

Continuing the Conversation:

The Roles of Women and Men in Orthodox Judaism

PROGRAM

WASHINGTON DC REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Sunday February 3, 2008

OHEV SHOLOM – THE NATIONAL SYNAGOGUE
1600 Jonquil St., NW, Washington, DC 20012

WOMEN AND MEN WELCOME

CO-SPONSORS:



PROGRAM SCHEDULE

9:15 AM – 9:45 AM

REGISTRATION

9:45 AM – 10:00 AM

OPENING REMARKS

Main Sanctuary

10:00 AM – 11:15 AM

EMPOWERING ALL OUR CHILDREN: GENDER SENSITIVITY IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Main Sanctuary

This session will address the different messages often given to boys and girls in Jewish day schools through curriculum and school culture. The panel of local educators and principals will discuss breaking down harmful gender stereotypes among students and teachers in order to communicate positive religious identities for our sons and daughters.

Speakers: Dr. Joshua Levisohn, Rabbi David Serkin, Rabbanit Sharon Freundel, and Mrs. Susan Koss

Moderator: Laura Shaw Frank

CONTINUITY AND INNOVATION IN RITUAL: THE FRIDAY NIGHT EXPERIENCE

Chapel

Traditionally the rituals that usher in Shabbat have been divided along gender lines; women light candles and men recite *kiddush* and lead *Kabbalat Shabbat*. Should there be “men’s” and women’s” *mitzvot*? How does the nature of a ritual such as *kiddush* change when performed in the private versus public sphere? Placing these activities in a broader exploration of the nature of ritual, this interactive session will address these and other questions.

Speakers: Rabbi Nissan Antine and Miriam Udel-Lambert

Chair: Na’ama Lewin

11:15 AM – 11:45 AM

BREAK AND REFRESHMENTS

11:45 AM – 1:15 PM

LIFE STAGES OF JEWISH WOMEN: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Main Sanctuary

Jewish women are presented with both opportunities and challenges for increasing their religious participation throughout their lives. What are the changes in contemporary American society that impact women’s religious and spiritual activity? The panel will address the roles and experiences of single and divorced women, mothers and women without children, “empty nesters” and grandmothers.

Speakers: Dr. Sylvia Barack Fishman, Dr. Erica Brown, and Roslyn Singer

Moderator: Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld

OLD TEXTS THROUGH NEW EYES: WOMEN IN THE BEIT MIDRASH

Chapel

The growing accessibility of rabbinic texts to women on a serious level has natural consequences for interpretation. Using specific texts as examples, this session will explore the theoretical and practical impact of women’s learning on communal ideas and practices, and discuss the specific challenges that women face in encountering traditional Jewish texts.

Speakers: Wendy Amsellem and Aviva Krauss

Chair: Ronda Angel Arking

BIOGRAPHIES

Dr. Joshua Levisohn is the headmaster at the Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy, a pre-school-12th grade Modern Orthodox school in suburban Washington, DC. He came to the Hebrew Academy following an 8 year tenure at Akiba Hebrew Academy in Philadelphia, where he was the Principal for Jewish Studies. He received his doctorate in Jewish Studies from Harvard University in 1999.

Rabbi David Serkin is an ordained rabbi from Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary with a Masters in Jewish Education from Ferkauf Graduate School and has been involved in formal Jewish Education for close to 30 years. Rabbi Serkin has focused his career on elementary school administration in Modern Orthodox educational settings. In addition to being Assistant Principal in Long Beach, NY (HALB), Boston, MA (Maimonides) and Chicago, IL (Hillel Torah), he has served as Principal in Chicago, IL (Hillel Torah), Denver, CO (Denver Academy of Torah) and West Hempstead, LI (HANC). He currently is in his 6th year as principal of the Hebrew Day School of Montgomery County.

Rabbanit Sharon Freundel received a B.S. in Nursing from the University of Maryland. She did graduate work at Teacher's College of Columbia University and is currently finishing her Masters degree in Jewish Education at the Baltimore Hebrew University. She taught and was the department chair of *Tanach* and *Torah SheBa'al Peh* (Rabbinics) and served as *Mashgicha Ruchanit* (Spiritual Guidance Counselor) of the Upper School at the Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy. She is currently the Director of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at the Jewish Primary Day School in Washington, DC. She also teaches *Tanach*, Jewish philosophy, and contemporary halakhic issues to adults and teenagers in multiple venues including Keshet Israel, the Georgetown Synagogue, the University of Maryland, and the George Washington University. Mrs. Freundel is the Rabbanit of Keshet Israel, the Georgetown Synagogue in Washington, DC.

Susan Koss is currently the Lower School Principal of the Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy. Previously she was the Head of The Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capitol for 15 years and after she "retired" from there, served as the director of the YISE Nursery School for 1 year. Susan and her husband, Rabbi Saul moved to the Washington area in 1981, at which time she helped start the Keshet Child Care Center in Alexandria, and then helped found Geshet Day School, where she taught kindergarten for 7 years. Susan is a retired army wife, who traveled with her chaplain husband for 20 years. She has a BA from Stern College and her Master's Degree from American University.

Laura Shaw Frank is a teacher of Tanach, Rabbinics and Jewish History at the Beth Tfiloh Dahan Community High School in Baltimore, Maryland. She also teaches at various adult education institutes including Mercat at Beth Tfiloh and the Women's Beit Midrash at the National Synagogue in Washington, DC. Ms. Shaw Frank is a founding board member of JOFA and the past organizer of the Baltimore Women's Tefillah Group. Prior to her career in Jewish education, Ms. Shaw Frank worked as an attorney, specializing in commercial litigation.

Rabbi Nissan Antine serves as an Assistant Rabbi & Director of Education at Beth Sholom Congregation and Talmud Torah. Rabbi Antine received his ordination from YCT Rabbinical School in 2006. Before entering rabbinical school, he studied in various yeshivot in America and Israel and he was a fellow of the Torah Metzion Kollel in Cleveland, Ohio. He earned a B.A. in Religion and Philosophy from Case Western Reserve University.

Miriam Udel-Lambert is assistant professor of Yiddish language, literature, and culture at Emory University. She is finishing her PhD in comparative literature at Harvard University, writing a dissertation about the ethics of speech. She has lectured widely on rabbinic literature in Boston, New York, New Haven, and Atlanta and directed the Drisha Summer High School Program. She holds a BA in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations from Harvard and has studied at MaTaN and Midreshet Lindenbaum in Jerusalem. Her essays and reporting have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The Forward*, *The New Republic*, and *Hadassah Magazine*. A collection of her essays about feminism and religion will be published by Trumpeter.

Na'ama Batya Lewin is a photographer and video artist living in Potomac, Maryland. She is adjunct faculty at the Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington DC.

Her work has been exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Judah Magnes Museum, California; Women in the Director's Chair Film Festival, Chicago; Art in General, New York; the District of Columbia Jewish Community Center; and at the JOFA international conference.

Dr. Sylvia Barack Fishman is Professor of Contemporary Jewish Life in the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Department at Brandeis University, as well as co-director of the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, and is a Faculty Affiliate of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies. Her newest book, *The Way Into the Varieties of Jewishness*, explores diverse understandings of Jewish identity, religion and culture across the centuries. Her previous books include: *Follow My Footprints: Changing Images of Women in American Jewish Fiction*; *A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community*; and *Jewish Life and American Culture*. Prof. Fishman received her BA from Stern College at Yeshiva University and her Ph.D. from Washington University in St. Louis.

Dr. Erica Brown is the scholar-in-residence for The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and the Director of Adult Education for The Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning. She has also served as an adjunct professor at George Washington University and American University. After her undergraduate studies at Yeshiva University, she continued her graduate work at the University of London, Harvard University and Baltimore Hebrew University. She was a Jerusalem Fellow and is a faculty member of the Wexner Heritage Foundation. She lectures widely on subjects of Jewish interest and leadership, in addition to extensive writing in journals of education and Jewish studies. She has chapters in *Jewish Legal Writings by Women*, *Torah of the Mothers*, and *Wisdom from All of My Teachers* and writes a weekly internet essay on the Torah portion of the week. Dr. Brown is the author of the forthcoming book, *Inspired Leadership: A Jewish Perspective*.

Roslyn Singer serves on Keshet Israel's Board of Directors as the Second Vice President. She has coordinated Keshet Israel's Women's Tfillah & Study Group (WTSG) for more than 10 years. Roz has served on the Board of Directors for the National Capital Mikvah and on the Board of the American Jewish Committee's Young Leadership Forum. She also led traditional explanatory services for the DCJCC Jewish Women's Project's annual women's retreat in 2005 and 2006. Roz is the Development Manager for Jewish Women International, the primary national Jewish organization that addresses domestic abuse, within and outside of the Jewish community. Originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, she holds a bachelor's degree in communication arts from the University of Cincinnati and a master's degree in communication from the University of Maryland at College Park.

Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld is rabbi of Ohev Sholom—The National Synagogue and is the host of "Shmoozin with Shmuel," a popular radio show. His *divrei torah* are archived at www.rabbishmuel.com.

Wendy Amsellem is a faculty member at Drisha Institute where she teaches Talmud and Jewish Law and she is pursuing a PhD in Rabbinics at New York University. She also directs the Dr. Beth Samuels Drisha High School Program. She holds an AB in History and Literature from Harvard University, and is an alumna of the Drisha Scholars circle, a three year program of intensive study of Talmud and Jewish Law. She has received a Wexner Graduate Fellowship and a MacCracken Fellowship, and has served as an Adjunct Faculty member at the City College of New York and a Core Faculty Member at the Skirball Institute for Jewish Education.

Aviva Krauss is a Clinical Associate in Stem Cell Transplantation at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC and a research fellow at the National Institutes of Health. She received her BA in Philosophy and Judaic Studies from Stern College for Women of Yeshiva University, and her MD from Albert Einstein College of Medicine. She studied at Midreshet Lindenbaum (Brovender's) in Jerusalem and is a former Torat Miriam Scholar.

Ronda Angel Arking is a professional writer and editor and is currently pursuing a Masters in Jewish Studies. Much of her writing has focused on the role of women in Biblical texts and rabbinic literature. She is a founding member of Kehillat Netivot Shalom in Baltimore, as well as the coordinator of the synagogue's monthly Women's Tefilla Group.

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