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SEARCHING FOR THE FICTIONAL WOMAN RABBI ON THE SMALL AND LARGE SCREEN

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The lack of examples of women as rabbis in TV shows and in the cinema was recently lamented by Rabbi Jordie Gerson in a blog posting titled "Letter to Hollywood—I Don't Have a Beard or Side Curls and I Look Just Like You: American Judaism's Image Problem (see page 741)." She concludes with these words: "The problem is this: These images make our jobs harder. Especially for female rabbis.... The Jews we serve don't recognize us. I don't either. It's time for that to change."[1] Stated simply, compared to the relative ease with which it is possible to find women rabbis in fiction, it is nearly impossible to find women rabbis as characters in fictional television programs or in films produced in North America.

Rabbis have long appeared as fictional characters in novels and short stories, reaching a heyday in the three or four decades at the end of the twentieth century. This is the period that includes the groundbreaking rabbi as central character in such books as Harry Kemelman's "Weekday Rabbi" series, *Friday the Rabbi Slept Late* (1964), *Saturday the Rabbi Went Hungry* (1966), and on for a total of twelve novels up through *That Day the Rabbi Left Town* (1996). It is the time of Herbert Tarr's

The Conversion of Chaplain Cohen (1963) and *Heaven Help Us!* (1968); it includes Noah Gordon's novel *The Rabbi* (1965), Chaim Potok's *The Chosen* (1967), Jerome Weidman's *The Temple* (1975), Howard Fast's *The Outsider* (1984), and Morton Levine and Hal Kantor's *The Congregation* (1985). Rabbis were also featured in print as important, although not central characters in short stories by Philip Roth, "The Conversion of the Jews" (1959), and Bernard Malamud, "The Silver Crown" (1973), as well as in Sylvia Tennenbaum's novel *Rachel, the Rabbi's Wife* (1978).

When rabbis were just briefly presented in fiction, most often they were teaching classes, conducting services, or officiating at life-cycle events such as *b'nei mitzvah*, weddings, and funerals. These examples include Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant* (1957), Saul Bellow's *Herzog* (1964), Herb Gold's *Fathers* (1966), Mordecai Richler's *St. Urbain's Horseman* (1971), Alice Kahn's *Fun with Dirk and Bree* (1991), Philip Roth's *Sabbath's Theater* (1995), and Allegra Goodman's *Paradise Park* (2001).The rabbis in Pulitzer Prize–winning Michael Chabon's noir novel set in Alaska, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* (2007), stand out, with their gangland ties.

As I explain in my book *American Rabbis: Facts and Fiction*, a reader needs to explore a variety of stories to get a feel for rabbinic life in North America.[2] It is not possible to read only a novel or two to obtain a realistic view of the American rabbinate. When, however, such works are read more widely, there does emerge a broad and accurate view of rabbinical life in our contemporary world.

Characters depicting male rabbis appear in various TV shows and numerous films, but it is rare that they have major roles. Often these rabbis are bearded and Orthodox, although exceptions exist. An example is Kemelman's Conservative rabbi David Small, who appears in a made-for-TV adaption in 1975, *Friday the Rabbi Slept Late* (with Art Carney as Chief Lanigan and Stuart Margolin as Rabbi Small). Later there is the film *Keeping the Faith* (2000) with Ben Stiller.

Like the ordination of women, the introduction of women rabbis as fictional characters in print is also more recent.[3] In nearly all cases,

these women are less than central characters. Still, women rabbis do occasionally have a significant role in some novels and short stories,[4] in some cases even a lead character.[5]

Nonetheless, even though women now have a forty-year history in the rabbinate,[6] as fictional characters—with the rarest of exceptions—they do not appear in films or TV shows. To date, there are no examples of a fictional woman rabbi as the lead character in a film or TV production.[7] Indeed, having scoured the Internet sources and polled rabbinic listservs for ideas, the clear answer is that as noted at the beginning of this chapter, a woman rabbi portrayed in a fictional TV or film story in North America is nearly impossible to find.

In several cases, where a woman rabbi does appear, she makes only a cameo appearance. The earliest example of a woman rabbi character on TV is on the "soap" *One Life to Live* (1995). Actress Camryn Manheim is featured in three episodes as Rabbi Heller; in two episodes she has a speaking role when she co-officiates with a Christian minister at an interfaith wedding. The next year (1996), on the well-received comedy series *The Larry Sanders Show* (starring Garry Shandling), actress Amy Aquino has limited, but more substantial appearances as Rabbi Susan Klein in the episode "My Name Is Asher Kingsley." A few years would go by until the successful series *The Nanny*, starring Fran Drescher, would feature a woman rabbi. In the episode "Maggie's Wedding" (1999), Sue Goodman as an unnamed rabbi conducts an interfaith wedding with a Christian cleric, who co-officiates next to her.

The opening decade of the twenty-first century sees an increasing number of examples featuring women rabbis in the fictional media. The TV drama series *Six Feet Under* (2001–2005) is about the family dynamics of the Fisher family and the business of owning and running a mortuary. Created and produced by Alan Ball, it won numerous media-related awards (Emmy, Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild, Peabody). Rabbi Ari Hoffman (played by Molly Parker) appears in the second season (2002) in two nonconsecutive episodes. As shall be discussed below, the figure of Rabbi Ari Hoffman was developed after one of the writers for the series, Jill Soloway,

met with real-life rabbi Michelle Missaghieh, the associate rabbi at Temple Israel of Hollywood.

Rabbi Missaghieh herself agreed to appear in an episode of a different series, *Grey's Anatomy*, which aired in mid-2005. There, a real-life rabbi portrays an unnamed fictional rabbi brought in to offer support for a young, newly Orthodox woman who is about to undergo emergency heart surgery. Fully garbed in a medical gown, the rabbi chants the *Mi Shebeirach*, the prayer for healing, in the operating room.

A woman rabbi is featured in a few scenes in the Hallmark Channel's made-for-TV movie *Loving Leah*, which first ran in 2007. There Rabbi Gerry Schwartz (played by Rikki Lake) serves Temple Judah Reform Congregation in Georgetown/Washington, D.C.

On the TV series *Eli Stone* (2008–2009), which centers on a law practice, Rabbi Rebecca Green (Jayne Brook) is featured prominently in one episode (2008). Her businessman husband has cancer. He feels God has spoken to him and given him permission to stop treatment. Although Rabbi Green appears to have an ongoing loving relationship with her husband, she nonetheless petitions the secular courts to override his decision. She claims that this is a manifestation of his depression and that he should fight for his life, for his family's sake, for her sake, and for his own sake.

Finally, Rabbi Renannah Zimmerman (Maggie Siff) appears in the 2009 movie *Leaves of Grass*. Again, the woman as rabbi is a minor figure. In her limited appearances, Rabbi Zimmerman is depicted as serving a Conservative synagogue in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She is featured conducting Shabbat services, on another occasion briefly interviewed by a TV news team, and finally meeting in her office with the lead character.

While these women rabbis may be only guest characters in these shows, they play important roles when they appear. For example, the episode of *Eli Stone* featuring Rabbi Rebecca Green was significant in that it depicted a religious practitioner going to the secular courts to seek a decision concerning her husband's body. It was also significant

in showing a woman making a decision about a man's (her husband's) body.

The character of Rabbi Ari Hoffman (Molly Parker, *Six Feet Under*) is substantial. She interacts with lead characters in several episodes, providing an ongoing thread related to the pastoral and ritual work of a rabbi. She first appears at a congregant's funeral and at the cemetery. Later she offers premarital counseling to two of the lead characters.

Sometimes the woman rabbi is a catalyst for important conversations. Rabbi Susan Klein (Amy Aquino, *The Larry Sanders Show*) initially is invited to visit the TV set backstage prior to a taping of the Larry Sanders Talk Show. She has a spirited conversation with the Jewish character, Hank Kingsley, who is working through what it means for him to be a *baal t'shuvah*. On a subsequent night she is featured again backstage. Rabbi Gerry Schwartz (Rikki Lake, *Loving Leah*) meets the lead male character presumably following a Shabbat service. The lead female character meets Rabbi Schwartz earlier on a weekday at the synagogue. Although this is not an extensive role for the rabbi, she does have meaningful conversations on both of these occasions, which help provide depth and background for the more major characters.

When considering the more prominent portrayals of women rabbis, to what extent are they realistic, and how positive are these presentations? What do they tell us?

Sometimes the rabbi is presented as an authority figure, who explains rules and customs. Rabbi Gerry Schwartz (*Loving Leah*), probably in her later thirties, chats with the lead character, Leah Lever, in the sanctuary of Schwartz's suburban synagogue. Leah is the young widow of a Chasidic rabbi in Brooklyn. She recently married his brother, Dr. Jake Lever, a thirty-year-old cardiologist living in Washington, D.C. Her new husband comes from a Reform background, but he appears to be non-practicing. Leah, who has never been in a Reform synagogue, has come into the building to see what one looks like. A sign in front of the synagogue says that the rabbi is Gerry Schwartz, but this could be a man or a woman. Leah is amazed to find out the rabbi is a *woman*. Given Leah's Chasidic background, this creates conflict in

two ways: her experience dictates that women are not rabbis, but it is likely easier for Leah to speak to another woman. In that conversation, Rabbi Schwartz learns that Leah and Dr. Lever decided to wed as an alternative to his being required to "renounce" Leah at a Chasidic-organized *chalitzah* ceremony. Rabbi Schwartz says to Leah that she did not believe that the *chalitzah* ritual was still being practiced.

Later in the film, Dr. Lever briefly chats with Rabbi Schwartz following a synagogue service. By this point, he has fallen in love with Leah. He wants to "explain" this to his deceased brother. Rabbi Schwartz says that often the souls of the deceased are in a kind of holding pattern for a time after death. On one hand, while not commonly taught as Reform theology, this view is consonant with elements of Jewish tradition (cf. Babylonian Talmud, *Bava M'tzia* 85b; *Bava Batra* 58a). In this example, Rabbi Schwartz is depicted as warm, caring, and sympathetic in her pastoral encounters, as well as educated in Jewish tradition.

The depiction of the woman rabbi as religious authority figure is often intertwined with the idea of woman rabbi as a sexual figure in these screen depictions. Dressed in a red pantsuit with matching shoes, Rabbi Susan Klein initially appears backstage speaking with one of the lead characters, Hank Kingsley (Jeffrey Tambor), an indifferent, unaffiliated secular Jew (*The Larry Sanders Show*). Apparently, the two met at the previous week's Shabbat services at her synagogue. He invited her to come backstage for a tour prior to a taping of the TV show where he appears. Hank tells Rabbi Klein that he wants to join her synagogue, but she discourages him from doing so. She observes that such a decision "requires a deep, deep commitment." She questions if he possesses the necessary purity of intent to join the synagogue. He insists his intent is pure.

This kind of conversation is unrealistic; Jews join synagogues for a variety of reasons, and rabbis do not speak of a membership prerequisite concerning one's purity of intent. Also unrealistically, she is depicted as sending a mixed message. For some reason, she brings him a present of a white *kippah* and then actually places it on his head.

There is a strange sense that she is portrayed as acting in a priest-like manner, both blessing him and offering him atonement.

In her other appearance in the same episode, Rabbi Klein wears a dark suit with a white blouse. Some time has passed since she gave Hank the *kippah*. Hank has insisted on wearing it on air, causing discomfort to the show's staff and sponsors. Apparently Hank has been in touch with Klein and has asked her to come to offer pastoral support. In their private conversation backstage, Rabbi Klein offers wise counsel to Hank. She suggests that wearing a *kippah* is important, but it is only a symbolic gesture. What is essential is one's spirituality, which "comes from within." She concludes with a positive affirmation, noting that she looks forward to his future involvement at the temple. He then changes the subject and professes his attraction to her as a woman, not as a rabbi. Taking his cue, Rabbi Klein proposes that his newfound spiritual awakening is actually a manifestation of his sense of attraction for her. He persists that he wants to further this relationship, but she states unequivocally that while she is flattered, she is not interested in him. This awkward moment is handled both professionally and courteously on her part.

Women rabbis are also depicted as leaders of life-cycle rituals and involved in pastoral counseling. In those roles too, the woman rabbi's sexuality often plays a part in how other (particularly male) characters interact with her. Rabbi Ari Hoffman (*Six Feet Under*) appears in the show's second season, in the episodes "Back to the Garden" and "The Liar and the Whore." She is a young rabbi, unmarried, in her thirties. She is portrayed authentically and positively. At the funeral in the mortuary's chapel, she wears a dark suit with a *kippah* and tallit. Just prior to her beginning the eulogy for the deceased man, a woman cantor, also wearing a tallit, chants part of *El Malei Rachamim*. Rabbi Hoffman begins her remarks with a statement from the Talmud. She then says, "Better is one day in this life than all eternity in the world-to-come," a paraphrase of *Pirkei Avot* 4:17, "[Rabbi Yaakov] used to say, Better is one hour of repentance and good deeds [*maasim tovim*] in this world than the whole life of the world-to-come [*olam haba*]."

Following the funeral service itself, the lead male character, Nate Fisher (Peter Krause), approaches Rabbi Hoffman and explains that as a funeral director he has questions about the Jewish views of death. She offers him her card, but he presses that he would like to discuss this immediately. She explains that she needs to go to the cemetery and invites him to accompany her. At a later point she speaks about the mitzvah of accompanying the dead as a great kindness, as a godly act, because the dead cannot repay the gift (reflecting the teachings in Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 14a; *B'reishit Rabbah* 96:5; Rashi's comment on Gen. 47:29).

At the scene at the cemetery awaiting the hearse, Rabbi Hoffman stresses the virtue of living a meaningful life day-by-day. One should be moral and consonant with what God wants of us. She says that she is not speaking for all of Judaism but for herself, what she does as a moral person. During this conversation, Rabbi Hoffman refers to God as "him" and Nate comes back with "or her." Rabbi Hoffman replies simply, "Here he comes," referring, it turns out, to the body in the hearse.

Later at the shivah house, Nate overtly flirts with Rabbi Hoffman, even though he has already explained that he is engaged. He asks her if she would go out on a date. She hesitates but then flatly declines, citing the fact that he is not Jewish. He pushes her on this, but she stands her ground.

In the second episode featuring Rabbi Hoffman ("The Liar and the Whore"), she is in her office offering premarital counseling to Nate and his fiancée, Brenda Chenowith. Here the emphasis is on her counseling skills and ability to communicate. She tells them that this will be a six-session course. It is not stated but can be inferred that she will conduct an interfaith marriage, because while Brenda is Jewish, Nate is not. Brenda challenges Rabbi Hoffman, "Have you ever been married?" She replies that she has not but that she has successfully counseled many couples in her congregation. The counseling techniques used by Rabbi Hoffman are sound and appropriate. She stresses the importance of mutual honesty and models the importance of being sympathetic to the other person. Brenda and Nate accept her advice.

There is a further scene that is perhaps less credible. On a subsequent night, Rabbi Hoffman shows up at the funeral home dressed in slacks and a sweater. Her stated reason for being present is that she has the name of someone who wants to make funeral arrangements long before the actual need arises. She quickly admits that this was only an excuse to come over. She asks Nate for a drink, and he hands her a beer. She acknowledges that she has a messiah complex: she tries to save men. It is unclear whether by this she means people or just men, but it is probably the former. During this visit, she comments that Nate is not honest with women. He replies that he is honest with her. She then uses this as an opportunity to once again underscore that she would never date him because he is not Jewish. He appears to accept this. With his no longer seeing her as a possible sexual conquest, they conclude that he can be honest with her.

These Rabbi Ari Hoffman episodes portray a rabbi acting professionally, personally, compassionately, and with *seichel* (common sense). The scenes are authentic and believable, and the rabbi alludes to standard Jewish traditions and principles. Notably, in a series that prominently explores a gay character's relationships, these rabbi-centered episodes present a conservative view of hetero-normative relationships.

Rabbi Hoffman initially flirts with Nate Fisher, but then she makes it abundantly clear that she would never date him because he is not Jewish. She gently rebuffs his advances, just as Rabbi Klein (*The Larry Sanders Show*) rebuffs Hank Kingsley. In each of these cases there is a sense that in addition to her basic sexual appeal, the male character is also is attracted to a perceived "otherworldliness/mystique/exotic/godliness" of the woman rabbi. To successfully seduce not only a woman, but a woman rabbi, would be a "double victory."

With limited examples of rabbinic conversations on the screen (unlike the extended examples one finds in print fiction, especially with Kemelman's Rabbi Small series, Howard Fast's *The Outsider*, or Noah Gordon's *The Rabbi*),[8] it is difficult to generalize as to the authenticity of how women rabbis are presented. That caveat offered, where women rabbis do have more than cameo roles, generally they are presented in

a reasonable and realistic, though sexualized, fashion. They are dressed professionally for the occasions where they appear. Rabbi Susan Klein, in the episode "My Name Is Asher Kingsley" (*The Larry Sanders Show*) is abrupt but credible when she observes that the apparently non-practicing, non-associating, non-synagogue-attending Jewish figure Hank Kingsley is not much of a Jew. She asks him if he observes Shabbat. He says no. She asks about the High Holy Days. He answers yes, "Yom Kippur and the Fourth of July." She asks if he keeps kosher. He does not. He laughs and then admits, "As a Jew, I'm not very good." Rabbi Klein responds with the quip, "As a Jew, you're almost a Methodist."

Considering the credibility of the scripting of the part of female rabbis, it is important to keep in mind the limitations of screenwriters. Jewish or non-Jewish, writers—like many Americans—may be insensitive or undereducated about matters such as Jewish holidays, expectations or requirements for joining a synagogue, kashrut, conversion, or the denominational politics of ordaining women. Actress Amy Aquino relates the following story:

> When I auditioned for this episode [The Larry Sanders Show], I went into the room and there were four or five of the writers there. Super nice, very enthusiastic. I started to ask some questions because in the script she's talking about keeping kosher and I said, "If she's referring to practices that are Orthodox, but she's a woman...I don't think she would be a rabbi if it's Orthodox." They all gave me these blank stares. I looked around and said, "I'm sorry. Is this the only writers' room in Hollywood where there is not a single Jewish person? Am I the most Jewish person here and I am not Jewish?"[9]

Another consideration is the scripting process itself, which includes numerous edits and cuts. Such seems to be the case with *Grey's Anatomy*:

> A producer on *Grey's Anatomy* asked [the associate rabbi of Temple Israel of Hollywood, Michelle] Missaghieh to consult and take a small role in an episode. "There were a lot of Jewish problems with the script, actually," [Rabbi Missaghieh] recalls. An

Orthodox teenage patient needed a heart-valve replacement. The doctors wanted to give her a pig valve, which the show's writers believed would pose a religious quandary in that it wouldn't be kosher. "They thought this was sort of sexy," Missaghieh explains. "I told them this was not an issue; you do almost anything to save a life." The writers also wanted the teenager's rabbi to be an Orthodox woman, a plot twist Missaghieh disputed as nearly impossible, because the Orthodox movement does not permit female rabbis.

But as any religious leader can tell you, the counsel of clerics isn't always followed. When she watched the show, Missaghieh discovered the producers had ignored her advice on both counts. "I was naive," she says.[10]

Rabbi Missaghieh relates another real-life situation. At one point around 2000, her congregant Jill Soloway, a scriptwriter for *Six Feet Under*," approached her. She wanted to meet with Rabbi Missaghieh to get a sense of what was/was not possible for a woman rabbi in a particular script. Soloway took Missaghieh to breakfast, where she explained that the script involved a single man and a single woman rabbi. Missaghieh asked Soloway if the man is Jewish? "No," Soloway responded and then asked, "Could they date?" "No," Missaghieh responded. Why not? Because a single woman rabbi would not date and then marry a non-Jew. Could there be a sexual interest? Missaghieh responded, "No." "What could there be? Flirtation?" Missaghieh responded, "Yes, flirtation."[11]

It was important to writer Jill Soloway to have a woman rabbi. As she explained in an interview, when working "on *Six Feet Under*, she modeled a potential love interest for Nate on Missaghieh. 'There are so few Jewish women on television that are positive and smart and sexy,' says Soloway. 'It's always been my secret wish to put more women like that on television for Jewish girls to relate to.'"[12] Soloway's wish is both significant and regretfully unfulfilled, certainly in terms of women rabbis portrayed in the popular media. Soloway herself, however is committed to her quest. She went on to create the series *Transparent*, starting Jeffery Tambor. She has both directed (12 episodes 2014-2015) and written scripts (credits for 31 episodes 2014-2016) for the

award-winning TV show. In that series Rabbi Raquel Fein (Kathryn Hahn) is a important recurrent character. She often serves as a moral compass as well as a foil for the Pfefferman family's twists and turns, emphasizing their Jewish identity and bringing Jewish values and traditions to the fore, while standing for a progressive Judaism working hard to embrace the contemporary reality of what makes up a family. Her commitment to Judaism enables her to set boundaries that appear much more difficult for the other characters on the show.

There are insufficient examples to make sweeping statements about the portrayal of these women rabbis, the credibility of their actions, or even how mainstream their positions are on various issues. In terms of weddings, there are two examples of women rabbis conducting interfaith marriages, in both cases alongside Christian clergy. There certainly are some real women rabbis who follow this practice, as do some of their male colleagues, but it is not a widespread practice within the major North American Jewish denominations. The theological talk put into the mouths of these fictional women rabbis is generally limited, but overall what is scripted is well within mainstream thought and practice.

This survey of women rabbis in television and film does not seem to indicate that there is any one reason that some shows wind up with women rabbis as characters. The actresses themselves sometimes are Jewish; usually they are not. Some of the writers, or even lead writers, of shows in which women rabbis appear are Jewish, but this is not a universal phenomenon. That said, the large number of Jewish television and screen writers does not equate with the relative paucity of women rabbis on TV and in cinema.

Is it significant that these rabbis on the screen are women? Let me suggest three reasons that it is. First, presenting the rabbi as a woman destabilizes the presumption that rabbis can only ever be men. Second, these women rabbis are portrayed possessing stature, authority, and power in the community, and not as subsidiary to men or other characters. Third, women view the representation of other women in popular media positively.

In ritual officiation, as well as in offering counseling or pastoral support, a female rabbi's practice may or may not differ from a male rabbi's approach. Yet gender plays a significant role in moments where the script wants to address male/female attraction (to my knowledge there have not been any TV or cinematic examples of fictional rabbis—women or men—portrayed as gay men or lesbians).

Rabbinic life is of course much wider than what is portrayed in these examples above. Rabbis—female and male—regularly meet with committees, are involved with interfaith matters of social justice, minister to the aging, educate teenagers, and so on. They preach and teach about Judaism's traditions and values, and they lead trips to Israel. Rabbis also are chaplains in a variety of settings: hospitals, long-term care centers, hospice, and the military. There are—female and male—rabbi-educators and rabbi-administrators. In addition to their professional duties, they have internal religious and personal family lives. None of these professional or personal dimensions have yet to be explored in these TV and cinema productions.

Women have been an active part of the contemporary rabbinate for over forty years. To date, worldwide, there are about a thousand women rabbis. There are now generations of children who have grown up never having known any rabbi other than a rabbi who is a woman. It is surprising, therefore, that there have not been more instances of women as rabbinic figures on TV or film. Perhaps it will just take some more time before these real-life exemplars make their way to become fictional depictions on the small and large screens.[13]

NOTES

1. Jordie Gerson,"Letter to Hollywood—I Don't Have a Beard or Side Curls and I Look Just Like You: American Judaism's Image Problem,"*Huffington Post*, November 8, 2013 or this volume, pp. 741–42.

2. David J. Zucker, *American Rabbis: Facts and Fiction* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson; Lanham, MD: Rowman and Litttlefield, 1998).

3. See the chapter "Women Rabbis" in Zucker, *American Rabbis: Facts and Fiction*; David J. Zucker, "Women Rabbis: A Novel Idea," *Judaism* 55, nos. 1–2 (Summer/Fall 2006): 108–16; and David J. Zucker, "Women Rabbis (and Rebbitzins) in Contemporary Fiction," *CCAR Journal* 54, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 68–91. See also Pamela S. Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination 1889–1985* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).

4. Rhonda Shapiro-Rieser's *A Place of Light* (1983, Lynda Klein); Joseph Telushkin's *The Unorthodox Murder of Rabbi Wahl* (1987, Myra Wahl); Erich Segal's *Acts of Faith* (1992, Deborah Luria); Anita Diamant's *Good Harbor* (2001, Michelle Hertz); and Athol Dickson's *They Shall See God* (2002, Ruth Gold).

5. Alex Goldman's *The Lady Is a Rabbi* (1987, Sara Weintraub); Eileen Pollack's "The Rabbi in the Attic" (1991, Marion Bloomgarten); Roger Herst's *Woman of the Cloth* (1998, Gabrielle Lewyn) and *A Kiss for Rabbi Gabrielle* (2011); Jonathan Rosen's *Joy Comes in the Morning* (2004, Deborah Green); and Ilene Schneider's mysteries, *Chanukah Guilt* (2007, Aviva Cohen) and *Unleavened Dead* (2012).

6. The first woman rabbi, Sally Priesand, was ordained in 1972.

7. Dana Evan Kaplan states that the controversy over the hiring of women rabbis has now largely become a nonissue because people have become accustomed to that idea, citing as evidence his observation of women rabbis acting in television shows. To my knowledge, however, Michelle Missaghieh is the only woman rabbi who has done this. Dana Evan Kaplan, *Contemporary American Judaism: Transformation and Renewal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 233.

8. See, e.g., Zucker, "God, Israel, and Tradition," in *American Rabbis*.

9. Edward Copeland, "Larry Sanders: Changing Television and Changing Lives," RogerEbert.com, September 14, 2012, http://www.rogerebert.com/demanders/larry-sanders-changing-television-and-changing-lives.

10. http://forward.com/news/israel/3416/tinseltown-rabbi-saves-a-prayer-for-prime-time-sho/. In a personal conversation with Rabbi Missaghieh (February 20, 2013), she confirmed this report.

11. Personal communication with Rabbi Michelle Missaghieh, February 20, 2013.

12. http://forward.com/news/israel/3416/tinseltown-rabbi-saves-a-prayer-for-prime-time-sho/In a personal conversation with Rabbi Missaghieh (February 20, 2013), she confirmed this report.

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