



A work in progress

Women, feminism & Jewish life

HIGH HOLY DAYS
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Australia, Israel and the Jewish world

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Introduction



NAAMAH KELMAN

Editor

When the Australian **Plus61J** team asked me to co-edit the supplement for this year's High Holy Days that would be devoted to Jewish feminism, I initially balked. For many years, I have rejected joining panels or doing presentations on Jewish women and Jewish feminism.

I often answer: I am happy to teach "Judaism" and Jewish texts (that include women) but defining me solely by my gender does not serve the greater cause. That cause, born some 50 years ago, aimed to transform Jewish life and Judaism as we knew it.

Yet, after this Covid period with so much uncertainty, reassessment of our lives, examining community life and upending so many assumptions, I paused to think that this may be, indeed, a good time to take a long, good look at some 50 years of Jewish feminism.

What has been the impact? What have we changed? Where have we failed or stumbled? Did we transform Jewish life? I say 50 years, because in our Biblical tradition, it is a moment to "restart".

I welcome the call to ask some tough questions and offer some great answers. This year, my Seminary, the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, will mark the 50th Anniversary of the ordination in America of the first woman rabbi: Sally Priesand. Her clarion call and courage brought down the barriers to allow what is now hundreds of women to follow.

In addition to the rabbis and cantors came scholars and thinkers claiming their rightful place at the study table (Beit Midrash) and on the

Bimah, at the lectern, in the highest offices of Institutions and organizations. It is staggering to think about the centuries of lost participation of women and the lack of recognition of their contribution to our civilisation.

We still face deep traditions of patriarchy and discrimination. Many of these first pioneers faced terrible treatment, outright dismissal, and rejection. Yet over these decades we have discovered the women we didn't even know were lost in our great Jewish story. We invented and reinvented Jewish rituals for girls and women and for all Jews. We sought out injustices to fight for others, women of Mizrahi traditions, the LGBTQ community, women in the military and more. Some of the early feminists of the liberal orientations gave courage to Orthodox and traditional women to examine their position in society, now being quite prominent.

This publication does not cover all the critical issues, but it is rich in its geographical and cultural range, the denominations, age, and ideologies. We apologise to those voices we may have left out and we invite you to write the next chapters.

I am particularly proud that I am co-editing this publication with my husband, Elan Ezrachi. He never set out to be a Rebbetzin, but he knew he was marrying a vocal feminist, who rejected the traditional roles of our families of birth. He understood that for this supplement dedicated to women, he would play a supporting role and let us lead.

Rabbi Naamah Kelman is the dean of the Jerusalem campus of Hebrew Union College. She was the first woman to ever be ordained in Israel, in 1992.



A NOTE FROM THE CO-EDITOR

I am happy to take a back seat in this special supplement. I had the privilege of editing the **Plus61J** special High Holy Days' supplements of recent years. What I enjoyed most was the ability to reach out and then edit the works of thoughtful people from all over the world. Each supplement had a unique character, in content and in form. Many people around the world noted how the material enriched their reflections in receiving the new year.

It was only natural that when a supplement would be dedicated to the issue of women I will not serve as the chief editor. Luckily, my life-partner, Naamah Kelman, agreed to take the captain's role and keep me in the co-pilot seat.

Shanna Tova,

Elan Ezrachi, Jerusalem

Where is the front page with a woman blowing the shofar?

DEBORAH STONE

Deborah Stone is a journalist, content creator and communications consultant. She is a former Fairfax feature writer, and former editor of the Australian Jewish News and ArtsHub.



MY FIRST ROSH Hashanah edition as editor of the Australian Jewish News was in 1999. We prepared two test covers for the festival supplement: one with a bee and honey design, the other a shofar-blowing image.

I knew music teacher Anna Mylenek-Kalman had a beautiful shofar and was skilled at blowing it, so I asked her to pose for a photo shoot. The photographer did an excellent job – the long curving shofar snaking up diagonally through most of the frame with Anna's face and her flowing black hair in the bottom left and a lovely clear skyline for the title text.

The shofar blower was clearly the superior cover, but staff and management asked me not to use it. Picturing a woman blowing the shofar was going to – if you will excuse the expression – blow the entire edition. Advertisers, rabbis, and readers would inundate me with complaints. Nothing else in the supplement would matter. We would be throwing a match into a tinderbox of communal tension.

I gave in and I regret it still. Playing it safe that first year allowed me to remain in the editor's chair and do what I could to push the discourse. But I wish I could write that I had stood on the barricade and won some small change then.

Reflecting on this experience for another Rosh Hashanah, 22 years down the track, it is disheartening how little has changed. Our mainstream Orthodox congregations continue to ignore half their congregants for ritual purposes and sideline them in most lay leadership, too.

Our Progressive congregations subscribe to full egalitarianism in ritual but are still dominated

by male leaders. (Rabbi Nicole Roberts finally cracked a glass synagogue ceiling when she became Sydney's first female senior rabbi in 2018; Melbourne has yet to have such an appointment.)

The Australian Jewish community remains dominated by a fundamental inconsistency in which the majority of Jews subject themselves to Orthodoxy's medieval attitudes to women in communal activity, although they accept neither Orthodox religious law in their personal Jewish practice nor the marginalisation of women in other aspect of their lives.

Today's Australian Jewish News (AJN) would still be unlikely to feature a woman shofar-blower, for the same reasons I did not in 1999. No one dares upset the powerful Orthodox-aligned hegemony which controls most of our synagogues, our largest schools, and significant sections of our Zionist and cultural organisations.

On the other hand, Plus61JMedia is running this column and I do not doubt would run the woman shofar image. I choose to write for a Jewish media outlet that has less coverage than the AJN, but it represents a kind of diversity that offers hope for a more inclusive and progressive community.

Diversity on the fringes is, I believe, the most hopeful change we have seen in the past 20-odd years.

Media diversity, both professional and social, has enabled new voices to gain a platform and to question the ingrained habits of our community, of which the exclusion of women is the most egregious but certainly not the only problem.

“Australia's Orthodox congregations continue to ignore half their congregants for ritual purposes, which makes it impossible for women to have equality within our community”

New kinds of minyanim that do not align themselves with traditional religious movements have enabled women to participate fully in religious practice.

Nitzan, Melbourne's first Conservative shul, has bridged the gap between Orthodox and Reform and enabled those who want a traditional style of practice to find an egalitarian alternative.

Shira Melbourne attempts the tightrope walk of commitment to Orthodox interpretation of Jewish law while including women in leading service, reading from Torah and counting in a women's side of the mechitzah minyan.

Kolenu is a secular minyan which has expunged God from its prayer book and created a style of service evocative of the youth groups from which many of its members are recent graduates. It is about communal and expressive rather than faith-based Jewish practice and comes with an ethos of inclusiveness that is natural to the 20-somethings who run it.

The establishment of these alternative synagogue frameworks is important to the advancement of women within our community. Of course, many Jews are not religious, some never enter a synagogue and many more only do so a couple of times a year and for significant life cycle events.

But the synagogue remains one of our keystones and it serves a deep-seated symbolic function in Jewish life. The exclusion of women from the

religious sphere makes it impossible for us to have equality within our community.

If we have the sense that there are some things women cannot or should not do, it follows that woman are not equally valued, powerful, or effective. Our daughters will continue to grow up with the sense that they are somehow lesser than their brothers and Jewish life will become increasingly out of step with the cultural milieu of secular Australia.

At the same time, synagogues are not the only place Jews gather. Recent years have also seen a revitalisation of secular Jewish life, expressed through cultural and educational activities including music festivals, book weeks, film festivals, museums, and learning opportunities.

Many of these new initiatives and growing institutions are led by smart and talented women or by enlightened men who consciously work towards equal gender representation.

Platforms for Jewish expression which embrace diversity, appreciate originality, and welcome boundary-pushing give us a richer and stronger community.

Perhaps in another 20 years the diversity on the fringes will sit at the centre of our community. One of the many positive results will be full participation of women in our community. But it is not the Jewish way to depend on miracles. We have work to do.



Equality in our daily lives but not in our Jewish lives

SHARON BERGER

Sharon Berger is Program Manager at the New Israel Fund, Australia. Sharon is a former journalist for The Jerusalem Post, Reuters, the Economist and the Australian Jewish News.



JEWISH MOTHERS GET a bad rap in popular culture. They are portrayed as overbearing, complaining, loud, overprotective and guilt inducing. Often depicted with strong New York accents, they have been typecast, usually negatively, in countless movies and TV shows.

Yet underneath all the nagging they are strong, determined women who speak their minds. They call the shots and their often brow-beaten husbands are seen as weak, bumbling fools who do whatever they are told.

Yet the fiercely strong female control portrayed in the Jewish home struggles to cross over to communal and public borders. While women in general are making huge strides in breaking through the glass ceiling, the Jewish community remains resistant to true gender equality.

This is exacerbated by the rising extremist tendencies, most evident in Israel, where not only do ultra-Orthodox parties refuse to field female candidates but increasingly women are being deliberately erased from the public eye.

While more apparent in Israel, it's also happening across the Jewish world more broadly. In June, a well-respected teacher at the London School of Jewish Studies (LSJS) had her fellowship revoked because she received smicha (rabbinic ordination) and took on the title of Rabba after three years of study. UK Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, who is also President of LSJS, said she had "stepped beyond the boundaries of mainstream Orthodoxy."

Although she was subsequently reinstated after an outcry, it's important to question why a woman

learning Jewish law is so threatening to the male hierarchy. Knowledge is power and I hope more women and girls will be encouraged to embrace it.

For thousands of years this has largely been the domain of the men, and some are so firmly entrenched in "tradition" that they are not willing to embrace the change that is happening under their feet.

In more enlightened Orthodox communities, female spiritual leaders have been appointed and the world has continued spinning. In Progressive Jewish communities this situation has been normalised for some time.

“We shouldn’t act as a silent majority placidly accepting what men decide is in our best interest. We give our power away too easily, reluctant to ruffle feathers.”

In the meantime we as a community shouldn't act as a silent majority placidly accepting what these men decide is in our best interest. Their delegitimisation of our choices, whether to study, or pray (at the Western Wall or elsewhere), to cover our hair or not, to get divorced, or dress the way we would like should motivate us all to harness the power we have.

An obvious example in the Australian Jewish community is the prevalence of manels (all male panels). I no longer attend such events where no effort has been made to include a female



voice. I encourage you to not only call out the organisations hosting them, but to stop attending.

Women are more than 50 per cent of the population. We have many male allies. If we spoke with our feet, I am convinced organisations would address our concerns. We give this power away too easily, as we have often been taught not to challenge the status quo or are reluctant to ruffle feathers.

Let's embrace the positive aspects of the Jewish mother stereotype and stand up for what we believe in. We have been raised to believe men and women are equal in our non-religious lives, yet when it comes to our Jewish norms there is a major lag. Just as we all believe in equal pay, let's also advance equal opportunity within our communities.

"Is he/she Jewish?" is a standard mantra of the Jewish mother's lexicon upon meeting a child's potential partner. At its core it's tapping into what is a family's legacy. Will the family's traditions,

norms and practices continue to be carried down to the next generation?

Traditionally the idea of Jewish heritage being passed through matrilineal descent recognised the pivotal role of the mother in passing these traditions from generation to generation.

Within my family there is a legacy of strong Jewish women who I feel connected to, none more so than my own mother, who passed away recently. She was opinionated, tough as nails, and spoke her mind. She grew up in a time before feminism existed yet believes in gender equality. I feel lucky to have such a great role model.

We have much to learn from the inspiring women around us. Don't forget to take a moment during these days of reflection and gratitude to tell your mother, wife, partner, sister, daughter, friend how much they enrich your life.

How to make women's ritual innovations take root

VANESSA OCHS

Dr. Vanessa Ochs is an American scholar of religion at the University of Virginia, an ordained rabbi and an important figure in the fields of Jewish feminism and Jewish ritual



YOU CAN PROBABLY name some of the new practices and ceremonies that address women's exclusion from the public face of Judaism and crafted ritual responses to previously unmarked events in women's lives. Bat Mitzvah, check. Women's Seder, check. Baby naming ceremonies for daughters, check.

You may not know what occasioned the creation of any innovation especially relevant to women or how it came about. What did the creators discuss as they debated and then finalised their ideas? What were their strategies for introducing the innovation? How did rabbinical authorities, communities and family members push back when the status quo was challenged, and how long did general acceptance (if it ever came) take?

“If we hope to see them as enduring, let us try to come up with explanations that will have continuing resonance”

Not surprisingly, few can name the individuals or small groups behind Jewish women's innovations. There are exceptions: the first women rabbis, the first Bat Mitzvah. Some might recognise the names of Rivka Haut, Bonna Haberman, Anat Hoffman for their roles in women's group prayer at the Kotel.

But which woman first showed up at morning minyan wearing a tallit or tefillin? Who first referred to God in Jewish communal prayer as “She?” Who first called together friends to find Jewish ways to celebrate a pregnancy or heal after a miscarriage?

That the details of how and who get quickly forgotten or were never publicly known in the first place doesn't worry me.

Here's why: Jews tend to speak and teach about beloved ritual practices and ceremonies in simple, mythical ways. Even innovations that have changed dramatically over time and places and those that have been debated by rabbis of the past and present are given straight forward, rudimentary explanations that could satisfy a child.

A good many of the explanations fit the familiar “we suffered, but then we survived” template. Hence: We light a Chanukah menorah because we returned to the desecrated Temple and there was enough oil to last eight nights. We eat matzah and horseradish because we were slaves and now we are free. The explanations answer the questions “What does it mean?” or “Why are we doing this?” by offering some narrative (usually fabricated) and a little theology

These explanations offer sufficient rationalisation for continuing the practice. They go beyond expositions of commandments and rules for Jewish living found in the Torah, Talmud, and subsequent texts, such as Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, which organised and distilled Jewish law, or a later code, Yosef Karo's Shulchan Aruch.

Speaking both as a scholar of Jewish innovations and a participant in Jewish feminist innovation, I can testify that I am no fan of the rudimentary explanations. But I know that they matter a great deal to teach, motivate and remind.

Now it is very possible that we are unconsciously and yet purposefully allowing the real narratives about the new women's' rituals and ceremonies to grow fuzzy, in the name of letting simple and easy-to-remember explanations emerge which will speak to future adaptors.

Ideally, the emerging explanations would authenticate the Jewish innovations and practices along the lines of the old ones, those we think of having been in place since the beginning of Jewish time.

One of the new ritual practices, putting an orange on a Seder plate, already has an explanation that seems to do the job effectively. “We put an orange on the Seder plate because once there was a rabbi who said to a feminist theologian, “A woman belongs on the bimah as much as an orange on a Seder plate.”

As many well know, that never happened. There was no such rabbi. The earliest Passover ritual that eventually led to the orange emerged among lesbians and the item for inclusion was not an orange (or a tangerine, the fruit theologian Susannah Heschel proposed) but bread.

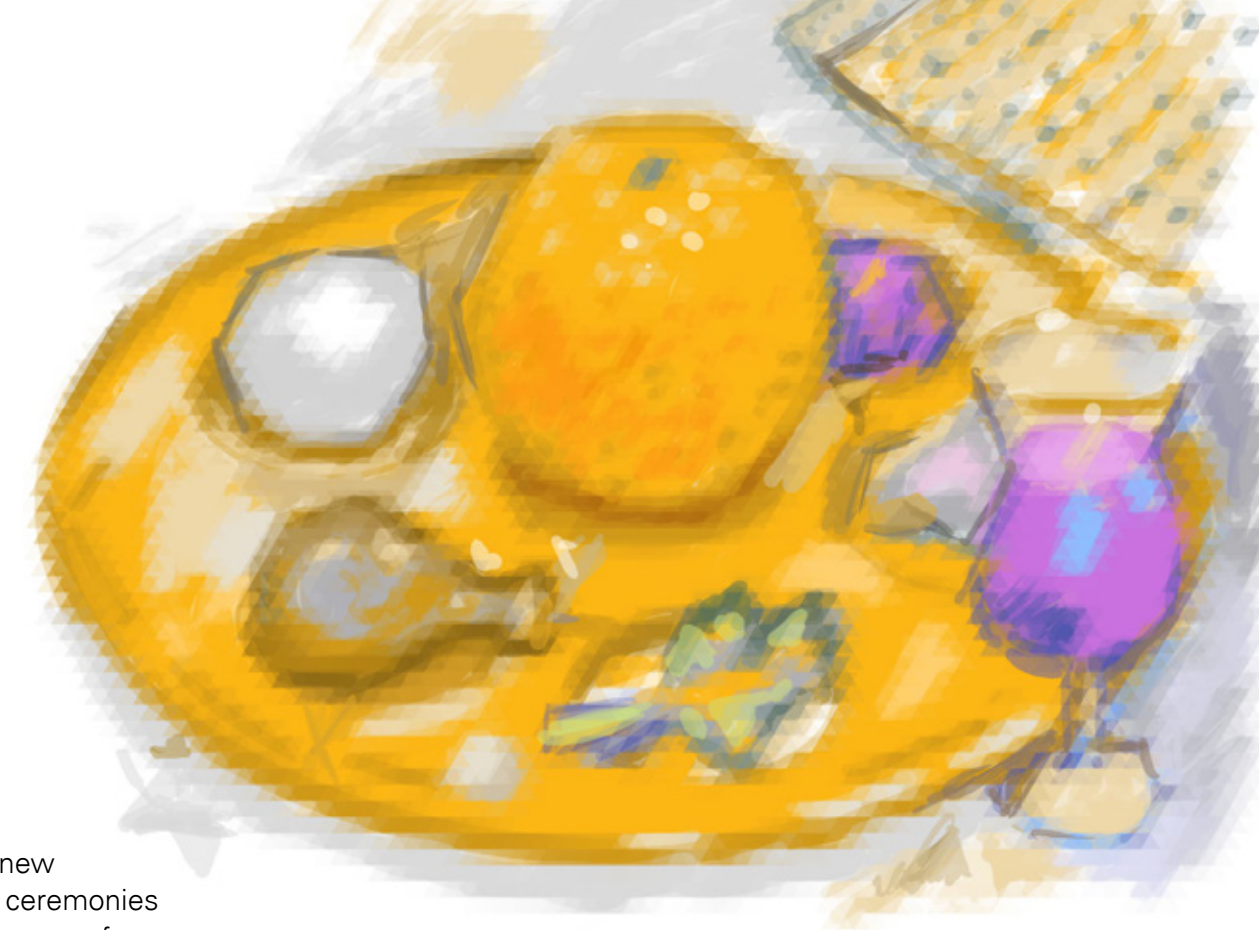
But I can see why this bogus explanation is so satisfying and keeps getting repeated. It suggests that if you are a Jew who wants to stand up against misogyny and create an

honored place for women, you can include an orange on your Seder plate.

It's a small and easy gesture to make (far easier than locating a shank bone or fresh horseradish, especially during a pandemic) and it effectively telegraphs your intentions to recall that while we no longer have to fight for women's spiritual rights in Judaism quite as aggressively as we did the last decades, the work is by no means done.

So here is the task at hand: If we hope to see some or all of the contemporary Jewish women's innovations enduring, let us try to come up with explanations (ideally ones that are historically accurate) that may have continuing resonance. Why do we have women's Seders? Why do we put a cup out for Miriam on the Seder table? Why have a rosh hodesh (new moon) groups? Why do women come to pray together at the Western Wall?

And what if we can't come up with satisfying explanations? It may be because, even in our time, any given innovation may have served its purpose of repair and no longer needs to be continued because Judaism itself has been transformed. Not just for women, but for all people, regardless of how they identify.



Architects who shaped early Jewish society in Palestine

SIGAL DAVIDI

Dr Sigal Davidi is an architect and an architectural historian. Her recent book *Building a New Land: Women Architects and Women's Organizations in Mandatory Palestine* (open University Press), was published in 2020



THE ZIONIST PROJECT is associated with massive building and impressive community development. While women played a significant role, their stories were not properly told. In my recent book I focused on these important women architects who were, literally, state builders. The first architect was Lotte Cohn, who emigrated from Berlin to Palestine in 1921 to become the first woman architect in the country.

Although women were not prevalent in the profession of architecture either in Palestine or the world in general, by the late 1930s there were 17 women architects who worked in all fields and on all scales of planning. Most of them graduates of technical universities in Germany and Vienna, these women left a distinctive mark on the planning, designing and building of the new Jewish society and the state of Israel.

From the 17 women I studied, three are highlighted here: Cohn (1893-1983), Elsa Gidoni Mandelstamm (1899-1978) and Genia Averbuch (1909-77). All three had a major effect on the assimilation of modern architecture in Palestine. All three ran successful architectural firms of their own, stood out among the architects in Palestine, and won the appreciation of the local architectural community and the public at large.

Among their notable achievements were projects initiated by Zionist women's organisations for the welfare of women and children, laying the foundations for Israel's socialist system based on modernistic ideas.

They planned extensively for four Zionist women's organisations in Palestine, all founded in the 1920s: WIZO, General Council of Women Workers in Eretz

Yisrael, WLI (Women's League for Israel), and MWOA (Mizrahi Women of America).

These bodies advocated a feminine agenda of advancing women by introducing modernisation into the household. To that end, they established modalities that reflected the modernist ideology. Seeking to help women adapt to their new land and providing for their needs by creating a supportive women's community, they set out to build autonomous modern establishments that were planned and managed by women for women.

In the 1920s, the revolution toward the professionalisation and modernisation of the domestic sphere promised to ease the load of housework. Notions of the "scientific household" were embraced enthusiastically by the Zionist women's movements, headed by WIZO, and influenced the establishment of their goals and their activity patterns for the benefit of women in Palestine.

The women's groups formulated a complete and indubitable belief in the contribution of rationalism in the domestic sphere to the proper development of Jewish society in Palestine in general. This belief placed the woman, who is responsible for the domestic sphere, in a significant and essential role for preserving the health of the nation and regarded her domestic work as contributing to building the nation and its strength.

In the new establishments, with their new and innovative planning and functionality, the scientific household was studied and modern culture was instilled into the women's life. The modern architecture helped structure the national identity of the new woman of Eretz Yisrael and played

a central role in the women's organisations' campaign for modernisation of the domestic sphere and the kitchen in particular.

In 1923, Cohn designed the first agricultural school for women in the village of Nahalal, which is 35km from Haifa. The project was initiated by Hanna Maisel, an agronomist, feminist and Zionist, and financed by WIZO.

After planning the first two buildings (1924; 1933), Cohn became the architect of WIZO's Nahalal Agricultural School, designing its five buildings (1924-46). In Tel Aviv, she designed two projects for WIZO: the WIZO Kitchen, a workers' restaurant with a training kitchen, which opened in 1931, and a Mothercraft and Child Welfare Centre in Kerem HaTeymanim (the Yemenite quarter) that opened in 1933.

The WIZO Kitchen was the first public kitchen in Palestine equipped with electrical appliances. While offering inexpensive nutritious meals to workers, it gave women an opportunity to practice using an electric stove and managing a large public kitchen.

Gidoni undertook her first project as an independent architect in 1934, winning a WIZO competition for designing the Domestic Science and Agriculture School in Tel Aviv. This competition marked the beginning of a productive cooperation between Gidoni and the women's organisations.

During her five-year residence in Palestine before moving to the United States in 1938, Gidoni designed six buildings for institutions initiated by women's organisations. They included the Women Pioneers' House (Beit Hachalutzot), apartments and workshops for single new immigrant women, and the WIZO House – its headquarters, alongside a women's club and training kitchen, both in Tel Aviv.

Averbuch won an architectural competition for designing the Women Pioneers' House in Jerusalem in 1939. This

marked the beginning of her long collaboration with five major Zionist women's organisations.

From the mid-1940s through the early years of Israel's statehood, Averbuch planned for these organisations youth villages for Holocaust refugee children.

“Few people are aware of the important role women architects played during the British Mandate period”

These establishments are an expression of holistic female creation, with women initiating, financing, planning, and managing modern social establishments for women, and they represent pioneering social action by the women's organisations and the women architects.

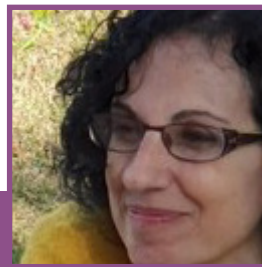
This expression of modernism that was affected by social changes was realised through this collaboration between professional modern women and women's organisations that contributed to the advance of women and shaped the image of the emerging Jewish society.



Between traditionalism and feminist activism

Yafa Benaya

Yafa Benaya is a lecturer at the Ono Academic College in Kiryat Ono and a research fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem.



THE TRADITIONAL Sephardi-Mizrahi identity – the identity of Jews from Muslim countries – is not always understood. It does not correspond to the range of Jewish identities that emerged in Europe as part of their encounter with modernity. In our world there are no Orthodox, Reform or Conservative denominations.

The Sephardi world does not recognise these denominations, nor the conflicts between them. They are not part of the history of Jews from Islamic countries.

As a result, the encounter with modernity in these countries bred a different type of Jewish identity and a different model of community. This identity does not accept the dichotomy between religious and secular. On the other hand, the Jewish community in these countries became a universe of diversity without division.

Traditional feminine identity adapted with flexibility between feminism and tradition, based on an approach that seeks to fix rather than take apart. This is an approach that recognises the patriarchal characteristics of the Jewish tradition and the role of women within it, while at the same time aspiring to gradually change it without taking it apart.

I will present two initiatives that serve as examples for this model. The first is Beit Midrash Arevot – Women Weaving Tradition, where I am a partner and leader – which has served traditional women since 2017. The second is Congregation Degel Yehuda, a Sephardi egalitarian community in Jerusalem that has been around for more than 15 years.

The women of Beit Midrash Arevot define themselves as traditional, but the place is also open to women who wish to gain familiarity with the Sephardi Jewish tradition. In reality, the Beit Midrash is also attended by Ashkenazi women as well as women from the Ethiopian community, religious and secular alike.

The openness of the Arevot group brings out a fundamental Jewish value of Hachnasat Orchim (welcoming guests). The goal is to build communities that exemplify what we had experienced in our countries of origin, to restore an inclusive model of multiplicity without division.

The activity in the Beit Midrash concentrates on several areas: Torah study with a focus on Mizrahi feminism and Islamic feminism. Here, we combine the study of Talmud and Halacha (Jewish Law), ancient Jewish texts as well as social and feminist sources.

“These are two initiatives that try to change the patriarchal traits of the Jewish tradition and the role of women within it – without taking it apart”

The issue of social class is very present in our learning, reflecting the history of pre-ascribed discriminatory roles, and the differential power structure between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews in Israel. We believe in the notion that Judaism is a system of social justice.

Jewish life needs to be updated to meet our times. At its root, it is a system of social change.

Yet Mizrahi women directly experience the issues of marginalisation of class, gender and ethnic positions, known today as intersectionality.

Rituals and ceremonies

We are also restoring traditional women's ceremonies that were celebrated in the East. For example, the ceremony Eid El-Banat (the holiday of girls, in Arabic) that was celebrated at the first of the month of Tevet in many communities of the Muslim countries, as a mark of feminine heroism, has been reclaimed.

Today, in Israel, we create rituals for women who wish to participate actively in weddings, Hina ceremonies, birth, as well as mourning rituals; all as communal traditional experiences. In this way, we explore and continue the Torah passed from our mothers and grandmothers, a Torah that was essentially oral.

Knowledge and learning

We study, research and write about path-breaking women in the Sephardi-Mizrahi world, with the goal of restoring the legacies of women whose contribution has been erased and forgotten by history. We are inspired by their reclaimed leadership. We provide training modules for women who wish to conduct rituals in their communities, and by doing so, we re-build the chain of tradition transmitted from women to women.

Degel Yehuda is an egalitarian, Sephardi-Mizrahi congregation, the first (and the only one so far) that exists in Israel. Based in Jerusalem, Degel Yehuda combines a commitment to the tradition

with the personal and social need of women to be full partners in Jewish practice in general and in prayer in particular.

In our community, women are counted in the Minyan; they lead services and read from the Torah. The doors of the community are open to all who wish to come. Men and women from the entire spectrum of religious and ethnic backgrounds, as well as the spectrum of gender identities, are welcome.

This is a model of the “Sephardi spectrum.” All our members are somewhere on the spectrum of faith, observance and commitment to the tradition. We believe that this model is a connector, a healing force.

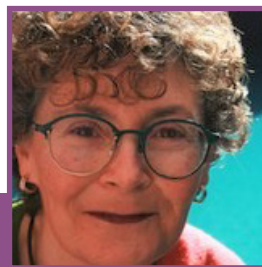
The egalitarianism is not only expressed in the domain of gender. It is also in the inclusion of those who are skilled in prayer and those who are not, empowering children to lead elements of the service, and ensuring that every woman and man feels that they are partners in Jewish living. Happily, Degel Yehuda has become a model and inspiration for egalitarian Sephardi communities in Israel and around the world.

The two initiatives described are based on the aspiration for Tikun Olam, namely, advancing social justice for the ger (the stranger among us), the orphan and the widow, as commanded by our tradition. But just as the Jewish tradition relies on the legacy of past generations, it operates with responsibility to the generations of the future.

My journey to leadership: ‘If I am only for myself, what am I?’

KIM RUBENSTEIN

Kim Rubenstein is Co-Director of the 50/50 by 2030 Foundation and a Professor in the Faculty of Business Government and Law at the University of Canberra.



I AM OFTEN asked what led me to law, academia and, more importantly, to human rights and gender equity advocacy?

There are many drivers but my Jewish identity has always been central. As a sixth generation Jewish Australian, my story is an unusual one.

My ancestor, Henry Cohen, was indicted at the London Old Bailey on March 20, 1833, for receiving stolen “promissory notes.” His indictment is accessible on the Old Bailey website, as are the Crown’s witness statements, which make for fascinating reading.

Cohen’s defence is rousing: “Gentlemen, I have taken these notes in my business, and I am entirely innocent of any guilty knowledge.” Naturally, “had [I known they were stolen] I would not have gone to Messrs. Masterman and Co. (the bank) where I must have been well known, having paid at that house monies at different times to a large amount, for bills of exchange accepted by me.”

Only a court with a heart of stone would stand unmoved by his request to be restored “to my wife and ten helpless children.” But no such luck, at least in England. Cohen was found guilty and at the age of 43 was transported (for 14 years), arriving in Sydney on December 18, 1833.

Thanks to Rabbi Dr John S Levi AC, we know Cohen’s wife Elizabeth and 10 children (and two of their servants) travelled to Australia on a separate ship, arriving three days after the convict ship that transported Cohen.

Cohen was sent to Port Macquarie, about 400km north of Sydney. He was “assigned”

to Major Archibald Clunes Innes, in whose “service” he remained for six years. In June 1839, Cohen requested a pardon, supported by Clunes Innes, and by the following February he was given a “leave ticket” but had to remain in Port Macquarie.

His service did not prevent him having two more children in Port Macquarie, in 1834 and 1837, and Elizabeth kept a clothing store in the centre of town.

Cohen eventually received a conditional pardon and by 1845 the Sydney Morning Herald reported him thanking the “settlers for their support” and resigning the management of the store to his sons.

“As borders close, nations and states huddle, exclude and banish strangers, Hillel’s famous words resound to me louder by the day”

He was pardoned fully in 1847.

Knowing I am part of a small group of Cohen’s descendants still living a Jewish life has been significant to me and relevant to my continuing interest in legal and social questions about membership and citizenship.

My lengthy Australian heritage spared me and my direct family from the Holocaust. But what Jew living anywhere has gone unaffected by the murderous events that so decimated European Jewry and placed a haunting yellow star in the psychology of Jews everywhere?

I knew that if I had been born in Europe it would have been me and mine, and that realisation

profoundly shaped my commitment to the role of law as a means of protecting human rights and promoting social inclusion.

Added to my Australian Jewish heritage, my experience as a Jewish school captain of Presbyterian Ladies’ College in Melbourne in the 1980s was formative in my journey. Indeed, reflecting on that period has been part of my life for the past 28 years, as I have been writing the biography of Joan Montgomery, my school principal and an inspiring leader. The book was launched on her 96th birthday.

My experience as a Jewish girl in a non-Jewish school environment not only framed my own sense of place in Australia, and the sense that as a woman there should be no barriers to what I use my skills towards, but the fight over her role as principal soon after I finished high school was my first experience of power trumping reason. That, too, is another influence on my desire to resist improper exercises of power in all that I do.

Hillel’s statement: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me, but if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” speaks to me and my drive to be an active citizen and to encourage others to be so as well. How can each of us make the communities in which we live stronger and more inclusive is a question that lives with me always.

This has been heightened over the past 18 months in our Covid world and I draw on my Jewish experiences when discussing these public policy issues. In the Sydney Morning Herald, I recalled being a law student and writing to a Russian refusenik. The freedom to leave was such a touchstone of democratic liberty. But without any apparent irony, our government is now preventing Australians leaving the country.

Equally, Australian citizens are stranded overseas, their passports of little value as their country of citizenship has effectively closed its borders to them. My work on dual citizenship (including section 44 of the Constitution and its implications for Jewish members of Parliament) has also been spurred by my devotion to active citizenship.

While being solely an Australian citizen myself, I recognise and cherish the cosmopolitan world in which we are all members, no matter whether solely an Australian citizen like me or a Jewish person with multiple citizenships.

As borders close, xenophobia rises, nations and states huddle, exclude and banish strangers, Hillel’s words resound to me louder by the day: “If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”

Feminism and Zionism — a work in progress

LEA MÜHLSTEIN

Rabbi Lea Mühlstein is Senior Rabbi at The Ark Synagogue, London



I HATE HAVING to introduce myself with my pronouns. I have no problem with people wanting to be able to choose their own pronouns, but when asked who I am, there are other aspects of my identity that matter more to me: I am a rabbi, thinker, liturgist, social activist and politician. In the first few years of my rabbinate, this is probably where my list of identity markers would have stopped.

While the ordination of women is no longer something rare, becoming a rabbi was barely imaginable in the community in which I was raised. Four rabbis were present at my Bat Mitzvah in June 1997 in the small Liberal Jewish community, Beth Shalom, in Munich, Germany, and not a woman was among them – what is more, none of us noticed.

Jewish women had been at the forefront of many European women's movements in the late 19th and 20th century and the first woman rabbi, Regina Jonas, was ordained in Germany in 1935 (and killed in Auschwitz in 1944) but, as the French sociologist Beatrice De Gasquet observed, the Holocaust was a major break:

"Unlike the United States, where feminism and a 'return to one's roots' went hand in hand, in Europe religious revitalisation was accompanied by conservative discourses on gender, for the collapse of liberal German Judaism led to the expansion of Orthodox Judaism."

When I grew up in the 1980s, women were represented in leadership positions in Munich's Jewish community and posters of the early Zionist pioneers prominently displayed in the Jewish

community centre showed young men and women working side-by-side as equals.

And yet, religious leadership in Central Europe, even in Progressive congregations, remained until recently the exclusive domain of men.

During the first years of my rabbinate, I often avoided getting involved with women's topics. I didn't want to be pigeonholed as a woman rabbi. This worked well for our rabbinic team as I am fortunate to be working alongside a wonderful male colleague who is much better than me in what became the female areas of the rabbinate - services for children and pastoral work.

“My work has taught me the power of naming gender injustice and of doing it especially in organisations that see themselves as egalitarian”

Perhaps because my own movement, Liberal Judaism in the UK, is at the forefront of egalitarianism, it took my work in the international Zionist movement to kindle my feminist activism.

I inherited from my father a passionate interest in communal politics and followed in his footsteps in advocating for religious pluralism - in his case in Germany, in my case in Israel. Remembering the posters of my childhood, I expected to find the Zionist movement to be fully egalitarian.

But as the American author, journalist, and social activist Loretta "Letty" Cottin Pogrebin put it:

"The fact is: the Zionist dream has not delivered for women." Just as the Zionist dream did not fully deliver for Israeli women, I discovered that it similarly had not delivered for women in the organised Zionist establishment.

When I first become active in the World Zionist Organization, the absence of women in leadership and speaking roles was astounding to me and even our Reform delegation included many more men than women.

When I was elected to be the international chair of Arzenu, the political voice of Reform, Progressive and Liberal Religious Zionists within the World Zionist Organisation, in 2017, I became the first woman rabbi to serve on the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Israel since its founding in 1929.

I realised there were additional aspects of my identity that I had to contribute to my Zionist work - I am a woman and a radical feminist.

While at first my efforts were largely met with annoyance and ignorance – “what's the point of counting how many men and women spoke and who was and wasn't interrupted?” - I was astonished how quickly others began to take notice.

Right at the start of my tenure as Arzenu chair, I remember rejecting a search process that produced an all-male shortlist. I asked us to reflect on the criteria by which we assessed suitability and qualification. For example, were we too focused on prior positional power and experience and thereby simply entrenching the patriarchy?

I was lucky to find wonderful female and male partners willing to join me in bringing about change. We decided to make targeted investments into women's leadership and attract talented women. In less than four years, we have almost doubled the number of women engaged in our work. And our efforts have caught on well beyond the Progressive movement.

My Zionist work taught me the power of naming gender injustice, not just defying

gender stereotyping and the importance of doing this work even, or maybe especially, in organisations that consider themselves egalitarian.

It has inspired me to be more conscious of elevating women's voices in all my rabbinic work: in my sermons and articles, in my theological thinking and in my work on liturgy. I follow a self-imposed rule that each of my written or spoken works which includes a quote must contain at least one quote by a woman.

And it has taught me the value of being the annoying person who points out that there is more work to be done.

And so, my request to anyone inviting me to speak is, please don't ask me to introduce myself with my pronouns, but rather with what truly defines who I am so that I can respond instead: “I am Rabbi Lea Mühlstein and I am unapologetic about wanting to dismantle the patriarchy.”

‘Judaism demands compliance: I can barely follow a recipe’

JOANNE FEDLER

Joanne Fedler is the Sydney-based author of 12 books, the most recent of which is *Unbecoming*; she is also a mentor and retreat leader



I WAS 12 when I staged my first feminist protest by refusing to recite the morning prayers at school. Why did boys get to say, “Thank God I was not born a woman,” and the girls had to supplicate with, “Thank you for making me just as I am”?

And why couldn’t I be counted for a minyan? Why did girls have to sit in the gallery in synagogue? Why couldn’t we read from the Torah?

The head of Jewish studies said women were naturally closer to godliness because we could have babies. Men were burdened with spiritual tasks. In fact, being excluded was to be exempted – and this, he claimed was “an honour”.

I knew gaslighting long before there was a name for it. Until then, I’d been a devout prayer reciter and mitzvah-chaser, on track to Eshet Chayil-dom (from the poem in Proverbs that describes the qualities of an ideal Jewish woman), with a price beyond rubies.

But something soured when I crossed the line from girl to woman. Judaism suddenly forked into a “his” and “hers”, underscored with a liturgy of rituals, fearful of menstruation, replete with a lexicon of shame-inducing hygiene. I slammed up against its gendered inhospitalities like a bird against a pane of glass.

Judaism demanded modesty and compliance. I can barely follow a recipe, let alone 613 mitzvot. Never, I swore, would I acquiesce to fashion advice from bearded men, erotophobic projections to curb male fervour for the female body.

*“Stung by Judaism’s exclusions,
I sought my faith elsewhere.
Feminism beckoned”*

As my feminism quickened, I recoiled from anaesthetising explanations of gender inequality and became loosened like a wobbly tooth in the jaw of my religion. It was another branch of the patriarchy, under a yarmulka.

But the fate of uppity women is well documented. The price of disobedience is expulsion, a myth deeply veined in our collective archetypal subconscious. Stung by what I perceived as Judaism’s exclusions, I sought my faith elsewhere. Feminism beckoned.

As a young women’s rights activist, I learned to discern hidden hierarchies of power and privilege, like shadows on an X-ray. Every blurry injustice clicked into sharp focus like a lens in those optometry frames which turns an O into a D.

I spotted objectification everywhere, like hidden wildlife in the bush – not only of people based on gender, sexuality, race and religion, but of animals, the earth and all its flailing resources.

Feminism troubles the very notion of narration; an idea exquisitely phrased by the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, who wrote: “Until the lions tell their own story, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.”

The eviction from Eden aside, the more ruinous injustice done to Eve (and every woman since

her) is the story that came to be told of her temptation. Whose agenda did her obedience serve? And what ever happened to Lilith, Adam’s first wife?

When I teach storytelling, I invite students to recast the tale of Little Red Riding Hood from the perspective of a little girl, huntsman, grandmother, wolf, even the basket of goodies.

Writers uncover complexity, errors of parallax, competing versions and silenced voices. A roving point of view dislodges the dogmatism of a single official narrative, determining who we deem as the protagonist, hero; what meaning we make.

Once we grasp that stories are cultural expressions of power, Eve’s insubordination gleams as a celebration of human imagination and autonomy. In the emergency of self-realisation, her defiance is a rasp of survival.

In *Autobiography of Eve*, contemporary American poet Ansel Elkins gives Eve her own voice: Let it be known: I did not fall from grace. I leapt to freedom.” The German philosopher Hannah Arendt asked: “To what extent do we remain obligated to the world even when we have been expelled from it or have withdrawn from it?”

I’ve stumbled on something close to an answer in the diaries of a young Dutch Jewish woman penned between 1941-43. Ettie Hillesum is one of our greatest treasures yet inexplicably remains largely unknown.

I read Ettie’s life as the inverse of Eve’s. With a drastic act of self-inclusion in the fate of the Jewish people, she volunteered to go to Westerbork labour camp, refusing opportunities which could have saved her from her death at Auschwitz in 1943.

She wrote, “... everyone who seeks to save himself must surely realise that if he does not go, another must take his place ...

“I want to be sent to every one of the camps that lie scattered all over Europe, I want to be at every front. I don’t ever want to be what they call ‘safe.’ I want to be there ... I want to understand what is happening and share my knowledge with as many as I can possibly reach.”

Shepherded by Ettie’s insights and courage, I am ushered back to the rich tradition of Jewish poets, storytellers, philosophers and thinkers who have complicated and interrogated what it means to be a Jew.

As a nation of Chosen People, designated as a light unto other nations, we have work to do on excavating our shadow, which includes the troubling questions of gender. We have so much to learn from the rebels in our midst.

With anti-semitism rising like a dark cloud around us, we may never, as Ettie expressed, “be what they call safe.”

Yet the most radical act of collective disobedience we can undertake is to refuse expulsion from humanity: to survive, not by falling, but by leaping to a new iteration of freedom.

Weaving a richer tapestry from the vault of our achievements

JUDITH ROSENBAUM

Judith Rosenbaum, PhD, is an educator, historian and writer, and CEO of the Jewish Women's Archive. She lives with her family outside of Boston.



FOR THE PAST 18 years, I have chanted the haftarah for the first day of Rosh Hashanah, which tells the story of Hannah. Barren and bereft, despite the love of her husband, she prays so fervently that the high priest, Eli, mistakes her for a drunkard. Her wish for a son is granted and Samuel is born. The haftarah does not end with this happy fulfillment but goes on to detail her weaning of Samuel and delivery of the young boy to Temple service – the “deal” she made in her desperate negotiation with God.

To the rabbis, Hannah becomes the paradigm of spontaneous prayer. To me, she’s an exceptional case of a woman’s story centered in our liturgy, her spiritual life held up as a model and the transitions of her motherhood acknowledged as essential human experiences.

The liturgy of the High Holidays focuses, in part, on failures – ours and those of our ancestors – to remind us that we all miss the mark, and that we must try to do better. The texts at the center of the holidays, like the story of Hannah, highlight

the challenges inherent to the human experience: jealousy, judgment, loss, misunderstanding.

That women play a central role in these texts also serves as an invitation. If the rabbis assembling our liturgy centuries ago could perceive and lift up the lessons of women’s lives, we, too, must expand our perspective by listening to the stories that are not generally centered in our narratives, such as the stories of women.

As an historian of women’s lives, and the CEO of the Jewish Women’s Archive (JWA), I am acutely aware of how rare it is for women’s lives to be recognised as touchstones of power and leadership.

Twenty-five years into JWA’s work, with thousands of Jewish women’s stories documented and made accessible to people all over the world, we are only at the beginning of expanding and transforming the Jewish story to include women’s voices and to value their essential historical contributions.

I became a student, and later a scholar, of history because I am interested in how individuals, families, and communities work to make change in the world. I am drawn to women’s stories because I love the surprises they offer and the untapped resources for learning about where we come from and where we might be headed.

As a woman, I enter the High Holy Day experience in a deeper way when I hear Hannah’s voice (and as the chanter, give literal voice to her story). But it is not enough to hear the story. We must also heed the lesson that she teaches us: to listen to the voices that we might initially be inclined to dismiss, to seek insight from experiences (public or private) that have not traditionally been part of our narratives of human experience, spiritual life and communal leadership.

When we listen to the stories of women like our mothers and grandmothers, we learn about resilience and how families have been built, loved, protected, and held together in times of violence and prosperity, continuity and upheaval.

From women who have run businesses and built institutions, like Helena Rubinstein or Henrietta Szold, we learn about the creativity and ingenuity it takes to navigate systems and make change, especially from behind the scenes.

“We are only just starting to expand the Jewish story to include women’s voices and value their essential contributions”

From activists, like Pauline Newman or Judith Heumann, we learn about the insights that come from the margins, and the bravery and risk-taking of those who have everything and nothing to lose.

From scholars, artists, healers and spiritual leaders – women like Asnat Barazani, Gertrud Bodenwieser, Helena Kagan and Regina Jonas – we learn about what it takes to work within societal restrictions, and what it takes to challenge expectations and break new ground. We learn to see the world through different eyes and to expand the range of role models we can turn to when we need advice and support.

In the midst of constant change, there is comfort in what remains the same: each year at Rosh Hashanah we encounter anew familiar stories – both those in the liturgy and our own life experiences. We are not alone in missing the mark; the founders of our people were themselves imperfect, deeply flawed, seeking ways forward. Just as we continue to work on ourselves, year after year, we will never be finished writing and rewriting the Jewish story.

Hannah, with her quiet but insistent prayer, invites us to listen more carefully, to attend to women’s voices more fully, and to carry the thread of women’s experiences throughout time, creating a richer historical tapestry with the potential to hold us, teach us and heal us in good times and bad.

Exclusion of women from public life can't be tolerated

RACHEL AZARIA

*Rachel Azaria is a social activist who served as deputy mayor of Jerusalem and as a member of the Knesset. Her book, *Guided Revolution*, was published in 2020.*



EQUALITY FOR WOMEN is a revolutionary idea that defines a watershed divide between liberal and conservative positions. It is one of the values that all liberals can agree on. As a result, when it comes to social change in Israel, and surely in the struggle between religion and state, the issue of gender equity is a change agent, where women are at the forefront.

In recent years, one of the most challenging struggles for social change in Israel has been the exclusion of women. This battle encompasses the tension between pluralism and conservative values, between the Jewish and democratic character of Israel. Therefore, it remains a flagship of the struggles for social change.

I was exposed to this issue 12 years ago during my campaign for election to Jerusalem's City Council. Like all candidates, my party wanted to publicise photos of our candidates in banners posted on buses. To our surprise, we discovered the banners could not include photographs of women.

I couldn't believe this could happen in Israel. My party decided to bring the story to the attention of the media and then, with the help of the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), to appeal to the Supreme Court. During the court hearings the judges asked the representatives of the bus company why they would not post my picture. The representatives said they feared the buses would be vandalized or set on fire.

The judges ruled that a bus company must not make decisions that impact on the character of Jerusalem's public sphere. If there was a danger to the buses, the police should take action. My pictures went on the buses and we felt victorious.

On the same day of the court decision, I was elected to the City Council of Jerusalem.

The story could end there, but I was troubled by this issue. I wondered how such a decision could have been taken without public debate, and since when have women been delegitimized in the public sphere. The issue was not only manifested on bus banners. We later discovered there were certain bus lines that required women to sit at the back of the bus.

Then, more such exclusions were added: banks that defined their working hours according to gender, separate job fairs for women and men, clinics with separate entrances for men and women, even restrictions on pavements. Separation and exclusion were everywhere.

We saw there was a need for a major public fight. Exclusion of women was a new reality that was spreading rapidly. These new expressions were seen only from the 2000s, nothing of this nature had existed in Israel before.

Over the next four years my council colleagues and I continued to appeal to the Supreme Court. At some point, the mayor, Nir Barkat, kicked me out of his coalition. Together with social change organisations, we created a continuous grassroots campaign, with demonstrations and protests. When the campaign became national, Haredi (the Ultra-Orthodox) women joined as well.

At the end, and with pressure from then US secretary of state Hillary Clinton, the Israeli legislature decided to act. The Knesset appointed a special committee and formulated new policies that defined exclusion of women as violating the law.

At that point we no longer needed the support of the Supreme Court. We were convinced that we had won. We were sure this pattern would not reappear. However, the proponents of exclusion had other plans.

Exclusion returned, and this time it appeared in gender separation in higher education and in cultural events. There were many cases of pictures of women being ripped from public signs, in Jerusalem and in other places.

The peak was when I was a member of the Knesset. A proposal by the Orthodox parties was submitted to allow such exclusion based on the argument with a misleading name of "multiculturalism". It took many efforts by female members of Knesset together with the Ministry of Justice to quash this proposed bill.

Why is this issue still haunting us? The answer is that at the foundation of society there is a deep tension between liberal and conservative approaches. It is not about comfort and utility, rather it is a debate about a basic value and on the meaning of multiculturalism. As we were pushing forward, we recognised that this was not about being considerate of the Haredi sector. It was not about sensitivity to others.

“The push to exclude women from the public sphere in Israel, driven by conservative religious forces, must be confronted head-on”

Any kind of "sensitivity" that involves exclusion of women harms all women. Any kind of exclusion sends out a statement that women are not legitimate in the public sphere. This battle is not about being considerate or sensitive to others; it is a deeper case regarding the status of women in the public sphere.

The debate enabled us to counter the multicultural argument and bring the pluralistic community to rally around a clearly defined value. The campaign against exclusion of women enabled a process that would place equality of women at the centre of public debate.

Exclusion of women cannot be tolerated in order to accommodate a competing value. This is a direct threat to the ability of diverse groups to exist together in one society. The campaign against exclusion of women made a big contribution to the capacity of Israel to function as a Jewish and democratic state.



Empowering feminist teens – and being empowered by them

TAMARA R. COHEN

Rabbi Tamara Cohen is VP and Chief of Program Strategy of **Moving Traditions**, a US-based organisation whose mission is to embolden youth through self-discovery, challenging sexism, and inspiring a commitment to Jewish life and learning.



A S WE BEGIN a new year, many of us with teenage girls in our lives, families and schools are filled with cautious hope as well as anxiety and concern. Last year was not easy for any of us but the toll on teen girls was especially heavy.

American girls aged 13-22 accounted for 71 per cent of all mental health claims by youth in that age bracket which is experiencing a 25 per cent increase in anxiety, depression and adjustment disorders compared to the end 2019.

In the early months of 2021, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), visits to emergency departments for suspected suicide attempts increased by approximately 50 per cent for adolescent girls compared with the same period in 2019.

Of course, this isn't the whole story. Teen girls also discovered their own resilience, forged new ways to stay connected, launched powerful online campaigns and bravely joined protests for racial justice, the rights of LGBTQ and non-binary teens and others issues they care deeply about.

Yet, as we adjust to the realities of the additional virus variants, raging fires and flooding in the US and around the world, growing antisemitism, and a US Supreme Court poised to overturn the fundamental right of women to control their own reproductive health, in the coming year Jewish teen girls will need all the support they can get.

I also believe that adults, who have more institutional power than teen girls, also need them

– for their creativity, for their new ways of thinking, and for the ways they will hold us accountable to our values and our commitments to not giving up on the possibility of a better world.

My goals are relatively simple. I want Jewish teen girls of all races, classes and religious affiliations – and their peers of all genders – to have the opportunity to learn face-to-face with their teachers, perform experiments in actual labs, and take leadership on the issues they care most about.

“Let’s lessen the pressure on Jewish adolescent girls – and on adolescents of all genders – to achieve perfection. Let’s instead make room for them to just be.”

I want them to have access to safe schools with proper ventilation and PPE. I want them to have the opportunity to perform solos on stage, to have the freedom to explore new interpretations of Torah, to create new Jewish songs.

I want them to have the freedom to experience the rush of a crush – on a person of any gender that gets their heart beating without fear that they will face bullying or discrimination. I want them to be able to define themselves using whatever language and pronouns give them a sense of belonging and rightness.

I know that while some of these wishes may or may not come to be, there is so much that

is possible for teen girls. I know this because over the course of this past year, I have had the honour of witnessing the strength, creativity and leadership of more than 50 Jewish teens - girls and non-binary - who participated in the Kol Koleinu feminist fellowship run by nonprofit Moving Traditions and co-sponsored by NFTY and USY (Reform and Conservative youth groups in the US).

I have been inspired by the teens who identify as girls and as non-binary as I have watched how, with a little support from adults and institutions that believe in them, they have the ability and the smarts to empower themselves and others.

One of the Kol Koleinu teens, Laine Schlezinger, spent much of the year creating an incredible resource for their school called Queeriosity: An LGBTQ Resource Guide for High School Educators. This 35-page booklet, available online, offers teachers a powerful and practical resource for ways to support the full range of students in terms of sexual and gender orientation in their high school classes.

It offers an overview of pronoun use, gender-affirming language, social emotional support and excellent ideas for teachers about how to bring subject matter that brings the presence of LGBTQ people and gender and queer theory into history classes, English classes, and health classes.

I caught up with Laine recently at a Jewish summer camp in Pennsylvania, where they were working as a counsellor. I asked Laine about what they were

seeing among girls and non-binary Jewish teens and what I heard was not surprising.

Laine spoke of more cases of campers needing to be sent home than in prior years, often for mental health reasons and some for eating disorders; many experiencing challenges that were beyond the capability of the staff to handle and seemed directly related to what Laine termed the “attention deficit” these Jewish teens had experienced over this past year of the pandemic.

Laine also reported on how many campers, especially girls and non-binary teens, are engaging with big picture societal issues, and expressed some concern about how much of the younger teens’ information was coming from Tik Tok. They are highly influenced by Tik Tok trends and struggle with body positivity and normative narrow definitions of beauty. Laine also said teens need support to cope with the upsurge of antisemitism they are encountering online and in person.

I want to conclude with one more important finding from recent research on adolescents of all genders. The strongest predictor of depression among adolescents in 2020 was perceived parental criticism and unreachable standards. I want to encourage all

of us to lessen the pressure on Jewish adolescent girls – and on adolescents of all genders – to achieve perfection.

Let’s instead commit to doing our part to not pass on our own stress. Let’s make room for girls and non-binary Jewish teens to lead, to be powerful, and to just be.



Where is the front page with a woman blowing a shofar?

As a special treat for Yiddish readers, here is Deborah Stone's article, translated by Reyzl Zylberman, Director of Jewish Studies at Sholem Aleichem College, Melbourne.



DEBORAH STONE

Deborah Stone is a journalist, content creator and communications consultant. She is a former Fairfax feature writer, and former editor of the Australian Jewish News and ArtsHub.

אין 1999 האָב איך דאָס ערשטע מאָל רעדאַקטירט די ראָש-השנהדיקע אויסגאַבע ווי דער רעדאַקטאָר פֿון די אויסטראַלישע ייִדישע נייעס. מיר האָבן באַשלאָסן צוצוגרייטן צוויי באַזונדערע טעסט-הילעס פֿאַרן צוגאַב: איינע מיט אַ בין און האָניק צייכענונג און די אַנדערע מיט אַ בילד פֿון ווי מען בלאָזט שופֿר.

איך האָב געוואָלט אַז די מוזיק לערערין, אַנאַ מלינעק-קלמן, האָט געהאַט אַ שיינעם שופֿר און איז געווען אַ געניטע שופֿר-בלאָזערין, האָב איך איר געבעטן פֿאַזירן אויף אַ פֿאָטאָ-סעסיע. דער פֿאָטאָגראַף האָט עס גוט געמאַכט - דער לאַנגער געבויגענער שופֿר וואָס שלענגט זיך דיאַגאָנאַל אין דער לופֿט כמעט אין גאַנצן דורך די רעמען פֿונעם בילד צוזאַמען מיט אַנאַס פנים און אירע פֿליסנדיקע שוואַרצע האָר אונטן אויף לינקס און מיט אַ שיינער קלאָרער הימל-ליניע פֿאַרן קעפל.

עס איז געווען קלאָר אַז די שופֿר-בלאָזערין איז געווען די בעסערע הילע, אָבער מען האָט עס קיין מאָל נישט געדורקט. נוצנדיק אַ בילד פֿון אַ פֿרוי וואָס בלאָזט שופֿר וואָלט צעבלאָזן די אויסגאַבע איבער דעם מאָס - זאָלט איר מיר מוחל זײַן פֿאַר דער ווערטערשפּיל. רעקלאַמירערס, רבנים און לייענער וואָלטן מיך פֿאַרפֿלייצט מיט טענות. גאַרנישט וואָלט נישט אויסגעמאַכט אַחוץ דעם. מיר וואָלטן אַרײַנגעוואָרפֿן אַ שוועבעלע אין אַ צונטער-שאַכטל פֿון געזעלשאַפֿטלעכער שפּאַנונג.

איך האָב זיך אונטערגעגעבן און איך האָב נאָך אַלץ חרטה. היטנדיק די ביינער במשך פֿונעם ערשטן יאָר האָט פֿאַרזיכערט אַז איך זאָל בלייבן דער רעדאַקטאָר און טאָן וואָס איך האָב געקענט דורכצופֿירן די דיסקוסיע. אָבער איך וואָלט זייער געוואָלט אַז איך זאָל קענען איצט שרייבן אַז איך בין דעמאָלט געשטאַנען אויף דער באַריקאַדע און אַז איך האָב דערגרייכט אַ קליינע ענדערונג אין דער צייט.

באַטראַכטנדיק די איבערלעבונג ראָש-השנה צייט נאָך 22 יאָר, איז אַפֿמוטיקנדיק ווי ווייניק האָט זיך געענדערט. די כלל-אַרטאָדאָקסישע קהילות פֿאַרזען ווייטער אַ העלפֿט

פֿון זייערע מתפללים פֿאַר ריטועלע צוועקן און באַזײַטיקן זיי אין דער מערהייט פֿון לאַישער אָנפֿירערשאַפֿט.

די פראַגרעסיווע קהילות פֿירן זיך אויף געאָליטאַריש מיט ריטואַלן אָבער די מערהייט פֿון זייערע אָנפֿירער זײַנען מענער. (ראַבינערטע ניקאָל ראַבערטס האָט סוף-כל-סוף צעבראַכן די גלעזערנע סטעליע ווען זי איז געוואָרן סידניי ערשטע עלטערער-ראַבי אין 2018, מעלבאָרן האָט נאָך נישט געמאַכט אַזאַ באַשטימונג.)

די אויסטראַלישע ייִדישע קהילה ווערט נאָך אַלץ דאָמינירט פֿון דער יסודותדיקער נישט-אויסגעהאַלטנקייט פֿון ס'רובֿ יידן וואָס וואָרפֿן זיך אונטער פֿאַר דער אַרטאָדאָקסישע מיטל-עלטערישע צוגאַנגען צו פֿרויען אין קהלשער טוהג, כאָטש זיי נעמען נישט אָן אַרטאָדאָקסישע געזעצן אין זייערע פערזענלעכער ייִדישער פראַקטיק, און פֿאַרווינקלען נישט פֿרויען אין אַנדערע אַספעקטן פֿון זייערע לעבנס.

די הײַנט-צײַטיקע אויסטראַלישע ייִדישע נייעס וואָלט נאָך אַלץ מסתמא נישט אַרויסגעהייבן אַ שופֿר-בלאָזערין צוליב די זעלבע סיבות וואָס איך האָב דאָס נישט געטאָן אין 1999. קיינער וואָלט זיך ניט אײַנגעשטעלט אויפֿצופֿרעגן די מעכטיקע די אַרטאָדאָקסישע-געשטימטע העגעמאָניע וואָס קאָנטראַלירט די מערהייט פֿון אונדזערע שילן, די גרעסטע שולן און היפשע טיילן פֿון אונדזערע ציוניסטישע און קולטורעלע אָרגאַניזאַציעס.

מעדיע די רובריק לִפֿון דער אַנדערער זײַט, דרוקט פֿלוס 61 און איך האָב נישט קיין ספֿק אַז זיי וואָלטן גענוצט דאָס בילד פֿון אַ פֿרוי בלאָזנדיק שופֿר. איך קלייב אויס צו שרייבן פֿאַר אַ ייִדישער נייעס-גרופּע וואָס האָט ווייניקער דעקונג ווי די אויסטראַלישע ייִדישע נייעס, נאָר זי רעפרעזענטירט אַ מין פֿאַרשיידנקייט וואָס לייגט פֿאַר האָפֿענונג אויף אַ מער אײַנשליסיקער און פראַגרעסיווער קהילה.

איך גלויב אַז מאַרגינאַלע פֿאַרשיידנקייט איז די האָפֿענונגפֿולסטע ענדערונג וואָס מיר האָבן געזען אין די לעצטע אומגעפֿער 20 יאָר.

פֿאַרשיידנקייט אין דער מעדיע, סײַ פראַפֿעסיאָנעלע סײַ געזעלשאַפֿטלעכע, האָט פֿאַרזיכערט אַז נייע קולות זאָלן האָבן אַ פלאַטפֿאָרמע און אַז זיי זאָלן אָפֿרעגן די אײַנגעוואָרצלטע טבעס פֿון אונדזער קהילה, צווישן זיי די שרייענדיקע אויסשליסונג פֿון פֿרויען כאָטש עס איז נישט די אײַנציקע פראַבלעם.

נייע מינים מנינים וואָס שטייען נישט צו צו טראַדיציאָנעלע פֿורמע באַוועגונגען האָבן דערמעגלעכט אַז פֿרויען זאָלן קענען אין גאַנצן אָנטיילנעמען אין אַ פֿורמען אײַנפֿיר.

די ערשטע קאָנסערוואַטיווע שול אין מעלבאָרן, ניצן, איז בייגעקומען דער חילוקי-דעות צווישן אַרטאָדאָקסישער און רעפֿאָרמער ייִדישקייט און האָט דערמעגלעכט אַז די וועלכע ווילן אַ מין טראַדיציאָנעלן אײַנפֿיר זאָלן קענען האָבן אַ גלייכבאַרעכטיקטע ברירה.

שירה מעלבאָרן פראַבירט גיין צווישן צוויי פֿייערן פֿון איבערגעגעבנקייט צו אַרטאָדאָקסישער אויסטייטשונג פֿון ייִדישע געזעצן אַרײַנגעמענדיק פֿרויען אין פֿירן די עבודה, לייענען פֿון דער תורה און ווערן אַרײַנגערעכנט אין אַ פֿרויען זײַט פֿון דער מחיצה מנין.

קולנו איז אַ וועלטלעכער מנין וואָס האָט אויסגעשטריכן גאָט פֿונעם סידור און האָט געשאַפֿן אַ מין עבודה וואָס דערמאָנט אין די יוגנט גרופּעס און אַ סך פֿון אירע מיטגלידער זײַנען טאַקע גראַדואאַנטן דערפֿון. עס האָט מער צו טאָן מיט געזעלשאַפֿטלעכע און אויסדריקעוודיקן ייִדישן אײַנפֿיר אַנשטאָט רעליגיעזער אײַנפֿיר און עס ברענגט מיט זיך אַן עטאָס פֿון אַרײַנגעמיקייט וואָס איז נאָטירלעך פֿאַר די עטלעכע און צוואַנציקער וועלכע פֿירן אָן מיט דער עבודה.

די גרינדונג פֿון די אַלטערנאַטיווע מינים שילן גערעמען איז וויכטיק אין דער אַוואַנסירונג פֿון פֿרויען אין אונדזער קהילה. פֿאַרשטייט זיך אַז פֿיל יידן זײַנען נישט קיין פֿורמע, טייל זײַנען קיין מאָל נישט אַרײַן אין קיין שיל און פֿיל מער גייען נאָר אַרײַן אין שיל עטלעכע מאָל במשך פֿונעם יאָר צוליב לעבנס-ציקל אונטערנעמונגען.

אָבער די שיל בלייבט איינע פֿון אונדזערע יסודות און זי קומט צו נוצן ווי אַן אײַנגעוואָרצלטע סימבאָלישע עובדה אינעם ייִדישן לעבן. עס איז אוממעגלעך פֿאַר אונדז צו האָבן גלייכקייט אין אונדזער קהילה צוליב דער אויסשליסונג פֿון פֿרויען פֿון דער רעליגיעזער ספֿערע.

אַז מען דערפֿילט אַז עס זײַנען דאָ זאַכן וואָס פֿרויען קענען נישט טאָן אָדער זאָלן נישט טאָן, גייט עס דערצו אַז פֿרויען זײַנען נישט גלייך אָנגעלייגט, מעכטיק אָדער עפֿעקטיוו. אונדזערע טעכטער וועלן ווייטער אויפֿוואַקסן דערפֿילנדיק אַז זיי זײַנען עפעס ווינציקער ווי זייערע ברידער און דאָס ייִדישע לעבן וועט אַלץ מער נישט גיין אין טראַט מיט דער קולטורעלער סבֿיבֿה פֿונעם וועלטלעכן אויסטראַליע.

אין דער זעלבער צייט זײַנען שילן נישט די אײַנציקע ערטער וווּ יידן טרעפֿן זיך. אין די לעצטע יאָרן האָבן מיר געזען ווי דאָס וועלטלעכע ייִדישע לעבן לעבט אויף פֿון ס'נײַ און ווערט אויסגעדרוקט דורך קולטורעלע און דערציערישע אַקטיוויטעטן, אַרײַנרעכענענדיק מוזיקאַלישע פֿעסטיוואַלן, מוזייען און געלעגנהייטן צו לערנען זיך.

אַ סך פֿון די נייע איניציאַטיוון און וואַקסנדיקע אינסטיטוציעס ווערן אָנגעפֿירט פֿון קלוגע און פֿעיקע פֿרויען אָדער אויפֿגעקלערטע מענער וועלכע אַרבעטן באַוואוסטזיניק אויף גלייכער רעפרעזענטירונג פֿון די מינים.

אונדזער קהילה ווערט אַלץ רײַכער און שטאַרקער צוליב די פלאַטפֿאָרמעס פֿאַר ייִדישער אויסדריקונג וועלכע נעמען אַרײַן פֿאַרשיידנקייט, אַריגינעלקייט און נעמען אויף שטויסן פֿון דער גרענעץ.

אין 20 יאָר אַרום וועט די מאַרגינאַלע פֿאַרשיידנקייט אפֿשר זיצן אינעם צענטער פֿון דער קהילה. איינער פֿון די פֿיל פאָזיטיווע רעזולטאַטן וועט זײַן די פֿולע אָנטיילנעמונג פֿון פֿרויען אין אונדזער קהילה. נאָר עס איז נישט ייִדישלעך צו פֿאַרלאָזן זיך אויף נסים. עס שטייט פֿאַר אונדז נאָך אַרבעט.

פֿון דעבאָראַ סטאָן



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