



June 22, 2009

JOFA (the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance) invites submissions for its Seventh International Conference on Feminism and Orthodoxy to be held in New York City on March 13th and 14th, 2010.

Leadership within the Modern Orthodox community has, for too long, been the domain of men. Halakha has been used by those in power to exclude women from positions of authority. Traditional values and social conservatism have reinforced narrow interpretations of Jewish law. Despite this historic reality, over the past few years, we have begun to see a serious effort to change this monolithic male power model.

Halakhic progressive minyanim, such as Shira Hadasha in Jerusalem, where women lead parts of the service, have emerged as a viable alternative to traditional synagogues. A woman has recently been ordained as a member of the American Orthodox clergy and is serving in a rabbinic role in an Orthodox synagogue, and women are members of the religious staff of a number of Orthodox synagogues. More women are founding and leading serious schools of learning where women are being trained as halakhic decisors. And, in the home, more women and men are sharing responsibility for ceremonial and ritual practice, previously performed by men only.

The challenge we now face is to both accelerate these changes and at the same time make them an accepted part of the mainstream Orthodox experience. In this conference, we will explore historical precedents that can serve as models for women's empowerment today. We will engage with texts to develop a balanced view of the halakhic dimensions of women's leadership in communal and religious life. We will examine novel approaches to facilitate change within Orthodox institutions and traditions. We will hear from Orthodoxy's young female leaders and scholars. Finally, we will discuss how to maximize the new facts on the ground to create a more vibrant, inclusive and democratic view of leadership within the Modern Orthodox community. We hope to address these issues through diverse perspectives and especially welcome proposals for interactive sessions, as well as those that focus on innovations in life cycle events.

Please submit a short abstract of your proposed presentation, as well as a brief CV via email to: conference@jofa.org. The final date for proposal submissions is October 15, 2009.