

Wedding Preparations for the Orthodox Marriage:

WHAT EVERY BRIDE AND GROOM MUST HAVE BEFORE THE *CHUPPAH*: *GETT* PROTECTION

LOS ANGELES REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Sunday, May 18, 2008 • 1:00 pm- 5:00 pm

PROGRAM

SPONSORED BY:



JEWISH ORTHODOX FEMINIST ALLIANCE

PROGRAM:

Session One: Screening of Excerpts from “Mekudeshet: Sentenced to Marriage.”

This groundbreaking documentary, by Anat Zuria, features an in-depth look at the plight of three Israeli agunot and tracks their pain and suffering as they negotiate the Israeli rabbinic court system. The film’s excerpts highlight the need for more protection for women in halakhic marriages and halakhic divorces and provide a springboard for discussion.

Session Two: How the Agunah Problem Came to Be.

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

This session will explore why the problem of Jewish divorce begins with the wedding itself. Is the pain and suffering of the women portrayed in the film embedded in Jewish law? Rabbi Riskin will look at the halakhic issues involved in kiddushin and nissuin that impact divorce.

Session Three: How Can We Protect Ourselves, Our Families and Our Community Before the Wedding Ceremony?

Dr. Susan Aranoff and Alexandra Leichter

Two steadfast agunah activists will present the mechanisms to protect women prior to the wedding. Together, they will discuss the variety of premarital protections that exists, their benefits and their flaws and other practical and necessary information for future brides, grooms, their families and communities.

SPEAKER BIOS:

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin founded and serves as Chancellor of Ohr Torah Stone Colleges and Graduate Programs, a network of groundbreaking institutions preparing the leaders of future world Jewry, imbuing students from junior high to post-graduate programs with a synthesis of Jewish values, Zionist ideals and a commitment to social justice.

Some of Ohr Torah Stone's revolutionary programs are: the first and only program in the world training women advocates to represent clients in the rabbinical courts, a Legal Aid Center for agunot, a women's "hesder" program enabling observant women to serve in the Israel Defense Forces, the first and only program enabling women with developmental disabilities to spend a year in Israel, and a program exposing secular Israelis to the beauty and relevance of their Jewish culture and heritage.

Rabbi Riskin became a major spokesperson for Modern Orthodoxy early on in his career, as the founding rabbi of Lincoln Square Synagogue in New York. In 1983 Rabbi Riskin left New York to become the founding chief rabbi of the City of Efrat, a burgeoning settlement in Gush Etzion seven miles south of Jerusalem, which he - together with Moshe Moshkowitz - had been working to establish since 1976. Today, Efrat numbers close to 10,000 residents and is considered to be the diamond in the protective ring around Jerusalem.

In addition to being a weekly column which is syndicated in newspapers worldwide, Rabbi Riskin is a prolific author of articles, monographs and books on Judaism and contemporary issues.

Dr. Susan Aranoff is a professor of economics at Kingsborough Community College. For two decades she has been a feminist activist in pursuit of freedom for agunot who are chained to dead marriages and freedom for women to hold halakhic prayer services at

the Western Wall, the Kotel. She has lectured in Israel, Europe and throughout the United States on these issues and has published countless articles in books, journals and newspapers. Dr. Aranoff is a community leader and teacher who has held numerous leadership positions in the New York UJA-Federation campaign and is widely known for her classes on Bible, Talmud and political affairs. She is a founding board member of AGUNAH Int'l Inc., the International Committee for Women at the Wall, and JOFA.

Alexandra Leichter has been a practicing family law attorney, representing an equal number of men and women in marital dissolution actions, for over 35 years. She is a California Bar Certified Family Law Specialist, and an American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers Certified Family Law Arbitrator. She now primarily concentrates her Beverly Hills practice on family law private judging, arbitration, and consulting. As a result of her articles and lectures on issues relating to *agunot*, she has become the address in Los Angeles for litigating, negotiating, and consulting on cases involving the *gett* issue. Her articles about *agunot* have appeared in the Los Angeles Jewish Journal, in the Los Angeles County Bar Association and the California Bar family law publications, as well as in nationwide journals for lawyers engaged in matrimonial law. Over the years, Leichter has developed contacts with the Rabbinical Council of California, Rabbinical Council of America, and numerous individual rabbis who are involved in *gittin*, and has led study groups for lawyers on these issues. She has counseled many rabbis and engaged couples regarding the effects and enforceability of various prenuptial agreements. But she says she would be happiest if all *agunah* cases were finally resolved, and she never had to hear of another one. She looks forward to a time when Orthodox women will be able to safely stand under a *chuppah* and be guaranteed that a halakhic wedding will not cause them to be chained or extorted by their husbands if the marriage fails.

*Wedding Preparations for the Orthodox Marriage is underwritten
by JOFA, the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance*

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**520 8th Avenue, Fourth Floor
New York, NY 10018**

www.jofa.org • 888-550-JOFA • jofa@jofa.org