinic and spiritual authority for Judaism in Israel. Since the Chief Rabbinate has the monopoly on weddings, burials, kashrut and other Jewish aspects of life, there is not much room left for Progressive Jewish movements, such as the IMPJ, to grow and develop. Nevertheless,
the IMPJ is still deliberating with the Israeli establishment and today Reform conversions are acknowledged by the State of Israel (though not by the Rabbinate).

I also found that gender and LGBTQ equality were values that were pursued and implemented from the IMPJ’s inception, as opposed to the 100-year long process women and LGBTQ persons had to struggle with in the U.S. Finally, while the URJ’s development in the U.S. has been generally easier, and the IMPJ’s development in Israel is generally more challenging, both movements have been sharing and implementing almost all values and ideologies, as sister-organizations under the umbrella organization of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ). Gender and LGBTQ equality, as well as social justice, are just a few examples of shared values and ideologies, while the IMPJ is not sharing just yet the URJ’s practices of performing intermarriage ceremonies and determining Judaism according to patrilineal descent.

**Ideologies**

The Union for Reform Judaism and the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism share similar ideologies and values. However, some of these values and ideologies are shared and/or supported for different reasons. Also, due to the status of the IMPJ in Israel, it pursues a few issues which the URJ, while supporting them, does not have to deal or actively pursue. Generally, I found, that both movements share the pursuit of Tikkun Olam, Zionism and the love of the State of Israel and its citizens, as well as their wish to engage with unaffiliated Jews.

I also found that both movements have religious actions centers (RACS) and congregational programs that train congregations to social activism. At the same time, I found that in each movement these bodies are filling different roles, as for example, the URJ’s RAC is the lobbying arm and the IMPJ’s IRAC is mostly the legal arm and each RAC is promoting different
issues: the RAC lobbies for Jewish causes in Washington D.C. and the IRAC provides legal support for Olim and new converts.

In addition, I found that while both movements consider themselves Zionist, and that the IMPJ was founded by Zionist Reform Jews who made Aliyah from Europe and the U.S., the URJ was not Zionist from its establishment. It was only in the late 1930’s that it changed its views regarding Zionism and a Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael (Palestine). Furthermore, I found that both movements have created programs to engage with unaffiliated Jews, though their reasons to do so are different. For example, the URJ is engaging unaffiliated Jews in order to prevent them from turning their backs on Judaism and affiliating with other religions, while the IMPJ is engaging with unaffiliated Jews in order to gain legitimacy and support from the bottom up, and using their support in the efforts of becoming a formally recognized Jewish movement in Israel.

Finally, I found that the relationship between religion and state has a large impact on the abilities of each movement to pursue its mission and follow its ideals. In the U.S., there is a strong separation between religion and state, and religion is voluntary. In Israel, this lack of religion/state separation prevents the IMPJ from publicly supporting values such as intermarriage or patrilineal descent-- which are legitimate in the eyes of the URJ. As a rule, the relationship between religion and state is the core of every difference between the Israeli and American Reform movements.

**Liturgy and Rituals**

The Union for Reform Judaism and the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism share basic values of modernity, egalitarianism, and liberalism. One of their ways of expressing these values was to adjust Judaism and Jewish practices to modern times by writing, adding, cutting out, cutting short, and changing liturgies and rituals.
I found that the markers of Reform Judaism in both movements include the modernization of traditional practices; the architecture and design of spaces of religious worship; the seating patterns in those spaces; how practices do (or do not) resemble Orthodox Judaism or Protestantism; how traditional religious dress is adopted (including prayer shawls and head coverings), as well as the observance of kashrut, Shabbat, and other Jewish festivals and holy days. American Reform rituals themselves evolved. In the 19th century, perhaps mimicking Protestant practice, American Reform worship included choirs and organs, banned prayer shawls or head coverings, and encouraged mixed seating. During the 20th century many religious practices reconnected with traditional Jewish rituals and customs, such as the wearing prayer shawls. The changes in the rituals reflected the changes in the movement’s platforms. In my eyes, it was the horrors of the Holocaust and the near complete destruction of European and North African Jews, that affected American Reform Jews and encouraged them to re-embrace their Jewish traditions. But at the same time, they were also affected by African-Americans, who proudly fought for their rights as equal American citizens, that aroused American Reform Jews to be as equally proud of their Jewishness.

I also found that in Israeli Reform rituals include wearing head covering and prayer shawls by men and women, and the family sitting together. The Israeli siddur, while egalitarian, has a hint of traditionalism, in order not to antagonize the Israeli society, and while an Orthodox Jew would sense the changes, he or she could still feel somewhat comfortable using it. For example, the siddur includes prayers in Aramaic and is not completely all inclusive.

Finally, I found that there many differences between the siddurim of each movement. These differences include the number and form of traditional prayers; language and the amount or lack of Hebrew; the rejection or inclusion of a prayer for Zion and the State of Israel; the pagination (the side from which the siddur is read, i.e., right-to-left or left-to-right); and other key values. For
example, while the IMPJ published only one *siddur*, *HaAvoda SheBalev* (1982), the URJ has published five *siddurim* over the past 160 years. The number of *siddurim* reflect the changes in the views and ideologies of the URJ. Another example is the size of each *siddur*. The URJ’s *Mishkan Tefilah* (2007) has about 700 pages, while the IMPJ’s *HaAvoda SheBalev* has about 300 pages. One final example: while the IMPJ has only one *siddur*, which is used by all the Reform congregations in Israel, there are Reform congregations in America that do not use the URJ’s *Mishkan Tefilah*, but publish their own personal *siddurim*.

**Who is a Jew? – Personal status in Reform Judaism**

The Union for Reform Judaism and the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism share basic values of egalitarianism. This egalitarianism is reflected as both structural equality where both women and LGBTQ persons are equal members who have the same rights, and as social equality, as both women and LGBTQ persons are considered equal by God. However, due to the political situation in Israel, the IMPJ has to deal with the questions of “Who is a Jew?” differently than the URJ. All personal status matters are affected by the answer to this question, such as patrilineal or matrilineal descents, marriages and conversions.

I found that while the IMPJ, due to internal Israeli-political matters, acknowledges matrilineal descent alone and rejects patrilineal descent, the URJ’s does acknowledge patrilineal descent under certain circumstances. In my eyes and my experience from working in a Reform Synagogue in Israel, the IMPJ supports patrilineal descent, but avoids verbally expressing the support since it is still trying to get the legal and formal recognition from the State, and supporting such a controversial matter would hurt its efforts to gain this recognition. In addition, I found that the conversion process is different. For example, while both movements have basic conversion
processes and guidelines, American Reform rabbis have more autonomy regarding the conversion process, while the Israeli Reform rabbis are bound to the guidelines of *Maram*. Another example is that the IMPJ can converts Israeli residents with a specific visa/residency status, while the URJ can convert even non-American residents or citizens.

Finally, I found that both movements will officiate for any Jewish couple, same-sex or heterosexual, but also that while in the U.S. same-sex marriages (either religious or civil) are legally binding in many states, due to the somewhat recent rule of the Supreme Court, in Israel Reform such weddings are not legally binding. In Israel, due to the connection between religion and state, and the monopoly of the Chief Rabbinate over all personal status matters, only Orthodox wedding ceremonies are legally binding and Reform weddings have only spiritual status. At the same time, while Israeli Reform rabbis who are members of *Maram* would not officiate intermarriage ceremony between a Jewish and a non-Jewish partner, many American Reform rabbis would officiate at an intermarriage ceremony as a way of trying to keep the couple as members of the Reform community, instead of non-Jewish communities.

**Issues in Reform Judaism today**

The Union for Reform Judaism and The Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism share the values of egalitarianism and gender and LGBTQ equality. However, I found that the age of the movement affected the development and the process of implementing these values, as they were not completely implemented when the movements were founded. I also found that today both movements encourage women to be rabbis and to assume other leadership positions. Both movements also support and welcome LGBTQ persons to be rabbis and cantors,
fully members in the different communities, have their same-sex marriage ceremonies recognized by the movement, and encourage them to pursue different leadership positions.

Finally, I found that the current status in the URJ of both women and LGBTQ persons evolved over a long time. For women, it took about 100 years to have gender equality and even today it is not 100%; for LGBTQ persons, it took about 30 years from the first time they began to pursue this path. In the IMPJ however, women and LGBTQ persons were equal members from the inception of the movement. The only obstacle was that rabbis began to officiate same-sex Reform marriage ceremonies only in 2002, about forty years after the IMPJ’s inception, due to internal political matters within the Israeli society and politics.

Of course, none of the movements live in a bubble and are parts of the greater American and Israeli societies. Therefore, their relationship with egalitarianism, gender and LGBTQ equality have been affected by the discourse in the general society since mid to late 19th century in the U.S. and the 1960’s in Israel. In the U.S., gender equality was first introduced in 1848, when the first women’s rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, NY. A set of twelve resolutions, which called for equal treatment of women and men under the laws well as voting rights for women, was adopted.481 However, it was Colorado in 1893 that first adopted an amendment granting women the right to vote.482 In 1924, the first attempt at organizing for political rights for gays took place, when Henry Gerber founded in Chicago a Society for Human Rights (SHR).483 But only in the 1940’s, that actions for gay rights became fertile.484

482 Ibid
484 Ibid.
In Israel, Israeli legislation has been supporting gender equality since its establishment in 1948, though the laws have not been necessarily translated to reality. For example, women’s representation in teaching positions in academic institutions is not proportional to their percentage in the Israeli society. While women are the majority in Israel and have been serving as Members of Knesset, Ministers and even Prime Ministers since the first elections, their numbers still do not represent their numbers in the society. At the same time, women have been serving in the *Israel Defense Forces* since its establishment in 1948 and even before then, as members of the underground organizations (*Hagana, Lechi and Etzel*), some as fighters and combatants, such as Hannah Szenesh, the Jewish paratrooper who volunteered to the Jewish Brigade of the British Army during WWII to assist the escape of Hungarian Jews, and eventually was captured, tortured and murdered by the Nazis.

Political and social processes for accepting and granting rights to the gay and lesbian community in Israel have been under way since the early 1960’s, a little more than a decade after the establishment of the State in 1948. For example, in 1953 the then Attorney General Mr. Haim Cohen gave an order to the police to avoid arresting and prosecuting gay men for having sex with other men, even though the law\(^{485}\) prohibited such acts until it was changed in 1988.\(^{486}\) Socially and culturally, it was in 1960 when the first Hebrew book about gay and lesbians was published.

**Conclusions**

In this paper, I wished to explore and learn more about the Union for Reform Judaism and the Israel Movement for Reform Judaism. My research question was “*To what extent are the...*”

\(^{485}\) Which was adopted from the British law of the Mandate.
American Reform movement and the Israeli Reform movement similar to each other, and how do the differences and similarities affect or affected by the relationship between the two movements and their status in their home-country?”

I found that there are basic differences between the movements that are reflected in the different principles and goals pursued. The fact that in Israel there is no separation between religion and state, and that the Chief Rabbinate has the monopoly over all matters of Jewish personal status, affects the ability of the IMPJ to grow, support and share the same values and practices as the URJ, such as intermarriage and patrilineal descent. In fact, the lack of separation between religion and state affects the possible answers to the question of “Who is a Jew?” which I feel is the umbrella question and issue, from which all issues derive. If the answer to the question is that offspring of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers are Jews, a marriage between a child of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother with a Halachic Jew would not be considered as intermarriage, but as a regular Reform ceremony.

In my eyes, the answer to the question is that the URJ and the IMPJ are more different than similar, and that while the similarities can be found in the shared values, the differences can be found in the small details, the reality, the implementation, and practice, and expression of social and religious values and goals. Despite that, I think that the relationship between the two movements is not as affected by these differences as one might expect, due to the fact that the differences exist in the context of the movements’ different political realities and contexts, and do not represent differences in core values.

I think that the characteristics, values and ideologies of the URJ are affected by its status in the U.S., but the characteristics, values and ideologies of the IMPJ, while affected by the lack of legal status in Israel, also affect the State of Israel in return. You can already see some changes
within Israeli society and the political establishment which were influenced by the IMPJ. For example, the Reform conversions are now acknowledged by the state. The Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism affects Israeli society and is not just affected by it – the changes occur from the bottom up as well as the top down. Another example is that Reform conversions are funded by the State, which is a result of the latter’s recognition of these conversions. One final example, although being changed all the time, is the fact that Israeli government passed a bill at the beginning of 2016 that formalized the existence of an egalitarian space of worship in the Western Wall. This matter is still being discussed and remains a conflict between the Progressive Israeli movements and the State of Israel, as the government still hasn’t implemented this legislation. One final example is the fact that the Ministry of Education supports and funds Reform educational programs, which promote and nourish Jewish pluralism and pluralistic Israeli-Jewish identities. However, the current government and Knesset, which are much more right-wing, conservative and traditional in their religious views, push back and prevent these pluralistic precedents from taking place, believing there is only one way to be Jewish in the State of Israel – the Orthodox way.

Nevertheless, the IMPJ fights back in every legal way and with the growing support and need for equal Jewish practices in the public sphere, but also in personal status issues, the fight for recognition is far from being over. The secular Israeli society, tired of having Orthodox Judaism being forced upon, fights back and strongly and publicly supports egalitarian Jewish practices, whether Reform, Conservative or secular. The key goals and issues that the IMPJ pressures to gain, in cooperation with the Israeli left-wing party Meretz and others are: first, legal recognition and financial support by the State of Israel; second, control on personal status matters, such as burials,

487 The holiest Jewish site.
divorces and weddings, but also formalizing the option for civil weddings in Israel; third, public transportation and the opening of places of business on Shabbat and holidays; fourth, a space for egalitarian worship in the Western Wall and finally, legalizing and formalizing same-sex marriages and LGBTQ equality.

While the relationship between the two movements is close and at the leadership level the relationship is strong, the American Reform movement is distancing itself from the State of Israel, due to political reasons, i.e., Israel is not liberal enough. Moreover, the URJ does not financially support the IMPJ, as opposed to what one should expect from a sister-organization, that is truly and genuinely concerned with its sister-organization status. Since the American Jewish community in general and the American Reform community specifically are concerned with issues of pluralism and democracy within the Israeli society and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I would expect it to provide more than just morale support, but also financial support, to the Israeli movement that is trying to achieve these issues it supports so much. While I am not so sure that the financial support would cause the State of Israel to change its course, I do think it would promote the IMPJ and enable it to outreach to more Israelis.

I believe that once the political and legal status of the IMPJ would change, i.e., the IMPJ would be acknowledged by the State of Israel as a legitimate Jewish denomination, the IMPJ would align with the URJ on all the issues it is not able to currently publically support, such as patrilineal descent and intermarriage. Therefore, under the present situation, when the two movements are sort of forced to have these ideological differences, in the future, when hopefully things would change in Israel, the Reform movements both in the U.S. and Israel would be able to prioritize the same issues, as should two sister-organization who share the same egalitarian and social justice values, should. At the same time, I think that due to the characteristics of each society (American
Jewish vs. Israeli Jewish) and the fact that the U.S. and Israel also differ, some differences between the movements would stay. For example, I think that it is important to the IMPJ that everyone would feel welcomed and comfortable, so if families or couples are asking for some aspects of the ceremonies would seem more traditional, such as a man rabbi with a beard, instead of a woman rabbi, the IMPJ should be able to meet these requests and embrace another family, rather than object and lose these families to the Orthodox establishment.

Finally, while I do think that shared values are a good basis to cooperation and understanding, I currently find it hard to believe that this strong relationship between the movements could be a vehicle for a closer relationship between the American and the Israeli Jewish communities. As the Israeli society is so complicated and the Jewish one even more so, I think that while the liberal part of the society would be more liberal, the Orthodox one would only become more extreme. At the same time, I think that the American Jewish community would become even more liberal as a result of the Trump administration. In my point of view, these events would affect the relationship between the two Jewish communities.
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