

Temple Marking 50th Anniversary of Rabbi Waxman's Book *Tradition and Change*
Series of Lectures Part of Yearlong Celebration

Rabbi Mordecai Waxman's monumental book "Tradition and Change" had a major impact on the Conservative Movement—in fact, defining it—when it was published 50 years ago.

The congregation will mark the anniversary with a yearlong series of programs at Temple Israel sponsored jointly by TILL (Temple Israel Lifelong Learning), the Temple's adult education program, and the New York Region of United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, METNY.

"We hope to demonstrate with this series how significant the Conservative movement remains by demonstrating the fruitful relationship that exists between Jewish tradition and modern life," said Rabbi Howard Stecker. "Fifty years after Rabbi Waxman's book was published, we face many of the same challenges.

"I strongly believe today what Rabbi Waxman articulated in 1958 and subsequently—that Conservative Judaism is authentic Judaism, and that our approach to Judaism as a living tradition has the potential to best meet the challenges that being Jewish in the modern world presents."

A series of four presentations through the spring, and an additional four speakers in the fall, will address the impact of the landmark publication as well as the changes within the Conservative movement since Rabbi Waxman wrote the book.

Rabbi Jonathan Waxman, Rabbi Waxman's son, will begin the series on March 17 with a presentation titled "We Were Number One: The Fifty Years Since Tradition and Change." The eldest of the late Rabbi Waxman's three sons, and the only rabbi, is the spiritual leader of Congregation Beth-El in Massapequa. He has published numerous articles and many of his sermons have been selected for distribution to the rabbinic community. He and his father began collaborating on a book that would follow the development of the Conservative movement from the 1950s to the present. The book was intended to be a sequel to "Tradition and Change." Rabbi Jonathan Waxman said he was looking forward to working with his father, but the excitement was stifled by the untimely death of Temple Israel's spiritual leader of 55 years. Jonathan Waxman said he plans to forge ahead with the new book "as a memorial to my father."

On April 21, Dr. Debra Reed-Blank will discuss "Including the Matriarchs in the Amidah: Liturgical Considerations." Dr. Blank is the Rabbi Philip R. Alstat Assistant Professor of Jewish Liturgy at The Jewish Theological Seminary. She teaches a variety of courses in liturgy, including classes on the liturgy of the High Holy Days and Shabbat. Dr. Blank has served as dean of List College and as an assistant dean of The Graduate School. Currently, she is director of the program in Liturgy and serves as academic adviser for the doctoral, masters, and undergraduate programs in Liturgy. She was a member of the first class of women to enter The Rabbinical School in 1984. She earned her master's degree, rabbinical ordination and a doctorate in Liturgy and Rabbinics at JTS.

“Tradition and Change in the Law Committee: Trends in the Approach to Jewish Law in Conservative Judaism” will be the topic of the next presentation, on May 19, by Rabbi David Fine, the spiritual leader of Shaarei Tikvah, The Scarsdale Conservative Congregation. He has served as secretary to the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement at The Rabbinical Assembly. Rabbi Fine has been editing the Committee’s responsa (Jewish legal opinions). A graduate of Wesleyan University, Rabbi Fine was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary and is pursuing a doctorate in modern European history at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, focusing on German Jewry and the First World War.

Rabbi Elie Kaunfer will discuss “The Next Chapter: How Empowered Young Jews are Changing America” on June 9. Rabbi Kaunfer is a co-founder of Kehilat Hadar; an egalitarian community committed to spirited traditional prayer, study and social action. A graduate of Harvard, he is a former corporate fraud investigator and analyst at Morgan Stanley. The Forward newspaper recently named him one of 50 Top Jewish Leaders. He was ordained at The Jewish Theological Seminary, where he also completed an MA in liturgy.

Each lecture will be held in the Sanctuary on a Tuesday, beginning at 8:15 P.M. A light collation will follow the presentations.

“I believe that our community has an obligation to attend these lectures for several reasons,” Rabbi Stecker said. “They represent the continuation of major topics initiated by Rabbi Waxman, they honor the important seminal work that Rabbi Waxman devoted himself to for over half a century, they will connect us to the latest trends and developments concerning our movement and they will invite us to contemplate in a profound and informed way the future of our movement and our people.”

The series was assembled by TILL Chair Gary Sazer and Dr. Sharon Keller, a member of the Adult Education Committee. They said they selected themes in Rabbi Waxman’s writings they found to be interesting which had significantly evolved since the book was written, and then sought authorities on those topics.

“The Conservative movement believes we are a living religion,” Mr. Sazer said. “That’s what the ‘Waxman Manifesto’ is all about. The way the movement evolved in the last century is really remarkable, and the way the movement absorbed all of this change without altering what we hold important will be studied in this series.