



THE JWC NEW MOON

Sivan 5768
June 2008

5768 Roshei Hodesh Review: ISRAEL AT 60: THE WOMEN

By Malke Frank

Inside this issue:

The theme for our Rosh Hodesh programs this year was Israel at 60: The Women. Sharyn Henry led our study and discussions. Rosh Hodesh Kislev on November 11, 2007 focused on women artists and writers. We learned about their lives and read their poetry and prose.

On Rosh Hodesh Shvat on January 7, we discussed the women involved in the political life of Israel, both past and present, which included the founders of the Israeli feminist movement and the leaders of the peace movement. Women on the Edge was our focus for Rosh Hodesh Iyar on May 5. These women are innovators and activists in the educational, political, and religious spheres of Israeli life. Women of the Wall (WoW) is a group which over the years has received our tzedakah and support. Founded in December 1988, they believe that women should be allowed to pray as a

group at the Kotel, read from the Torah and wear tallitot. Israeli law does not as yet permit this to happen at the Kotel. This issue wound its way to the Israeli Supreme Court which in 2005 ruled against WoW, five to four. However, the group continues to worship at the Kotel every Rosh Hodesh, hold its Torah service at a small archaeological garden near the Kotel, and read at the Kotel the Scroll of Esther every Purim and the Book of Lamentations each Tisha B'Av.

When the JWC traveled to Israel in 1996, we joined these women in prayer and study. Alice Shalvi is an Orthodox Jewish woman who at 81 has worn many different hats in furthering the rights of Israeli women. She was the principal of the first Orthodox feminist high school, was the founding chairwoman of the Israel Women's Network, established the English Department at Ben Gurion University in the Negev, founded the International

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Coalition for Agunah Rights, and has been active in Palestinian-Jewish women's peace groups. In the Orthodox community, there are now trained women who are *poskot*, those who give advice and verdicts to women with questions about religious living. Rachel (cont'd on p.2)

A Sweet and Celebratory Seder

by Lani Diamant

On the chilly evening of January 27, 2008, the Jewish Women's Center celebrated Tu B' Shvat with our annual seder. The main room was lit by candles (and a few electric lights), and the table was set with a variety of fruits. Yet with all this, the eyes of the participants were drawn to one thing in particular: a semi-flowing chocolate fountain at the back of the room. All of these factors contributed to having a traditional yet inventive seder.

All participants took turns reading from the prepared packet, although additionally adding their own thoughts and reasoning to the text. Throughout the seder, the fruits, which included persimmons, oranges, grapes, dates, and figs, were eaten with great gusto. All of these foods were later tried dunked in chocolate, which provided a sweet end to the JWC's celebration of Tu B' Shvat, the birthday of the trees.



Tu b'Shvat seder participants celebrating the fruit of the cocoa tree.



(Roshei Hodesh Review; cont'd from p. 1)

...Ben Dor, who is presently living in Columbus, Ohio and teaching at Ohio State University, was the founder of Four Mothers, the group that helped to convince the Israeli government to leave Lebanon in 2000 after 20 years.

Machsom is a group founded by women which now includes men. Its purpose is to chronicle the border crossings and to report on confrontations between the Arabs and the soldiers. Judy Ben-Et is a friend of Malke's who hosted the JWC on her kibbutz. Over her many years in Israel, Judy has formed a

women's group with members of her kibbutz and women of a neighboring Arab village, has organized activities between the kibbutz children and those from Arab villages, organized the women of her kibbutz to participate in Women in Black, an organization which each Friday stood on major roads throughout Israel to oppose the intifada, and after the Oslo agreement in 1993, co-created with an Arab friend a Jewish/Arab women's group to discuss peace. They eventually received funding from the Abraham Fund.

Women in Israel are hot!!

Editor's note: In honor of editor Pat Cluss' recent 60th birthday, she is increasing the font size of the newsletter by one size. You should read well and prosper!

The JWC Women's Pesach Seder

by Sydelle Pearl

There we sat, eighteen women of various ages, around the seder table with the pink pages of the women's hagaddah before us. It was the fifteenth JWC seder and Laura Horowitz, seder leader and hagaddah compiler, added a new twist. "As you introduce yourself, let us adapt a Sukkot custom and invite our absent mothers, daughters, friends—any woman with whom you would wish to share this women's ritual." And so our circle of eighteen became symbolically larger when we named these special women in our lives. We were also in the company of "women of valor" such as Bella Abzug and Henrietta Szold who appeared on posters from the Jewish Women's Archives in Boston that were taped to the walls surrounding our table.

Laura presented us with questions to ponder including "Where were Jewish women in relation to the Jewish community 15 years ago?" We read about the tradition of including Miriam's Cup, Kos Miriam, a tradition that began in the late 1980's with a Rosh Hodesh group in Boston and then spread to non-Orthodox communities everywhere by the late 1990's. Julie Newman led us in song throughout the seder. As we joined her in the chorus of her new composition with the words "I'm standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before me/Recalling generations past, imagine those yet to be," we enlarged our symbolic circle even more.

When we washed our hands the first time, Laura asked us to refrain from speaking. We gathered at the washbowls, each woman pouring water over the hands of the woman who stood behind her. The trickle of the water sounded like water flowing over rocks in a brook. The words of the hagaddah washed over us too as each woman in turn read aloud a paragraph. The African-American poet Audre Lord (1934-1992) joined our ever-widening circle as we read:

Speak proudly to your children
where ever you may find them
tell them
you are the offspring of slaves....

We spoke about the plight of women—constantly struggling to make time for family and work. It is disturbing to realize that women are still economically enslaved, often receiving lower wages just because of our gender. But we spoke about the hope we have to continue to fight for justice. And we sang together "None of us are free till all of us are free."

It was a joyous and thoughtful seder. The homemade food was delicious. I am sure that anyone passing by the Labor Zionist Center could have heard us singing.

[See a related recipe on page 8.]

Rosh Hodesh Shvat

By Pat Cluss

Shvat, the month that ushers in springtime in Israel, felt like springtime in Pittsburgh on a warm and blowzy Monday evening in January. That night, thirteen JWC members and others met at the Labor Zionist Center to celebrate RH Shvat and to participate in Installment #2 of Rabbi Sharyn Henry's series of discussions about women of influence in Israel at its 60th birthday. The topic this evening was women in Israel's political life. We began with a robust discussion of the dreams, myths and realities of gender equality in the early Zionist movement and in the state of Israel. Of course, Golda Meir's influence (both pro and con) was a stepping-off point, but Rabbi Henry focused on:

- Rebel Shulamit Aloni who started her own politi-

cal party and championed the rights of agunot, children of intermarriage, and the rights of Israeli women to reproductive choice;

- American-born Marsha Friedman who formed the Women's Party in Israel in 1977 and who is credited with bringing the American feminist movement to Israel;

- Tzippi Livni, a member of the Knesset since 1999 who is currently the vice prime minister of Israel and only the second Minister of Foreign Affairs in Israel's history; and

- Nechama Leibowitz, a beloved professor and teacher who influenced Israel not by her political teachings or causes but by her commitment to bringing Torah study to people from all walks of life in Israel.

There was spirited discussion

all around, with interesting insights and additions brought to the table by group members who have lived in Israel and, in some cases, participated in parts of the feminist Israeli history we were discussing.

Rabbi Henry has been excited to facilitate our discussion this year about women's experience and women's influence in Israel during its six decades of existence. She has offered to join us again next year to share her expertise and knowledge with JWC members and participants. Stay tuned for 5769 topics!



Rabbi Henry and RH Shvat participants

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

◇Marilyn Asimow ◇Barbara Baumann ◇Aya Betensky ◇Lani Diamant

◇Malke Frank ◇Sydelle Pearl

Member News



What's new?

From Stefi Kirschner:

A friend of mine is researching how to write personal memoirs. She has some tips (see below). When you're finished, send your memoir to her for feedback at marthajewett@marthajewett.com and let her know if you'd like to be interviewed as part of her research.

Tips on Personal Memoir Writing

[Adapted from an interview with James Luce, memoir writing teacher at Shepherd's Center-Beachside, Florida]

Start with three words.

Then answer who, what, when, where, why, how.

Focus on one thing only.

Keep it short.

Put yourself in the story.

Tell the truth.

Good luck with writing. You, your family and friends will enjoy your story or stories.

Mazal tov to member **Aya Betensky** who wrote in May: "I couldn't resist telling you all that I've now joined the grandmas' club! Zachary Benjamin was born to our son Dan and daughter-in-law Anita on Friday. 7 lbs 12 oz, lots of reddish-blond hair. What a gift for Mother's Day! We'll be going to Chicago soon to see him and help out."

Also mazal tov to **Elizabeth Gordon** who says: "JWC members headed to New York City might be interested to know that my one-act play **THE FOUR QUESTIONS** will be produced there by Love Creek Productions as part of Brief Acts. The show is June 23, 24 and 25 at 8:00 p.m. at The Parker Theatre, (part of the Algonquin Theatre complex), 123 E 24th Street. Reservations can be made through Love Creek 212-769-7973 the week of show. Hope to see some friendly faces there!"

Malke Frank and **Pat Cluss** are recently back from attending the 6th annual North American Chevra Kadisha conference in New Jersey, sponsored by *Kavod v'Nichum* (Respect and Comfort), the national organization promoting knowledge about Jewish death, dying and funeral practices. Malke and Pat are members of the New Community Chevra Kadisha, a group that has recently begun performing the ritual of *taharah*, preparation of deceased members of the Jewish community for burial. The conference was an opportunity to network and learn from Jews all over North America and from all walks of Jewish life about *taharah* and about how local chevrei kadisha serve their communities.

The *Century Project* comes to Pittsburgh

By Marilyn Asimow

What is the genesis of a community program, event, seminar--in my case, a unique photography exhibit? My involvement began rather innocently in an email exchange with my friend, Women's Studies Professor at the University of Wyoming, Jeanne Holland, with these words: "Meanwhile, it is the last week of Women's History Month and I've brought the Century Project here. Please check it out at www.thecenturyproject.com; it is a powerful and amazing show raising important issues about women's bodies and self-esteem." I checked out the website for my first glimpse of "the girls" as photographer Frank Cordelle fondly refers to them. The vision sent chills down my spine and tears down my cheeks and the rest, as they say, is history. Thus began the travels of Cordelle's odyssey to the Steel City, about one year after our initial contact. Once he agreed to make the Burgh a pit stop in the Spring of 2008, my search began for a co-chair, sponsor, advertiser and fundraiser. In the end, it would all be coordinated by one talented and committed individual: JWC member and Pitt sociology professor, Lisa Brush, who spent months arranging the best possible venue and schedule for the exhibit.

The Century Project is a series of mostly nude photographs of women from birth to 100 years of age—a century of women. Body acceptance is a major focus of the exhibit, but often depends on the gender of the viewer. For women viewers it tends to be supportive, even at times, therapeutic. For men it is often more educational as stated in this comment: "This [exhibit] is the antidote to all the airbrushed perfectionism expected of women in our culture. If you are a woman, this is what you need to see. If you are a man, viewing these photos will give you an insight never before shown about women." The Pittsburgh exhibit included more than 80 photographs. Cordelle comments that the subjects portrayed are real people in real bodies. They span all ages, ethnicities, body types and have a rich variety of experiences to draw upon and to share. Each photograph was accompanied by personal statements, usually written by the subject of the photo. These were often highly personally and intensely moving.

Attendees said: "I loved the variety of stories, women, ages, etc. I'm sure every woman that walks through this exhibit can empathize with at least one woman's story+her feelings. We are all victims of focusing on our flaws instead of embracing them. I feel a sense of empowerment as a woman. I shall let no one define me. Thank you."

A JWC-er wrote: "Well, I went to see the Century Project today. Instead of seeing, I experienced the Century Project. I spent much longer than I expected to---because I was so drawn to know the stories of the women pictured there. It occurs to me that this is a good thing to see at Purim in particular. This is a real beauty pageant, a deep consideration of what it means to be, feel and embody beauty. The common theme told in so many powerful stories---some beautiful, some overpowering and awful, but each unique in its own details---was describing the longing, the desire to be known as a whole person, a *neshamah*, as a soul (although none used that terminology). This is the pageant that Ahashueros would have profited by seeing!"

I would love to bring "the girls" back our way in a different venue....perhaps in a hospital setting attracting patients, social workers and their clients, doctors, counselors, groups, etc. If any of you are of like mind, or know someone who might be, please contact me at masimow@att.net. A very special THANK YOU to JWC for your enthusiastic attendance at the exhibit and support in encouraging others to do likewise!

Semester in New Zealand: A Jewish Perspective

By Aya Betensky (Feb 25-May 10, 2008)

After stops in LA to visit our daughter-in-law's parents and in Hawaii to be tourists (the warmest and sunniest place on this trip), we're living in Christchurch, on the south island of NZ. It's an Anglo town, with its own Avon River meandering through town and the University. Canterbury University, where Bob is teaching and writing as an Erskine Fellow, is located in a western suburb about a 15-min ride from City Centre and doesn't have the charming nouveau-Gothic look you might expect. The place that does is the old campus in City Centre, now turned into the Arts Centre, a maze of artisans' shops, restaurants, theatres, and a cinema where we saw Evening in a mini-theater big enough for 13 (sitting in cushioned living-room chairs), and Dylan Thomas's Under Milk Wood in a normal theater.

The Christchurch Hebrew Congregation and the Jewish Community: Sounds like a contradiction in terms! We went to Friday night kabbalat Shabbat service once at the Christchurch Hebrew Congregation downtown. It's a combined synagogue with Orthodox services Shabbat mornings together with the Chabad branch in town and Progressive services 2 Friday nights a month. When we went, there were about 20 people, including a baby. After the service, a very nice couple, formerly American, invited us to dinner at their house. We didn't expect such hospitality and thought it was just great. As it turned out, almost everyone around the table was from somewhere else, including Europe and Australia, though most were now citizens of NZ. A very interesting evening.



Purim: We missed the Megillah reading and Purim party because of our trip to the Otago Peninsula. We're told it's full of drunken singing, fulfilling the mitzvah to drink until you don't know the difference between Mordechai and Haman. The membership of Chabad is largely Israeli and their rabbi is Israeli too. It may be that well-known phenomenon that some Israelis who are totally secular in Israel feel the need to be Jewish when out of the country, and the only kind of Jewish they know is Orthodox.

For Purim I ended up baking hamantaschen from fillo dough, with a filling of dried apricots, almonds and pistachios. I made them in a hurry as if they were matzah, because I had a lot of work to finish and we were leaving for Dunedin the next day, so used arbitrary amounts of the ingredients. As a result, too much filling, not enough dough. But they sustained us for breakfast in the motel on the Otago Peninsula, when nothing was open because of Easter weekend.

Passover: We had our smallest seder ever, with a lot of improvisation in cuisine and texts. Our son Joel and his girlfriend Meave came from San Francisco, and Joel did a lot of the cooking. We invited the one other Jewish family among the Erskine Fellows at the university, from Rochester, whose 3-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son made it lively and a lot shorter than usual. Also, we had only the two Open Door haggadot Joel had brought with him. It's hard to pass around 2 large haggadot among 8 people! We should have looked for the Maxwell House version. No horseradish to be had, so we made do with not-very-sharp daikon and radishes. But the haroset was like home, and the food was mostly Sephardic and vegan, except for the meatballs for the kids. The 5-year-old found the afikomen and we ended with *Ehad mi yodea* as usual. The big hit--passionfruit sorbet that I made! I'm glad to be back to celebrate the next holiday here in Pittsburgh.

Barbara Baumann's (now) Famous Recipe

By popular demand from JWC Pesach Seder attendees



APPLE-MATZOH PESACH KUGEL

4 large apples, Granny Smith or any tart apple, cored and cut into medium dice

1/2 cup light brown sugar

1/4 cup orange juice

6 plain matzohs

8 eggs

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 1/2 cups sugar

1/2 cup (8 tablespoons) butter or margarine, melted

1 cup golden raisins

1 cup dried apricots, medium, chopped

4 tablespoons butter or margarine, cut into small pieces, for casserole topping

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.

2. Toss the apples with the brown sugar and orange juice, set aside in a medium bowl.

3. Break the matzoh into 2- to 3-inch pieces and soak in 1 cup of warm water until soft but not mushy. Set aside.

4. While the matzoh soaks, beat the eggs with a wire whisk in a large bowl until blended. Add the salt, sugar, cinnamon, melted butter, raisins, and apricots.

5. Squeeze the liquid from the softened matzoh and add the matzoh to the egg mixture with the apples. Stir the kugel well and pour into a lightly greased 2 1/2-quart casserole dish or a 10x14-inch pan. Dot the top of the kugel with the 4 tablespoons of butter.

6. Bake the kugel for 1 hour. Cover the top with foil if the top begins to become too brown early in the baking. Remove the kugel from the oven and cool to room temperature.

Cook's Tip: The kugel can be made 2 days ahead, cooled, and refrigerated, covered. Bring to room temperature and reheat in a 350°F oven.

You can view the complete recipe online at:

<http://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/104862>

Mark your calendars: Marilyn Asimow of the Jewish Domestic Violence Task Force asks us to publicize this important upcoming event:

Call for actors: you can be part of the solution!



WORDS NOT SPOKEN:

an interactive improvisational theatre experience addressing dating and love relationships

Program creator Hedda Matza-Haughton, LCSW, is looking for teen/young adult women and men to perform, under her direction, short monologues around the issue of healthy relationships.

No acting experience is necessary – just a willingness to portray the intimate moments and feelings of people dealing with dating & love relationships.

"The issue of teen dating violence has always been important to me, but I never really understood how someone suffering from abuse would feel. When performing in 'Words Not Spoken'... I started to see everything differently. As I let the character I created speak and feel through me, I understood as well as anyone can the pain, fear, and confusion of a young girl whose first boyfriend is an abuser."

Sarah Ifft, student & participant in JWI's March 2005 youth retreat

HOW IT WORKS:

- All teen/young adult actors become oriented to the program through one conference call with Hedda.
- With Hedda's guidance, each teen/young adult actor creates a character that deals with some aspect of teen/young adult dating and love relationships.
- Teen/young adult actors communicate with Hedda via e-mail and phone when necessary until they are comfortable with their character development and presentation.
- There are no lines to memorize – this is improvisational theatre.
- One live rehearsal will occur the day before the performances.
- Each actor performs his/her monologue along with other teen/young adult actors in the program.
- After the drama presentation, the actors stay in character and respond to questions from their peers in the audience (facilitated by Hedda). This leads to additional peer group discussion on the issue.

Teens/Young Adults: to become an actor in this program, call or e-mail by May 30th:
Erin Barr (ofc) – 412.422.7200 ebarr@jfcspgh.org • Carol Yahr – damas50@hotmail.com
Jen Creinen – 412.782.5850 / mitchjen@comcast.net

"WORDS NOT SPOKEN" is presented by the
Jewish Domestic Abuse Task Force of Pittsburgh

As part of its 2008 community education outreach program

Tools for Teens: Building Healthy Dating Relationships

Two uniquely dynamic programs serving Greater Pittsburgh's Jewish Community

Sunday, October 26, 2008 • JCC of Greater Pittsburgh

"WORDS NOT SPOKEN" is designed especially for teens and young adults

"When Push Comes to Shove – It's No Longer Love" is designed especially for parents, youth educators and those impacting Pittsburgh area teens & young adults

Co-sponsors (as of 5/08): Jewish Women International, Pittsburgh; Jewish Children & Family Services of Pittsburgh; Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh; Jewish Women International

Learn more about *Words Not Spoken* at www.laughforthehealthofit.net

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TO:

THE JWC NEW MOON

Watch for:

- **RH Tammuz (July 2) and Av (August 1): Do-it-Yourself Roshei Hodesh. Celebratory materials will be sent via e-mail.**
- **RH Elul (September 7): Potluck Family Dinner at Barbara Baumann's from 11AM-1PM; a reminder and RSVP request will be sent in July**

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.

