

91 Clarewill Avenue  
Upper Montclair, N.J.

September 3, 1974

The Ritual Committee  
Temple Shomrei Emunah  
67 Park Street  
Montclair, N.J. 07042

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen of the Ritual Committee:

In June 1975 my daughter Sally will celebrate her thirteenth birthday and expects that she will be a Bat Mitzvah. She would like to have her service on Saturday morning, rather than on Friday night and I believe it only proper that she be permitted to do so.

The religious education which girls receive today is equal to that of the boys. Girls and women are leaders of your organizations, religious schools, countries and everything else that vitally affects our lives and the very existence of Judaism.

Although I recognize the irrational, emotional bases to religious practices, I believe that we as Conservative Jews must change those traditions which are odious to large segments of our people and which have no rational, moral justification for their continuation.

It is a fact of life that women are moving into areas from which they have been traditionally excluded - one of which is the Bimah of a Conservative synagogue. A second is to the Torah from which she derives the same law and inspiration as a man. The very fact that there is a variety of opinion among Conservative Jews as to whether or not women should be called to the Torah should make it incumbent upon the Ritual Committee at Temple Shomrei Emunah to follow a course of fairness and equality for all members.

The girls in Montclair are keenly aware of the options allowed the decision makers at their synagogue. They are critically watching to see if the religious rituals at their synagogue are ruled by those who will not relate either to the times or to them or by those who are willing to perhaps suffer some temporary strangeness during a service in order to promote a greater good.

To be sure, Sally will celebrate her Bat Mitzvah - be it on Friday or Saturday. However, this dispute will doubtless con-

Continue until the women have prevailed. Meanwhile, the traditionalists will constantly be on the defensive and the women and girls will continue to be antagonized and alienated. This issue will not fade away regardless of how much we may wish it to do so. (I have three younger daughters and if this is not resolved now, I am fairly certain that I will be compelled by conscience as well as by them to continue this battle.)

I respectfully request that the members of the Ritual Committee openly look at all aspects of this question - not merely at their reaction based on years of tradition. Above all, ask what effect this is having upon our young girls, who so often hear the comment "Judaism is outdated and has no meaning for my life today". Admittedly, calling girls to the Torah will not change everything, but it will certainly help to show that our religion is living, adaptable and subject to modification where the basic moral laws are not jeopardized.

Yours truly,

*Paula Gottesman*

Mrs. Jerome W. Gottesman