

Celebrating

the Jewish Calendar and Marking the Landmarks of our Lives

Women's roles for ceremonial occasions? It's way beyond matzo ball soup.

One of Lilith's most consistent subjects has been how women are expanding Jewish rituals. Two important changes: Women are finding new ways of enabling more female participation in traditional Jewish ceremonies—women and girls now routinely say the blessings over the Torah in prayer services, and some daven in tallit and tefillin; others are even becoming mohels. And, thrillingly, women are creating new Jewish rituals for women and men. Judaism pushes for *hiddur mitzvah*, enriching and adorning a mitzvah. So—at Pesach women now pour a cup of spring water for Miriam (Kos Miriam) on the seder table along with Elijah's cup of wine; we put an orange on the seder plate and add "Instructions from Vashti" to a plate of hamantaschen, weave personal prayers and blessings into a home-made ceremony welcoming a newborn Jewish daughter. We start Rosh Hodesh groups, pray with other women, hold adult bat mitzvah ceremonies, and infuse old rituals with new meaning.

And also...

- Turning 40 (Spring 1992)
- Women's Folk Judaism (Fall 1991)
- "What the Ark is to the Jewish Male, My Dish Cupboard Is to Me" (Fall 1991)
- At 60: A Ceremony of Wisdom (Fall 1988)
- To Buddhism and Back (Fall 1988)
- How Was This Passover Different from All Other Passovers? (Spring-Summer 1977)
- Bat Mitzvah in the Divorce Crossfire (Spring 1990)
- A Personal Ritual for Menstruation (Spring 1990)
- Midwife's Kaddish (Summer 1990)
- A Wedding "Beyond Belly Joy" (Summer 1990)

From Prehistoric Cave Art to Your Cookie Pan:

TRACING THE HAMANTASCH HERSTORY



A hamantasch is *not* a Haman's pocket. That's phony. It's a cosmic womb—a triangle with dots (seeds) inside. It represents something sacred *and* female.

Rabbi Susan Schnur, Spring 1998

Gaiac Healer, Goddess, Ecstatic Rock'n Roll Mama?

THE CULT OF MIRIAM



Who was the biblical Miriam? A minor character, backstage sister to the palace-reared Moses? Or was she a real historical leader in her own right? If you squint while rereading the books of Exodus or Numbers you'll pick up, though the pentimento, the existence of a cult of devotees who demonstrate extraordinary allegiance to Miriam.

The potter, Nisan Grabm-Mayk, explains: This graceful pedestal goblet holds spring water for the ritual of Kos Miriam. As the cup rotates, so Miriam's story is unfolding.

Rabbi Susan Schnur, Spring 1992



Two Lesbian Women and Their Pretty Straight Wedding

Michelle's grandfather, an Orthodox rabbi in his 70s, surprised both Michelle and Aimée with his reaction to their *Kiddush Ahava*. According to Michelle, his first response was mere acceptance of the situation. Yet, once he saw their involvement with traditional Judaism and got to know Aimée personally, he became very enthusiastic. He even led the Grace After Meals in his old-world accent by saying, "*Birshus ha-kalles, yefos to ar u-yefos mareh*" ("In honor of the beautiful brides"). Aimée says, "It blew us away."

Susan Sapiro, Winter 1997-98



Clockwise from the upper left: Judy's, Judy's, Judy's, whoops, Judy's, whoops, Judy's, Judy's, Judy's. And (missing from Elijah's chair because she's photographing her hamantasch) Judy.

JEWISH JUDYS & JUDITHS

My friend Judith Wild and I began planning a Jewish Judy's and Judith's party. The idea started out as a joke, but I decided we should make it happen....We sent invitations to all the synagogues and Jewish women's organizations in the area. We also posted notices in high-visibility spots like the Jewish Community Center. Mostly we relied on word of mouth to identify our constituency. The success of the party remains a delightful mystery to me...how nice it was (for a change) to create a community for ourselves based on joy.

Judy Brodkey, Fall 1994

Retro Weddings in a Feminist Age

Thirty years of feminist analysis exposing the perils women face in traditional marriages, yet modern women are opting for traditional wedding ceremonies. Even as women—and men—subscribe to the premise that marriage is a partnership of equals, the ceremony that creates this partnership seems to have escaped most women's analytical scrutiny.

Why? Lilith decided it was time to find out.

Spring 2000



ADULT BAT MITZVAH

CHANGING WOMEN, CHANGING SYNAGOGUES

Thousands of Jewish women have claimed for themselves the childhood rite of bat mitzvah. While no one seems to know who the first adult bat mitzvah was, she ignited a spark that has crisscrossed the continent, inspiring with possibility many women who needed just such a ceremony to affirm their Jewishness, connect with or make a public commitment to a Jewish community, mark a turning point in the life cycle or right an old wrong.

...Perhaps the time has come to institute an *esbet mitzvah* (woman of the commandment) ceremony so even girls who are bat mitzvah in their early teens can still experience the intense joy and affirmation an adult bat mitzvah can bring.

Ruth Mason, Fall 1989

Ceremonial Welcoming for a Newborn Jewish Daughter

When Kayla Judith Strassfeld was born, her parents had already thought out an alternative to the circumcision ceremony.

The essential part of circumcision is that it marks the entering into the covenant of Israel—for males in a physical ritual involving the sexual organs....There seems good basis for use of the *mikvah* as a ceremony for entering the covenant, since the connection between the *mikvah* and women's sexuality is also clear.

Sharon and Michael Strassfeld, Winter 1977

THE NEW IMPROVED JEWISH DIVORCE: Hers/His

I wanted to stand before the entire Jewish community—including the most traditional—and have my new status declared and validated. I believed that a Jewish ceremony, unlike the civil event, might emotionally support me through a difficult transition....I decided to gather my own cadre of supportive women friends. I also decided to write my own *get* document, to create my own customs for the day. On the one hand I felt unspeakably sad and afraid; on the other, I felt strong and dignified, ready to claim this ancient ritual as my own.

Vicky Hollander, Summer 1990

S.E.P.A.R.A.T.I.N.G.

A Havdalah Ritual for when a Marriage Comes Apart

Naomi and Joseph had been married for 19 years, and conflicts between them had escalated to the point where Naomi felt that it was not possible for her to continue in the marriage. She chose to mark the occasion of their moving to separate residences with a ceremony. Our Rosh Hodesh group chose to use and reinterpret the symbols of *havdalah* (the ceremony marking the end of the Sabbath)—the wine, the spices and the candles—to enable Naomi to mark this transition to a new phase of her life.

Ruth Goldston, Spring 1993



Do you want equal access to traditional Jewish rituals? Or do you want to create Jewish rituals honoring women's experiences? Equal rights, or equal rites?

Hamantasch (right) and background images from a photo by Louis Wolkstein in R. M. S. Skolnik's book, *Jewish Folklore* (Stevens, Blue & Chang, New York).

Illustration by Lisa Winkler

Historic artwork by Elina de la Cruz, based on the subject of the Talmud.

Foremothers

Heroes, Roles Models, Goddesses

From its earliest issues, Lilith recognized that the women of the Bible—Sarah, Tamar, Yael, Ruth, Lot's daughters, Jephtha's daughter, Vashti, Pharaoh's daughter (to pick just a few)—had been sidelined to near-invisible roles for over 2,000 years, and that our job was to more fully imagine them and bring them to center stage. We premiered new texts by Alicia Ostriker, Marcia Falk, Ilana Pardes, Deena Metzger and others, and trumpeted groundbreaking feminist scholarship.

Lilith moved on to "capture" all sorts of foremothers: Charlotte Salomon, the Holocaust painter; Amy Levy, the Victorian Sylvia Plath; Manya Shohat, inventor of the kibbutz; Pauline Wengeroff, 19th-century diarist; Israeli poet Zelda, and contemporary women too little known.

We rewrote "A Woman of Valor" so that it speaks to new kinds of exemplary females, and we continue to unearth and celebrate not only foremothers, but foremothers-in-the-making.

And also...

Gender Rebellion in Yiddish Film: Molly Picon (Winter 1995-96)

Radical Jewish Women in America (Winter 1989)

Blaming Jews for the Death of the Goddess (Issue #7, 1980)

Esther Singer Kreitman: The Trammelled Talent of Isaac Bashevis Singer's Neglected Sister (Spring 1991)

Deconstructing Dena (Spring 2002)

Surviving Siberia: Ida Nudel Beats the Odds (Winter 1982-83)

Mother Nature and Human Nature: The Poetry of Malka Heifetz Tussman (Fall 1987)

Judy Chicago (Summer 1994)



The woman who carried out the first known act of Jewish sabotage against the Nazis talks with Lilith about what it was like to be a woman in the Resistance in the ghetto and forest, her relationships with male and female comrades, and the special role women took in the movement.

Jewish women partisans from Vilna fought alongside men in the anti-Nazi resistance in the forests. Photographed on their return to Vilna on Liberation Day, 1944, are (l. to r.) Vítke Kempner, Rusika Korczak, and Zelda Trager. (Photo courtesy Ciesla Foundation)

Aviva Cantor, Spring 1987

Conjuring Emma Goldman

For some, she appears as the archetype of the righteous rebel. For others she appears as the nostalgic remnant of a more radical Jewish past, of who we were before we chose polite, liberal politics over active, bare-faced resistance. She surfaces as a reminder that feminism, Jewishness, and a sense of social justice can all be part of one's identity, that these are not contradictory, that they need not—cannot—be separated.

Rachel Kranson, Winter 2001

My Mother the FEMINIST



I recognized my mother's subversive feminist lessons only in retrospect, when as an adult, I learned that biographies of Elizabeth Blackwell and Harriet Tubman were not standard children's fare. It also wasn't until adulthood that I realized how cleverly my mother had solved the "what shall a Jewish family do about Christmas?" dilemma. On Christmas morning I would always find a little something from "Mrs. Santa Claus," who, my mother explained, was undoubtedly doing all of Santa's work, including the gift wrapping, without getting credit. She would remedy this injustice.

Carol Tawris, Summer 1989

The Lilith Question

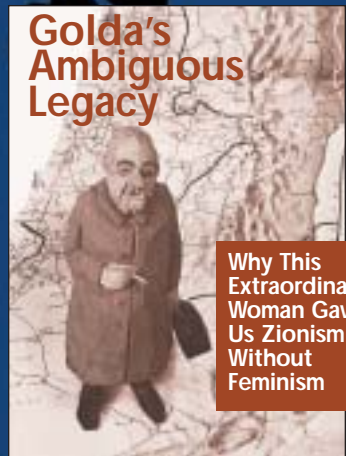
The most ancient Biblical account of the Creation relates that God created the first man and the first woman at the same time. Jewish legends tell us that this woman was Lilith.

Lilith, we learn, felt herself to be Adam's equal ("We are both from the earth"), but Adam refused to accept her equality.

...The demonic Lilith overshadowed the original independent Lilith in all subsequent legends to the point where the name Lilith engendered only the association of demon/witch....The time for reassessment of the Lilith myth has arrived.

Who is Lilith? Or, more to the point, which is the true, the real Lilith—the rebel against tyranny—or the wild-haired vengeful witch? Is Lilith a myth without historical basis and, if so, why was it necessary to invent her? Or does she embody a clue to our past and, if so, what? Should we forget her revolt because of her later (alleged) crimes and thus reject her? Or should we forget her later crimes and focus only on her revolt, because only this is significant; or do both parts have value for us? All these are aspects of The Lilith Question.

Aviva Cantor, Fall 1976—premiere issue



Golda's Ambiguous Legacy

Why This Extraordinary Woman Gave Us Zionism Without Feminism

The wood statuette above of Golda Meir (partial map of Israel in the background) features her ubiquitous cigarette (tough politician) and handbag (devoted grandma). Was it because her public saw these two roles as contradictory that Golda was such a popular subject for caricature, taking on a folkloric aspect?

Prina Lahav, Issue 6, 1979



Proud of her Jewishness, written about by Charlotte Brontë, Virginia Woolf and Henry James, painted by Delacroix, she scandalized France (no easy feat) and redefined theater.

Rachel Kadish, Winter 1995-1996



LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS WOMEN

A walking (or armchair) tour honoring Jerusalem's renowned terrific women

Dorothy Gitter Harmon and Ntiza Brown Rosovsky, Spring 1997



Trina Robbins, Issue 7, 1980

What Foremother do you know who still needs to be discovered?

Uncovering the Darker Stories

Taking Risks to Report the Truth

Sometimes we worried, at Lilith, that too many of our stories were “bad news”—addictions in Jewish families, painful Holocaust stories, domestic violence in Jewish homes, genetic diseases, AIDS among Jewish women—and not enough of our stories were “good news.” But we value female Holocaust survivors’ narratives as a precious legacy. And the Jewish community’s characteristic “silence” around many problems and pathologies in our culture serves only Judaism’s collective sense of shame; it doesn’t serve the individually disempowered among us: the female, the young, the old, the poor, the mentally or physically ill, the hidden.

For many reasons, perhaps—anti-Semitism, concern over the marriageability of offspring, Jews’ defensive sense of being culturally superior—Jews have been, as a people, allergic to our own “dirty laundry.” Lilith, though, has been staunchly committed to uncovering painful truths in our midsts, and we’ve occasionally taken hard knocks for doing so. “Speaking our truths” is a core piece of Lilith’s feminist, ethical mission; with our readers’ help, we intend to speak more of them.

And also...

Five Women’s Holocaust Stories (and How to Teach Them) (Winter 1994)

Why Jewish Women Get Raped (Summer 1986)

From Privilege to Poverty (Summer 2002)

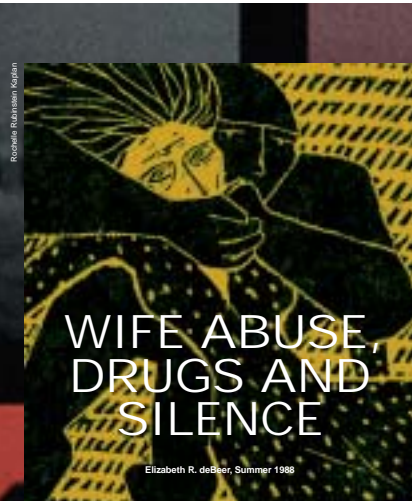
Hidden Children of the Holocaust (Fall 1991)

A Refugee Again—This Time in a Country Called Widowhood (Spring 1994)

A Lesson in Dying (Fall 2000)

Why Jewish Girls Starve Themselves (Spring 1998)

Surviving Incest in a Holocaust Family (Winter 1993)



Roberta Rubin/Kogon



Equality Soldiers On in Israel

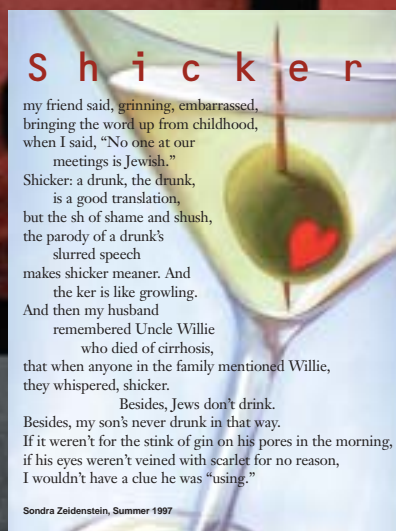
Protecting Women from Sexual Harassment

For decades, sexual exploitation of women in the military, the workplace, the political arena and indeed in any public or private forum was viewed as a fact of life. Israeli women knew that they could expect to be accosted by their bosses, that army jeeps were dangerous venues, that professors had wide license to make intrusive remarks, that hospital nurses were fair game for anybody wearing a white coat.

How did they cope? In the vast majority of cases by silence, by shame, by keeping a low profile, and sometimes by playing the very game they had been unwillingly drafted into. One mature Jerusalem attorney recalls that when she was a young lawyer a senior jurist repeatedly put his hand on her thigh. Complaining seemed out of the question: “What could I do?” asks the woman who until today is too nervous about the man’s power to name him. “I was just a nobody, and he was a leader of the profession.”

The sweeping 1998 Prevention of Sexual Harassment Law is considered the most progressive legislation of its kind in the world.

Helen Schary Motro, Fall 2000



Tracy Weil

Shicker

my friend said, grinning, embarrassed, bringing the word up from childhood, when I said, “No one at our meetings is Jewish.” Shicker: a drunk, the drunk, is a good translation, but the sh of shame and shush, the parody of a drunk’s slurred speech makes shicker meaner. And the ker is like growling. And then my husband remembered Uncle Willie who died of cirrhosis, that when anyone in the family mentioned Willie, they whispered, shicker. Besides, Jews don’t drink. Besides, my son’s never drunk in that way. If it weren’t for the stink of gin on his pores in the morning, if his eyes weren’t veined with scarlet for no reason, I wouldn’t have a clue he was “using.”

Sandra Zeidenstein, Summer 1997



SELECTIONS FROM **NOGA**, ISRAEL’S FEMINIST MAGAZINE prepared and translated by Naomi Danis

THE FLESH TRADE: AROUND THE WORLD AND IN ISRAEL

About one quarter of the prostitutes in Israel are imported. An estimated 1,000 women arrive in Israel for this purpose each year, and 70% of the prostitutes in Tel Aviv come from the former Soviet Union. Other countries of origin include the Baltic States, South Africa, and the Dominican Republic.

There are reliable testimonies that these women are held in brothels against their will. Some are beaten and raped by gangs specializing in robbing them of their self esteem until they believe that prostitution is their only way out. Some are drugged for this purpose. A few “disobedient” women have been murdered.

Mira Ariel, Spring 2000 based on a report by Martina Vandenberg with the help of Noga Applebaum for the Israel Women’s Network



Time by Judith Marano

On the Autopsy Table in Lodz

“Sally, come quick to the Anatomy Building.” “What’s going on?” “Come and see for yourself,” answered Sarah, a girl I knew well from the years spent together in the Lodz ghetto.

“Sally,” Sarah said triumphantly, “take the scalpel and start the dissection of Hans Biebow.”

HANS BIEBOW!

I looked at the exposed body again. The narrow forehead, the shape of the jaw, were the sole remainders of Hans Biebow, the man who liquidated the Jews of Lodz.

Is it Biebow, the six-foot-tall Wagnerian god in shiny black boots, whip in hand? What happened to the golden hair, the cold blue eyes? That’s how I remember him as he stood on the podium during the eradication of the Lodz ghetto in the summer of 1944. I was eighteen.

...I was among the crowd of listeners, and when the sun caressed Biebow’s blond head I felt that God had abandoned us and joined the company of Biebow’s.

I wondered why we called the lowest human instincts of hatred and violence “dark” forces when they should be called “blond” ones.

Salome Kape, Summer 1993

A Paradoxical Legacy: Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach’s Shadow Slide

An Orthodox rabbi by training, Rabbi Carlebach took down the separation between women and men in his own synagogue, encouraged women to study and to teach the Jewish texts, and gave private ordination to women before most mainstream Jewish institutions would.

It is an alarming paradox, then, that the man who did so much on behalf of women may also have done some of them harm. In the three years since Rabbi Carlebach’s death, at age 69, ceremonies honoring his life and work have been interrupted by women who claim the rabbi sexually harassed or abused them. In dozens of recent interviews, Lilith has attempted to untangle and to explain Rabbi Carlebach’s complex legacy.

Sarah Blustain, Spring 1998



Family Secrets

Did your Jewish family once have a retarded relative hidden away? An old photograph holds new revelations about the author’s long-dead sister.

Mona Kornberg, Winter 1977



Do you have a story that’s still too hard to tell?

Justifying Jewish Law

(that is, making it more *just*)

Jewish law specializes in distinctions—between kosher and non-kosher, between holy days and quotidian moments, between Jews and non-Jews, and—the clinker for us females—between women and men.

Jewish feminist scholars, passionate laypersons and justice seekers have wrestled with legal strictures that have often cast women into the category of second-class Jews, unable to take on full ritual responsibility, unable to instigate divorce proceedings, unable to serve as witnesses in a rabbinic court, unable to pray aloud in public. Lilith has analyzed and chronicled these constraints, and has showcased a generation of women scholars brilliantly able to reinterpret our sacred texts, in ways that allow even the most strictly observant Orthodox woman to claim her place in prayer and learning.

Women can now act as representatives in Orthodox rabbinic courts, Conservative and Reconstructionist Judaism have for more than 20 years ordained women as rabbis and invested them as cantors, and women in the Reform movement have been in pulpits for 30 years. Considering the geological pace of the changes in Jewish law, we're living in a time of extraordinary transformation.

And also...

When the Mohel Is a Woman (Spring 1999)

Women's Liberation and Jewish Law (Fall 1976—premiere issue)

Notes Toward Finding the Right Question (A Vindication of the Rights of Jewish Women) (Issue # 6, 1979)

Bound for Glory: Females in Phylacteries (Fall 2002)

Taking Back Our Rites: Candles, Challah and the Laws of Married Sex (Summer 2001)

Jewish Divorce Law: If We Must Part, Let's Part as Equals (Spring/Summer 1977)

FEMINISM WITHIN ORTHODOXY

A REVOLUTION OF SMALL SIGNS

Although Talmud study, throughout most of Jewish history, was out of bounds for women, it is now well, if not widely, accepted...A once uncommon sight is now taken for granted: women walking through the streets on a Shabbat afternoon (in communities where there is an *eruv*—a boundary marker allowing Orthodox Jews to carry on the Shabbath) with a volume of Mishnah or Talmud tucked under their arms.

...To a non-Orthodox reader, this might all seem totally inconsequential, or worse, laughable. So what if women recite a bit of Torah in public? So what if a girl stands in the women's section and the rabbi recognizes her on her bat mitzvah day? What is so remarkable that a Jewish child finally carries both mother's and father's names? These are "significant changes in Orthodoxy"? ...Each act represents a fundamental shift...The taboos against seeing and hearing women perform communal acts of holiness are steadily being lifted.

Blu Greenberg, Summer 1992

Paradoxes and Mysteries of Sacred Space

CASE #3
SACRED FUSE-BOX CLOSET



When my father died, I decided I was going to say kaddish once a day for the traditional 11 months and one day. I'm a Conservative Jew, but an Orthodox lunchtime minyan was my most practical option, at an office a block from where I work. I called up and asked if I could daven there, and they said that was okay, they would arrange a place for me behind the filing cabinet.

So I went to this minyan five days a week. One day I get to the minyan a little late, and a man says to me that if I come late I should stay in the fuse-box closet and not walk past the men and distract them to get behind the filing cabinet. A few times that year I ended up praying in the fuse-box closet (I was always the only woman at the minyan).

Once, near the end of my kaddish year, an Israeli woman joined me behind the filing cabinet. She was very indignant about the chairs—that the men had chairs, but I didn't. She asked, "Why do you put up with this?" and I answered, "Maybe I need to keep my anger. If I had a chair," I said, "I'd be comfortable."

Naomi Danis, Summer 1996

GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT AT THE SEMINARY

Conservative women seeking to become rabbis have grounds for concern.

...The Seminary's Chairman of the Department of Pastoral Psychiatry, Mortimer Ostow, speaking on "Women and Change in Jewish Law" three years ago at the Rabbinical Assembly Pastoral Psychiatry Conference: "Among men who will oppose the presence of women on the bimah will be many who fear that a menstruating woman will contaminate them and the sacred objects on the bimah, especially the Torah. Others...will be awed and humiliated by the woman whose competence in religious matters clearly exceeds their own. While such men will not be challenged directly in a sexual encounter with these dangerous and powerful women, their self-esteem within the community where they live will be shaken, as will their confidence in their own vitality."

Amy Stone, Spring/Summer 1977

"After a Decade of Jewish Feminism, The Jewry is Still Out"

An interview with Arlene Agus and Paula Hyman, part of a group—Ezrat Nashim—that in 1972, in a historic move, petitioned the Conservative movement's rabbis for women to be counted in the minyan, be given aliyot to the Torah, and be encouraged to become rabbis and cantors.

HYMAN: We asked that women be declared obligated under Jewish law to observe all the commandments, because we recognized that the exemption of women from certain time-bound commandments placed women in a second-class category vis-à-vis Jewish tradition.

I think it is an important theoretical issue, because...the *halchic* [Jewish legal] considerations are all linked to this exemption of women. ...In Jewish law, if you're not obligated, you're in an inferior position to those who are obligated.

Fall/Winter 1983



An image from an Israeli poster protesting practices in Jewish divorce law.

Naomi Grossman, Summer 1993

"I am their Text."

A College Student Struggles to Teach Jewish Feminist Values to Teen Girls

On the third day of class, we talk about Feminism. "Are you a feminist?" I ask. "No way," says one girl, immediately. "Feminists are lesbians."

The girls are shocked. Though they've sat through several years of Jewish education (they had to in order to have a bat mitzvah ceremony), they have never seen these texts before.

"That's what it means if you translate it?" one girl asks incredulously. "Well, forget it, I'm not having a Jewish wedding."

Sophie Danis Oberfield, Summer 2001

Women Fight to Pray

The conflict between Israel's Ministry of Religion and the women praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem took a dramatic turn recently when Israel's Supreme Court agreed to make a decision on the legality of the women's service and to guarantee the women worshippers protection as long as they refrain from praying at the Wall with tallis and Torah.

According to the "Women of the Wall," opposition to them is not based on *halacha* (Jewish law). No religious authority has dared declare that *halacha* forbids women from doing what they're doing. Opposition is based instead on *minhag* (custom). Simply, the women have been told that praying at the Wall with a Torah and wearing prayer shawls has never been done in Israel and therefore is not acceptable.

Randi Jo Land and Toby Axelrod, Summer 1989

The Prisoners of Divorce

Increasingly, rallies and other forms of communal pressure are being brought to bear on recalcitrant husbands. In Los Angeles recently, community centers were plastered with posters showing a man's face, giving his name and stating that he refused to give his wife a *get*. In one community in Canada, a group of women united in their refusal to go to the mikvah until a particular husband relented in his demand for \$25,000 in return for giving his wife a *get*. (Mikvah is a prerequisite for the resumption of a couple's sexual relations after the mandated menstrual separation).

Adena Berkowitz, Winter 1987-88

Can you think of any other time in Jewish history when there has been such energy infusing Jewish discourse?

Optioning Motherhood

How We React to the Reproduction Imperative

Fears of fertility. Fears of infertility. Anguish over pregnancy loss, and new rituals to ease the passage through this pain. Women “mothering” not through maternity, but through choosing cultural roles of “mentor” and “nurturer.” These days, hardly any aspect of reproduction is off limits, and Lilith has covered them all—from the changing stances of Jewish organizations towards these issues to—our beat, really—the unique and extraordinary responses of individual women through wild and virgin societal territories.

The politics of reproduction, the socio-biological mandate to reproduce, and the Jewish injunction to “be fruitful and multiply” all converge here. As Lilith “mothered” more than 25 years’ worth of articles on these issues, we expanded the discourse on mothers without partners, lesbian mothers, the world of adoption, and lots more. Finally: abortions, failing to tell young Jewish women loudly enough that the biological clock is no joke, and groundbreaking new angles on real women’s experiences in trying (and not trying) to have it all.

And also...

Single Mothers—By Choice (Spring 1996)

Is Abortion Murder? Jews and Christians Answer Differently (Winter 1997-98)

“How Our Mothers Nursed Us” (Spring 1993)

On My Daughter’s Answering Machine (Winter 1993)

Pregnant? Don’t Eat Radishes: Medieval Jewish Childbirth Practices (Fall 1991)

The Stay-at-Work Mom (Fall 2002)

How Did They Get into Her Womb? A DES Daughter’s Story (Winter 1996)

Breastfeeding in Shul—A Holy Act (Fall 2002)



For more than two decades, LILITH has been following the story of contemporary Jewish women’s fertility through its various permutations. The cover story of issue # 3, an article entitled “The Population Panic,” told “Why Jewish leaders want Jewish women to be fruitful and multiply.” It featured the outraged responses of some women protesting what they felt was a “barefoot and pregnant” motif trying to draw them back from feminism’s gains. Ten years later, the same author wrote about “The ‘New’ Infertility,” exploring the feelings of childless couples

and the experiences of a Jewish surrogate mother. In 1996, articles on Jewish single mothers who’d had children without partners concluded with the first-person piece “You Don’t Have a Daddy, You Have a Donor.” LILITH’s cover stories have focused not only on gestational motherhood, but also on adoption—from three perspectives: the infertile mother, the adoptee and, most recently, in “Sex and Shame in a Different Era,” Jewish birth mothers who, years ago, relinquished their babies for adoption

Fall 2001

NEWS TO TURN THE WORLD

Illegal abortion: That little known commonplace in the world of our immigrant mothers

Katie Singer, Spring 1996

Torah as the Matrix for Feminism

in which it is shown that in Judaism a woman’s personhood is not defined by motherhood



What is feminism? Betty Friedan encapsulates it in a word—the “personhood,” she puts it, of women.

...The beginning of personhood lies in Jewish civilization.

...Consider, by way of illustration, Hannah, the mother of Samuel: a heroine of Jewish civilization. She is counted as a heroine because she was a barren woman who prayed to have a child and got one.

...Hannah, genius of lyric outcry though she is, originator of prayer-speech though she is, is nevertheless perfectly conventional in her most pressing desire: she wants to do exactly what society expects her to do. She prays to have a son; she prays to own prestige through motherhood. The inventor of prayer is, simultaneous with her genius, a woman obedient to the rules of patriarchy.

...[T]here is nothing feminist in her story. Until we have a look at her husband, Elkanah... “Hannah,” says Elkanah, “...Am I not better to thee than ten sons?” Now nothing is more valuable in the world of Hannah and Elkanah than a son, and ten sons ten times that—so that in asserting the value of his individual personhood to Hannah, Elkanah is also asserting the value of Hannah’s individual personhood to himself, even without the achievement of motherhood.

...What Elkanah...has discovered in himself is the first principle of feminism: the ethical passion that expresses itself against instrumentality, against woman-as-instrument, against woman-as-the-instrument-of-societal-policy.

Cynthia Ozick, Winter/Spring 1985

JEWISH WOMEN’S EGGS

A HOT COMMODITY IN THE IVF MARKETPLACE

EGG DONOR REQUIRED. Couple seeks egg donor. We prefer as follows: R1500 SAT, 18-28 years old, 5’5”-5’9”, healthy, attractive, athletic, at least one Jewish grandparent. Compensation \$25,000. Email photos and scores...

Why all these ads now?

Infertility has struck Jewish women with a vengeance. American women in general choose to have their first child at a later age than ever before. Between 1985 and 1994, the proportion of births to women in their 20s dropped from 62 percent to 53 percent. The proportion of births to women 30 to 44 increased from 25 percent to 34 percent, according to the American Infertility Association. And Jewish women, the best educated subset of women in North America, tend to stay in college and graduate school for more years than other women, thus becoming the group most likely to delay marriage and childbearing. Because fertility declines with age, many unexpectedly find themselves infertile just when they’re ready to have children. Responding to an article on abortion rights, a Washington, D.C. journalist commented, “Frankly, for my friends in their 30s and 40s, the biggest worry now is not an unwanted pregnancy, but just trying to get pregnant in the first place.”

Susan Weidman Schneider, Fall 2001

A quiet ritual for **Burying the Baby’s Placenta**

The ground was hard and my progress was slow. When the hole looked right, I leaned the shovel against the tree and gathered my thoughts: Maya made the first connection to me. This placenta is hers; she generated it from her own cells. It is my turn to make the second connection to her, a *kapparah* of solidarity with the Jewish spiritual season that I also felt stirring in the autumn air, a whiff of promises and reconstructions and fresh beginnings: This for that; for your offering, my offering.

I placed the placenta in my two-foot hole and covered it with soil. And then I prayed:

I agree to be your mother. After I give you all that I can, and you walk away to claim your own homeland, may you always, through your long life ahead, find a source to sustain you. Amen.

Catherine Grossman, Fall 2002

“You Don’t Have a Daddy, You Have a Donor”

...One day at the playground, Sarah and I are sitting together on the bouncy rabbits, her three-year-old legs pumping away. “Mom,” Sarah says suddenly; “let’s get a man.” “Why do we need a man?” I ask. “So he can be the Daddy.” “Why do we need a Daddy?” “Cuz you have to have a Mommy and a Daddy.” “But we have a single mom. What would a Daddy do?” “He could read a newspaper.” Sarah’s friends ask questions, too. One day, four-year-old Max says, “Where is your Daddy?” “I don’t have a Daddy, I have a Donor,” Sarah explains.

Julie Greenberg, Spring 1996

Jewish Adoption

It is holy enough, and complicated enough, that there should be a body of *halakhah* advising adoption facilitators, the adoptee, the birth parents and the adoptive parents on how they should treat each other.

As one of the five thousand babies adopted in the state of New Jersey in 1963, I know first hand how important it is to safeguard “the best interests of the child.”

Michèle Kriegman, Summer 1998

Putting Jewish Wombs to Work

The proliferation of new reproductive technologies in Israel is the result of an extraordinary convergence of law, medicine, and religion, a convergence that has at its center the pronatalist impulse to reproduce Jews...

Susan Martha Kahn, Summer 1998

The Anti-Choice Movement: Bad News for Jews

Susan Weidman Schneider, Summer 1990

Why does egalitarian parenting feel like a last frontier of feminism?