

Rabbi Gaylia R. Rooks Received Doctor of Divinity at HUC-JIR Graduation Ceremony in Cincinnati



Rabbi Gaylia R. Rooks, rabbi at **The Temple, Congregation Adath Israel Brith Shalom**, Louisville, Kentucky, received a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, from the **Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR)**. The degree was granted at HUC-JIR's Cincinnati Graduation ceremony on Sunday, June 7, 2009 at Isaac M. Wise Temple.

Rabbi David Ellenson, Ph.D., announced HUC-JIR alumni recipients who were awarded honorary Doctorates of Divinity, Music, Jewish Religious Education, and Jewish Communal Service, as well as the Founders' Medallion, in recognition of their 25 years of distinguished professional service.

Rabbi Rooks has served at The Temple since 1988. She was ordained at HUC-JIR in 1984. In May 2000, Rabbi Rooks received her Doctor of Ministry degree from the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Her Rabbinic Thesis, *Halachic Guidance for the Terminally Ill*, provides insights from Jewish tradition for the modern day dilemmas of biomedical ethics. Rabbi Rooks has continued her interest in morals in medicine by serving on the Ethics Committee of the Norton-Kosair Children's - Alliant Hospital In-vitro Fertilization Board.

Rabbi Rooks graduated cum laude from Brandeis University in 1979 as a double major in Psychology and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies. She served twice as the chairperson of

the Reform Group of Hillel and studied abroad her Junior year at the Jacob Hiatt Institute in Jerusalem.

At The Temple, Rabbi Rooks is involved in Social Action and outreach to people becoming Jewish and intermarried families in the congregation. She provides leadership for women through the Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ) and the annual Women's Shabbaton (retreat.) Her work with senior adults led her to create Senior University, an annual day-long series of seminars for senior adults. She also teaches a variety of adult education classes, as well as teaching in The Temple's Religious and Hebrew School.

Rabbi Rooks directs worship and ritual and is responsible for all the music offered at The Temple. She has released a collection of original Jewish music on CD titled *If You Will It . . .*, all proceeds from which go to The Temple Israel Future Fund which helps send teenagers to Israel, and is hoping for a new CD to be released soon.

Rabbi Rooks has been an adjunct faculty member at Spalding University Graduate School Department of Religion, the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and Indiana University Southeast. She also serves as Vice-chair and founding member of STAR - Systematic Treatment of Autism & Related Disorders at the Weisskopf Child Evaluation Center, a division of the University of Louisville School of Medicine Department of Pediatrics.

Rabbi Ellenson said, "Rabbi Rooks is a strong advocate for social action and women's programming, as well as outreach to converts and those who are intermarried. She has combined the age old truths of Torah with the insights of modern day, and has expressed the Jewish values of tolerance, respect and justice in her work."

For more information on the HUC-JIR Graduation, Investiture, and Ordination ceremonies in New York, Los Angeles, and Cincinnati, please visit <http://www.huc.edu/newspubs/pressroom/article.php?pressroomid=271>.

*Founded in 1875, **Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion** is the nation's oldest institution of higher Jewish education and the academic, spiritual, and professional leadership development center of Reform Judaism. HUC-JIR educates men and women for service to American and world Jewry as rabbis, cantors, educators, and communal service professionals, and offers graduate and post-graduate programs to scholars of all faiths. With centers of learning in Cincinnati, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, and New York, HUC-JIR's scholarly resources comprise renowned library and museum collections, the American Jewish Archives, biblical archaeology excavations, research institutes and centers, and academic publications. HUC-JIR invites the community to an array of cultural and educational programs which illuminate Jewish history, identity, and contemporary creativity and which foster interfaith and multiethnic understanding. Visit us at www.huc.edu.*