



THE JWC NEW MOON

Shvat 5768
January 2008

5768 Program Theme: ISRAEL AT 60: THE WOMEN

Rosh Hodesh Kislev: Israeli Women in Poetry, Song, and Prose

Amidst warm shelter at the Labor Zionist Center on a dreary, dark and rainy November night, Rabbi Sharyn Henry treated us to the first of her three part study series on *Israel at 60: The Women*. Rabbi Henry focused on Israeli women writers, poets, and singers/composers from the early pioneer days to the present era. We learned about writers Rachel Bluwstein and Leah Goldberg and heard songs by and a discussion of the historical and contemporary influence of composers/singers Naomi Shemer, Ofra Haza, and Basya Schechter.



Rabbi Henry's presentation was enhanced by the personal memories of JWC members Aya Betensky and Malke Frank who shared with us some of their experiences living in Israel. Aya told of her mother's experiences hoeing cucumbers and tending chickens on an early kibbutz. Malke described the dismay of both the female and male members of her kibbutz when she volunteered for "men's duties" in what was supposedly an egalitarian kibbutz. Malke also described visiting Rachel Bluwstein's grave at the Kinneret and the meaningfulness of reading from the volume of her poetry that is posted near her grave amongst the graves of Rachel and other luminaries who helped create the state of Israel.

We rounded out the evening with our Rosh Kislev ritual, initiation of our new tzedakah box and the donation of a few dollars to this year's project—Ahoti/My Sister and, of course—being the JWC—tea and treats from Trader Joe's.

Inside this issue:

Fall Shabbaton	2
5768 Calendar	3
RH Tevet	4
Member News	5
More on 5758	6
Tzedakah Project	
Look ahead to Tu B'Shvat	7

We look forward to Rabbi Henry's next study session on January 7th (at 7:30 at the LZC) where she will highlight Israeli women's influence in Israeli politics.

Fall Shabbaton and RH Cheshvan Celebration

by Binah Burney



October thirteenth, starting at 10am, the Jewish Women's center sponsored a Shabbaton at the home of Miri Rabinowitz. All the attendees: Anna Rosenfield, Aya Betensky, Pat Cluss, Mimi Resnick, Jean Binstock, Marion Hirshman, Malke Frank, Debbey Altman-Diamant, Janey Clark, Barbara Baumann and Elizabeth Gordon were treated to a morning of worship lead by Julie Newman and assisted by Barbara Burney, the organizers of the day. Julie's warm, personal style and love of liturgy were enhanced by Barbara's ease with harmony and the Kirtan chant-

ing style of Yofiyah, especially HaMakom.

Working out of a few siddurim and the Parsha Noach, the morning centered around the questions pertinent to women in that section of Torah: Are you ever the one building the boat, going against all advice to the contrary? Are you busy saving the world or trying? Do we use our words and actions for good, to build a world, or to deconstruct those around us? These ideas and the poetry and singing worked together into a beautiful service.

Breaking for lunch was pure joy, since Malke made her chocolate chip/apple cake and all the dishes were delicious. After a good meal and conversation, Barbara lead a writing workshop using the techniques introduced by Natalie Goldberg: timed writing where one never lifts the pen off the page. This allows everyone to trust themselves and not over think. After a few exercises, some wonderful poetry and essays were written and read aloud. Elizabeth should publish!

Later in the afternoon, Barbara presented collage materials and different sizes of canvases to the group and we all played with these and created small projects to take home. Pat made a new tzedakah box for the JWC out of homemade paper. Some of us thoroughly enjoyed Miri's indoor hot tub and the ensuing conversations and relaxation. Havdalah came soon after.



It was a beautiful Shabbat and we thank Miri for her hospitality and generosity. We invite all members to bring friends next year and enjoy a truly female Shabbat experience.

JWC Program Year for the rest of 5768 (2007-08)

EVENT	DATE	TIME	PLACE	TOPIC
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	[RSVPs required: 412 422-8044]
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

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

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

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

Rosh Hodesh Tevet

By Barbara Baumann

Our celebration for Rosh Hodesh Tevet, dubbed / Made It Out of Clay: Chocolate, Chardonnay & Clay turned out to be a lovely way to celebrate Chanukah with the Jewish Women's Center. Nine women gathered at the Clay Pit on Murray Ave in Greenfield to celebrate Rosh Hodesh Tevet on December 10th, 2007. Each person had the opportunity to create something out of clay and glaze it to be fired. The creations were outstanding and were not



in any way affected by the chardonnay.

Many women chose to make Kiddush cups or goblets and a few made bowls. Although most of us created our objects at our tables by the roll-pat-and-squeeze method, several tried their hands (actually, arms, knees and hands) at throwing pots on the wheel. Karina Dayich, the

owner of the Clay Pit, was delightful to work with and put everyone at ease, even when some of the creations tumbled over or didn't turn out as planned. The Rosh Hodesh ritual, chocolate, and wine all added to the relaxed and celebratory atmosphere. Everyone present agreed that we should make this an annual event, so if you missed out this year, look for it in next year's calendar.



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

◇ **Binah Burney**

◇ **Barbara Baumann**

◇ **Debbey Altman-Diamant**

◇ **Pat Cluss**

Member News



What's new?

Judith Lantos Finkelstein, who remains a loyal Jewish Women's Center member though from Johnstown, sends her regards. She says, "I do not get into Pittsburgh very much. However, I appreciate the news as well as hearing about the people from the Jewish Women's Center. I speak to Malke sporadically and keep up with 'Jewish Pittsburgh' as much as possible. Happy (secular) New Year. Best wishes for good health, good weather, and happy days."

Debbey Altman-Diamant and **Neil Diamant** celebrated their daughter, **Ilana Yonit (Lani)**, becoming a Bat Mitzvah on December 8th. Lani led a Mincha/Maariv service with Torah reading and Dvar Torah and, with **Julie Newman** accompanying with her voice and guitar, a beautiful Havdalah ceremony. Mazal tov to Lani and the Altman-Diamant family!

Barbara Shuman writes: I have 3 current interests/passions:

1. **Jordan Elyse Pollner**, our 3-month old granddaughter;
2. **Spiritual teachings and practices** (including regular silent medication retreats); and
3. **Raw or "living" food**—I am no longer on a "diet"; instead, I have a "liv-it".

In reference to #1, Barbara says that she and her husband are so excited to be grandparents that they have purchased a condo near Doylestown so they can visit Jordan whenever they want!

Member **Aya Betensky** writes: "In my role as a web designer, I've been redesigning the JWC website--take a look, it's almost done! I'm also working on a new website for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at CMU, which used to be ALL. My family and I are going to be in Israel over winter break, visiting family and friends and doing some touring in Tel Aviv/Yafo, Haifa, and Jerusalem. Later on, between February and May, Bob and I will be living in New Zealand while he takes a sabbatical from CMU to teach at Canterbury University. An adventure! And last, but not least, we're expecting our first grandchild in mid-May."

Support the JWC's 5768 tzedakah project:

AHOTI/My Sister

Ahoti was established in Israel in 1999 by Mizrahi feminist activists. The name Ahoti, meaning 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 (Oriental: Middle Eastern, African and Asian) Jews 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.



Social Action at Ahoti House

Ahoti has tried, along with the people of the area, to close the prostitution houses in their neighborhood and to physically create a friendly and social environment there. In Ahoti House, a space has been created for women who come from different national, religious, and social backgrounds. The House supports the women and allows multicultural dialogue. In the House, a consulting and information centre for women has been established. The House also includes exhibitions, lectures, workshops and courses that are open to the public without a fee.

Every Thursday between 3-6PM, the House is open for people who are seeking assistance, such as writing letters to different authorities, media, government officials, and National Security. Legal advice and assistance is offered without charge. The House is open to everyone, especially to women, because Ahoti sees women to be the ones suffering the most from the corruption in the area.

JWC Treasurer:

Here is my contribution of \$_____ to support this year's tzedakah project, Ahoti/My Sister.

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

The JWC Celebrates Tu b'Shvat (New Year of the Trees) with a Women's Flair

by Debbey Altman-Diamant



In the depth of winter (here in Pittsburgh) on January 27th we celebrate Tu B'shvat, the New Year of the Trees (the blooming of the almond tree is the harbinger of Spring in Israel). This holiday allows us to stop and contemplate the meaning of trees (nature) in our lives, give thanks and blessings for all that trees do for us as well as find deeper spiritual meaning in the symbols of the holiday.

Hundreds of years ago, in the town of Tzfat in Israel the Kabbalists developed a Tu B'shvat Seder, modeled on the Pesach seder. They drank four cups of wine and ate fruits symbolizing various aspects of the human spiritual condition.

Each year the JWC relives this tradition. Using traditional symbols and modern, feminine language, we drink four cups of red and white wine, eat various fruits, read from a haggadah, sing and share stories.

This year we will add the cocoa bean to our celebration as we dip our fruit in a chocolate fountain!

Please join us for a memorable evening... Sunday January 27 at 7PM at the LZC.

RSVP, please, to (412) 422-8044 or jwcpgh@yahoo.com.

Tu b'Shvat Milestone for Israel

Global warming? Reducing our carbon footsteps? When it comes to trees, Israel leads the world. As we all know, the goal of the early pioneers in pre-Israel Palestine was to "make the desert bloom." The early Zionist movement saw the planting of trees as an important effort toward reaching that goal. The Jewish National Fund started planting trees in 1901 and continues that effort to this day, assisted by contributions from Jews and others all over the world. As reported in the January 2008 edition of *Hadassah Magazine*:

Israel is today the only country in the world to have more trees at the beginning of the 21st century than it had at the beginning of the 20th!

That is an amazing fact and gives us something else to celebrate this year on Tu b'Shvat, Jewish Arbor Day or The New Year of the Trees.

Jewish Women's Center of Pittsburgh

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We're on the web:
www.jwcpgh.org

TO:

THE JWC NEW MOON

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.

