

October 24, 1983

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In March, 1972 Ezrat Nashim, the first Jewish feminist organization, publicly called upon the Conservative movement to ordain women as rabbis. Today we salute the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary for voting to accept women as candidates for ordination in the Rabbinical School. This act recognizes the compelling moral claim of women's equality as well as the changed status of women in the modern world. It is consonant with Conservative interpretation of the development of halakha (Jewish law). It also follows logically from earlier decisions of the Conservative movement to reject the sexual segregation characteristic of the Jewish past by providing equal education for Jewish daughters, introducing mixed seating in the synagogue, counting women in the minyan (prayer quorum), and calling them to the Torah.

This important step forward enables the Conservative movement, the largest denomination within American Jewry, to draw upon the talents of all Jews for religious leadership and prepares the way for including women, and women's sensibilities, in the ongoing interpretation of Torah which has ensured the survival of Judaism.

Ezrat Nashim was established in 1971 as a study group and lobby to attain equality for women in the Jewish community. Its members occupy leadership positions in religious, educational, and communal organizations.

Members have included

Martha Ackelsberg
Arlene Agus
Toby Brandriss
Edith Cohen
Elaine Shizgal Cohen
Flora Davidson

Leora Fishman
Gilda Flashman
Judith Hauptman
Paula Hyman
Elizabeth Koltun
Maureen McLeod

Judith Plaskow
Toby Reifman
Dina Rosenfeld
Judith Samuels
Leslie Shanken
Susan Shevitz
Phyllis Sperling