

Continuing the Conversation: The Roles of Women and Men in Orthodox Judaism

WASHINGTON DC REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Saturday Evening February 2, 2008

CO-SPONSORS:



CONGREGATION OHEV SHOLOM – THE NATIONAL SYNAGOGUE

8:00-10:30 PM

MEKUDESHET: SENTENCED TO MARRIAGE

"*Mekudeshet*" is a documentary on the subject of the *agunah* crisis made in 2004 by Anat Zuria, who also directed the widely acclaimed movie *TEHORA*, about *mikveh* and the laws of family purity. *Mekudeshet* follows the struggle of three *agunot*, Tamar, Rachel and Michelle, to obtain a divorce in the Jerusalem rabbinical courts, helped by advocates from Yad L'Isha. It is an extremely moving film and demonstrates how the men involved were able to manipulate the system to their benefit, and were aided in this by the delays and attitude of the rabbinical court judges whose sympathies clearly lay with the husbands. The film had a showing in the Knesset to an overflow audience that included government ministers and Knesset members and promoted a very powerful discussion. It won the prize for the best documentary of the Jerusalem Film Festival.

Moderator: Robin Bodner, Executive Director, JOFA

Film screening followed by a panel discussion with: Dr. Susan Aranoff, Cynthia Ohana, and Barbara J. Zakheim

BIOGRAPHIES

Dr. Susan Aranoff holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University and is a Professor of Economics at Kingsborough Community College in New York City. A major focus of her research is the economics and politics of gender inequality, particularly in the Orthodox Jewish community. For more than two decades she has been an activist in pursuit of freedom for *agunot*, women who are chained to dead marriages. She is the co-founder and director of *Agunah* International Inc. She has counseled thousands of *agunot* throughout the world, helped to establish a rabbinical court which frees *agunot* and published numerous articles in books, journals and newspapers. She is a founding member of the International Committee for Women of the Wall and the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance.

Cynthia Ohana has been an *agunah* for almost 5 years, after 18 years of marriage. She is still waiting for her husband to give her a *get*. Cynthia grew up in Silver Spring, and attended NYU and Touro College. She lives in Baltimore with her five children. She owns and runs a day care business, and also works as a victim's advocate and crisis counselor for CHANA (The Counseling Helpline and Network for Abused Women) which was established to help Jewish victims of abuse in Baltimore. She has appeared in several documentaries about domestic violence and the withholding of the *get*, and has been interviewed on radio and television about the *agunah* situation. She has testified before senate state judiciary committees in favor of passing the "Get" Bill."

Barbara J. Zakheim is the Founder and Past President of the Greater Washington Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA), which provides victim support services, community educational programming and youth prevention training. Trained at Oxford University as a policy and economic analyst, Barbara is currently the President of Keith R. Scott Associates, LLC, a business-development consulting firm. She served for over 20 years as an energy and environmental consultant to clients in the government, private and international sectors and has supported the public-outreach and development efforts for two Israel-based, non-profit organizations. Barbara is a board member of Ohav Sholom, The National Synagogue.

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