

5768 Program Theme: ISRAEL AT 60: THE WOMEN



Join us this year as we celebrate Israel's 60th birthday by exploring the lives and contributions of Israeli



women, past and present. Rabbi Sharyn Henry will lead study sessions to help us discover and appreciate women's influence in the arts, politics, history and the daily life of Israel.



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AHOTI/My Sister

JWC Tzedakah Project 5758

Ahoti was established in Israel in 1999 by Mizrahi feminist activists. The name Ahoti, which means My Sister in Hebrew, expresses the spirit of the movement: sisterhood, solidarity, camaraderie, equality and a sense of family. Ahoti is devoted to raising public awareness of Mizrahi feminism. "Mizrahi" means Oriental in Hebrew, and implies the ethnic characteristics of Middle Eastern, African and Asian Jews who are not considered mainstream in Israel today. Ahoti's primary goals are to advance economic development and personal empowerment for women from a unique Mizrahi perspective. Ahoti supports self-empowerment projects, workshops, and

conferences to support women's economic independence. Through Ahoti's empowerment strategies, economically disadvantaged women are encouraged to develop self-organizational skills, organize community cooperatives and/or partnerships and develop new and creative ways of earning money. Ahoti is doing its work among the majority of Israeli Mizrahi women. Oddly, this majority has been treated in Israel as a disenfranchised minority. Ahoti promotes social justice and its goal is to assist factory workers, low-paid women, and unemployed women, while focusing on women from the peripheries or outskirts of towns. Ahoti works with Blue-collar women, deprived Mizrahi women and new immigrants, whether they are Jewish, Moslem, Christian or Druse.

Focus on one Ahoti special project: The Women's Community Kitchen

Establishing small businesses is an effective strategy for fighting poverty, unemployment, and low salaries. Ahoti's current project, the **Women's Community Kitchen**, grew out of a successful pilot micro-business project, **'Women Cook up a Business'** – Unemployed Women Becoming Professional Chefs, which is co-run by Ahoti and Kol Ha-Isha. The Women's Community Kitchen seeks to create an innovative model of cooperation for women in building business partnerships by establishing a community kitchen as a joint enterprise with women graduates of micro-business programs who specialize in the culinary field. Graduates of 'Women Cook up a Business' and other micro-business programs establish a supportive and community environment where these women can gain the skills, work experience and confidence they need to be involved in a feminist economic initiative. Furthermore, the Women's Community Kitchen provides a kitchen facility with the necessary Ministry of Health and Kashrut certificates. The Kitchen is located at the Elwyn Rehabilitation Center in Kiryat Ha-Yovel. The use of this brand-new professional, institutional kitchen was secured after an extensive search for a kitchen in the community that meets the project's needs. The Kitchen will immediately provide 250 hot meals for the population of the Elwyn Institute for the Mentally Challenged. In addition, the Women's Community Kitchen will locate other Institutions and schools within Jerusalem to provide for the School Lunch Program.

5767 Program Report: Rosh Hodesh Elul

by Barbara Baumann

The Jewish Women's Center welcomed in Rosh Hodesh Elul with a potluck lunch on a lovely summer day. This event was open to families and friends which also made it quite special. We were all able to share blessings for the upcoming month and talk about the year ahead. We shared too the simchas we had experienced in the previous month. It was a great way to finish up the past year and start thinking and preparing for the holidays ahead.



JWC Program Year for 5768 (2007-08)

EVENT	DATE	TIME	PLACE	TOPIC
Tashlich/Shalechet	Sun 9/16	2PM	Chatham Pond	Casting off the obsolete
Sukkot	Sun 9/30	7:30PM	Member's home ¹	
Fall Shabbaton & RH ² Cheshvan	Sat 10/13	10AM-havdalah (~7:30PM)	Member's home	Rosh Hodesh celebration and Torah theme study
RH Kislev	Sun 11/11	7:30PM	LZC ³	Israel at 60: The Women (#1): Study with Rabbi Sharyn Henry
RH Tevet	Mon 12/10	7:30PM	The Clay Pot	I Made It Out of Clay: Chocolate, Chardonnay and Clay
RH Shvat	Mon 1/7	7:30PM	LZC	Israel at 60: The Women (#2) Study with Rabbi Sharyn Henry
Tu b'Shvat Seder	Sun 1/27	7PM	LZC	
RH Adar 1	Tues 2/5	7:30PM	LZC	Jewish Women's Writings
Women's Shabbat	Sat 3/8	10AM	LZC	Parshat Shekalim
RH Adar II	Th 3/6	—	Your home	(Do-it-for-yourself sent via e-mail)
Ta'anit Esther	Wed 3/19	6:30PM	Restaurant TBD	Social action TBD
RH Nisan	Sun 4/6	7:30PM	Member's home	The Creative Writer Within
Women's Pesach Seder	Th 4/24	6PM	LZC	
RH Iyar/Annual Meeting	Mon 5/5	7:30PM	LZC	Israel at 60: The Women (#3): Study with Rabbi Sharyn Henry
RH Sivan	Mon 6/2	7:30PM	Member's home	Plant exchange
RH Tammuz	Wed 7/2	—	Your home	(Do-it-for-yourself sent via e-mail)
RH Av	Fri 8/1	—	Your home	(Do-it-for-yourself sent via e-mail)
RH Elul	Sun 9/7	11AM	Member's home	Family potluck brunch

¹ An e-mail will be sent out prior to events in members' homes giving the exact address.

² "RH" indicates a Rosh Hodesh—celebration of the new moon or new month

³ The Labor Zionist Center (LZC) is located at 6328 Forbes Avenue in Squirrel Hill.

Support the JWC with your 5768 dues:

\$18 _____ \$36 Regular membership _____ \$54 Supporting membership _____ \$100 Sustaining membership _____

I am adding \$ _____ to my dues for this year's tzedakah project, Ahoti/My Sister (see p. 2).

Mail your check to: JWC, P.O. Box 81924, Pittsburgh, PA 15217

Tashlich / Shalechet

By Malke Frank

On Sunday, September 16, 2007/4 Tishrei 5768, the Jewish Women's Center held its annual Tashlich/Shalechet. Under a sunny and bright sky with a touch of autumn in the air, we walked from the parking lot of Tree of Life Synagogue to the pond on the campus of Chatham College. Because of nearby construction, the pond was muddy, but the fountain with its arched streams of water reflected the rays of the sun. Our ritual program included singing, readings, and a guided meditation through the months of the past year.

Shalechet is the Hebrew word for "shedding." It has the same three root letters as Tashlich – "you shall cast out." As a tree

which sheds its leaves in autumn, we can shake free of what has dried up and no longer healthy or nourishing us. Shalechet is a feminine noun, and for women, the concept of letting go is a part of our natural ongoing cycle. As tashlich is a cyclical process, so is shalechet. The pieces of bread thrown in the water are eaten by the fish and recycled back into the food chain. The fallen leaves fertilize the soil around the tree, helping new plants and trees to sprout in the spring. Thus, what is no longer useful, what we shed or cast off, can become sustenance to someone else. What each of us would like to release for ourselves might be exactly what another person is looking to bring into her life.

As part of our ritual, each of us wrote



on a card an understanding about ourselves that we learned this past year, that we wanted to give to another. These cards were placed in a basket, and each of us chose one. We had both flower petals and bread crumbs to throw into the pond. And as the crumbs floated on the water, we discovered that beneath the muddy surface, there were actually goldfish. Our yearly ritual culminated with Lisa Brush sounding the shofar, a loud and sustained call to each of us to reflect and return to our better self.

Member News



What's new?

And more babies! Member **Elizabeth Gordon** and husband Jerry are grandparents again—this time to *Phoebe Wechlser Gordon (Shlomit)*, born on August 16th to son and daughter-in-law **Assaf Gordon** and **Robyn Wechsler**.

Mazal tov to **Barbara Shuman** whose daughter Jessica and her husband Daniel Pollner brought Barbara's first grandchild into the world on August 29th. Barbara reports that *Jordan Elyse* is "beautiful, smart and very cute" and that she is "totally in love" with her granddaughter and with being a grandmother. Best wishes to the whole family!

More babies! **Malke Frank** and Ivan's son Ayal Frank and daughter-in-law Bobbi Kraham welcomed *Noa Sylvie (Noa Sivan)* on August 22nd. Noa Sylvie is named in memory of Malke's mother, *Sylvia Feldman Steinfeld*. In other news, **Malke** was recently elected to the board of directors of the *Jewish Chronicle*.

And more: **Pat Cluss** became a grandmother for the second time when daughter Arin and son-in-law Ryan Keough delivered *Natalie Heather (Nechama Chaya)* on July 18th. Natalie is named in memory of Arin's father and Pat's mother, Hazel Cluss.

And our best wishes go out to **Judith Lantos Finkelstein** who will become a bat mitzvah by reading from the Torah for the first time on October 20th. *Yashir kocheych* in advance, Judith!

New Members



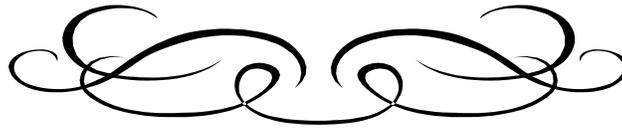
Bruchot habaot! Welcome to the following new members who have recently joined the Jewish Women's Center:

Janey Clark is transitioning from working for herself as a children's woodworking teacher to being a full time undergraduate student at Carlow University majoring in Special & Elementary Education. Creating art is a passion which Janey hopes to use with her students. She says that in the past few years, Judaism has grown to be more meaningful in her life—one of the reasons she has joined the JWC.

Diane Samuels is the mother of 3 young adults, one still in college. She spent 25 years in New Castle and moved to Pittsburgh 6 years ago. She is self-employed as a CPA serving individuals and small businesses with their tax and accounting needs. Diane belongs to Congregation Beth Shalom and is looking forward to expanding her Jewish education via the JWC.

Carol Woolford is a native San Franciscan, although she has now been in Pittsburgh for 28 years—a long time, she says! She is a research scientist at Carnegie Mellon University and the organizer of Temple Sinai's Rosh Chodesh group for the third year. She joined the JWC to get involved in other Jewish women's happenings in the city.

We look forward to getting to know Janey, Diane and Carol better as the year goes along.



JWC Board for 5768



The board of the JWC met for its annual board retreat in July 2007. Longtime board members (clockwise from top left) Malke Frank, Mimi Reznik, Barbara Baumann and Pat Cluss are happy to welcome **Binah Burney** (first row left) to the board.

Binah is not only new to the board but newly back in her hometown of Pittsburgh. Binah came home from California recently and attended the JWC Women's Shabbat service last winter. She loved it so much that she joined the board! Binah has had a life in the theater and raising two creative children. She now resides in Highland Park, teaches children's music, writes and is starting a chanting group using Shefa Gold's beautiful chants.

The board is excited about this year's programs. We will enjoy old favorites such as the Jewish Women's Writings event—this year moved to its new time slot on Rosh Hodesh Adar I—and our annual plant exchange hosted by member and newly-minted Master Gar-

dener Nancy Levine Arnold. We'll be giving a Hanukkah tradition ("I made it out of clay") a new twist with "Chocolate, Chardonnay and Clay" to be held at The Clay Pot on Murray Avenue. You'll make something out of clay to celebrate the holiday and the JWC will supply the wine and chocolate.

We are especially excited that Rabbi Sharyn Henry, back by popular demand after last year's study series on mikvah, has agreed to continue with another series this year. She will lead us in three discussions of *Israel at 60: The Women* focusing each time on women who have made a difference then and now in Israel. We hope you will join us for these and other JWC programs in 5768.

Wish I'd Said That, or The Fantasy Rabbinate, Revised

By Pat Cluss

For some as yet unascertained reason (a slow news week, perhaps?), *Newsweek* earlier this year published a story by Sony Pictures CEO and Chairman Michael Lynton and his friends and “fellow power brokers” Gary Ginsberg of NewsCorp and Jay Sanderson of JTN Productions titled: **The Top Fifty Rabbis in America**. These three friends developed their own admittedly nonscientific and subjective rating criteria that included, among other categories, whether a rabbi was known nationally/internationally, the size of his/her constituency, and whether the rabbi has a “media presence.” You may not be surprised to hear that of the 50 rabbis listed, 45 are men and 5 are women. Number one on their Top 50 list is Marvin Heir, an Orthodox rabbi who, “...is one phone call away from almost every world leader, journalist and Hollywood studio head” (*Newsweek*, April 2, 2007 issue). The first woman in the Top Fifty list does not show up until #19 (Sharon Kleinbaum, senior rabbi of the world’s largest synagogue for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered Jews), with the other four at numbers 32 (Rachel Cowan, director of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality), 34 (Janet Marder, first woman head of the Central Conference of American Rabbis), 42 (Naomi Levy, author) and 48 (Toba Spitzer, first openly lesbian rabbi to lead a national rabbinic association).

Enter Letty Cottin Pogrebin, well-known feminist matriarch and prolific Jewish feminist writer. Pogrebin wrote an open letter to the editor of *Newsweek*, published in the April 16, 2007, edition of the online *The Lilith Blog*. Here’s an excerpt of her letter:

Letter to the Editor of Newsweek

In your April 2nd issue, Michael Lynton and his friends rated “The Top Fifty Rabbis in America” according to fame, media savvy, influence, and size of constituency. Though many of the “chosen” are superb rabbis, your list – not surprisingly, given those hyper-muscular criteria – contains 45 men and five women.

I’ve spent the last week soliciting nominations from Jewish friends around the country in order to compile a list of rabbis who satisfy a different set of criteria: spirituality wedded to activism, deeds of lovingkindness, and ability to communicate the meaning and beauty in Jewish life. Since we’re talking about rabbis, not bestsellers, their names are listed alphabetically not hierarchically. And since your list was in dire need of affirmative action, you’ll understand why my list contains 45 women and five men.

Sincerely,
Letty Cottin Pogrebin

Pogrebin’s list of *The “Other Fifty” Top Rabbis In America* starts with Judith Z. Abrams, the Founder of www.Maqom.com and Rebecca Alpert, Associate Professor of Religion and Jewish Studies at Temple University and co-author of *Lesbian Rabbis: The First Generation*. The list ends with Elaine Zecher of Temple Israel in Boston, the first female rabbi in the Temple’s 130 year history who organized a coalition supporting cutting-edge health care legislation in Massachusetts, and Devorah Zlochower, Rosh Beit Midrash and Head of the Drisha Institute for Jewish Education who teaches Talmud and Halacha in the Scholar’s Circle. Interesting, Rabbi Zecher grew up in Monroeville and attended Temple David religious school. Of course, Sally Priesand makes the list as the first woman rabbi ordained in U.S. (1972), as do the less well-known (to me) Margaret Moers Wenig, whose Siddur Nashim was first to use feminine imagery and God language in a prayer book and Melissa Weintraub of Rabbis for Human Rights, author of the first report on torture and Jewish law.

Check out the blog at www.lilith.org/blog to see the full list of the Other Fifty.

Tzedakah Project Update

News from past JWC tzedakah projects

5767 (2006-07) project: Israel Women's Network

The IWN has been very busy in the last year. In their recent newsletter sent to the JWC, they report the following successes:

- The IWN-sponsored petition to protest the plea bargain for former President Moshe Katzav, accused of sexual assault, resulted in a court order against the plea bargain going into effect.
- Approval in the Knesset of an amendment extending women's maternity leave from 12 weeks to 14 weeks (and an additional 3 weeks for every additional child in a multiple pregnancy/birth)
- Knesset approval of an amendment stating it is illegal to fire a woman returning from maternity leave or unpaid vacation for at least 60 days (instead of 45) after her return.

5760 and 5764 (1999-2000 and 2003-04) project: Women of the Wall

The Women of the Wall is a persistent group of women and men who came into being in 1988 when a group of Israelis and visiting American women and men attending a feminist conference in Jerusalem spontaneously decided to pray together at the Western Wall, a symbol of Jewish historical unity that has been and is under control of the ultra-Orthodox rabbinate who have declared it a religious space subject to orthodox law and custom. Since that day, the group that came to be known as the Women of the Wall (WoW) have worked with the police, the Knesset and other political entities to be allowed access, a fight that is far from over. We have learned in the most recent *Jerusalem Report* that a new film about the WoW has recently been released, entitled "Praying in Her Own Voice." It is the first movie about this group made by an Israeli woman, director and producer Yael Katzir, and it is distinctive in that it presents "an Israeli perspective on democracy, Israeliness and Judaism" (*Jerusalem Report*, October 1, 2007). We are looking into rental or purchase options and hope to be able to show "Praying in Her Own Voice" at a future JWC meeting.

Many thanks to the contributors for this edition of the newsletter:

◇Barbara Baumann

◇Malke Frank

◇Pat Cluss

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TO:

A simple, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a recipient's address.

The JWC Mission:

The Jewish Women's Center is a community of women of all backgrounds that provides educational opportunities and spiritual experiences rooted in Jewish values and feminist ideals. The JWC is a supportive environment for broadening our knowledge and involvement in Jewish life. The programs and resources of the JWC create opportunities for Jewish women's learning, leadership, spiritual growth and ritual practice.

