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From Our President

Honor Thy Father *and* Thy Mother

By Carol Kaufman Newman

I have recently been thinking about the use of women's names in Orthodox Judaism. It began last year when I made my annual call to one of our supporters to ask for a pledge for JOFA. As we spoke, she told me how she had taken on the commitment of saying *kaddish* after her mother died, and how upset she was that she was not allowed to put her grandmother's name on her mother's monument. This resulted in a whole discussion about the use of women's names, which led us to the theme of this JOFA Journal.

Have you ever visited a cemetery and looked at the *matzevot* (monuments)? Do you wonder how it is that none of the people buried had mothers? I had an aunt whose gravestone is right behind those of my parents. She is identified as the wife of so and so and the daughter of her father. Yet only a few steps away her mother is buried. (My parents' tombstones include the names of both their fathers and mothers.)

When I am at a *brit,* or a *simhat bat*, a *bar mitzvah* or even a regular Shabbat service where a man is called to the Torah with only his father's name, I feel the exclusion of women. I remember years ago when one of my oldest friends called me from Israel to tell me her daughter was getting married. "And Carol," she said, "my name is going to be in the *ketuba*." How incredible it was to sit in Jerusalem and catch her eye as her name was read along with her husband's. Yes, her daughter has a mother.

Another story: I took part in a *tahara* that was not in my own community. The *haredi* women who comprised the *hevra kadisha* would periodically say a prayer with the name of the deceased followed by her father's name. I would then say her mother's name. When we all parted company one of the women stayed behind to speak with me. "You know," she said, "my son is studying in Israel and he called me the other day to ask my Hebrew name. He didn't know it!" And then she kissed me and left.

There is so much to reflect on. Why are the *imahot* missing from our liturgy? And can we change what has been done for generations? Many synagogues now include the *imahot* in *mi shaberakhs* for the sick, and in the prayer for the soldiers of Israel. Can we look for ways to be even more inclusive? Can we include Miriam's song after Moshe's when we pray every morning?

Many times I have broached the subject and am told that it is not a halakhic prohibition, but… But what?

A generation is growing up not knowing their mothers' names. Another generation is dying without leaving a record of who their mothers were.

When my youngest granddaughter was born, my children were going to end the ceremony with the recitation of *shehehiyanu.* They were told by the rabbi to say instead what is recited at a *brit:* the blessing *hatov vehametiv.* The birth of a baby girl, just like the birth of a baby boy, is good for us *and* for the whole community. If we truly believe that girls are blessings too, let us and let them reclaim their names.

As I write this, we are reading the book of *Shemot*—names. I believe that the Torah wants us to understand the importance of names in Jewish life. The Midrash teaches us that redemption from Egypt was the reward that the Children of Israel received for not forgetting their names. All of Israel—the women along with the men.

Let us, too, remember *all* the names and in so doing keep alive those who have come before us as well as those who will follow us into the future.

Jewish Women's Names: A Historical Perspective

By Aaron Demsky

Anyone who begins to think about the meaning of names will realize that names signify identity both in the historic sense as well as how our parents thought we should appear in contemporary society. For committed Jews, personal identity takes on greater ramifications regarding family history and ties, community beliefs and fashions. There is a wealth of literature on Jewish names and naming patterns from the Bible to the most modern trends and fashions in Israel and in the Diaspora. In general, names can be considered as a cultural code, a sort of a key to understanding what is and was going on in the Jewish world. In this article, I will look at Jewish women's

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Jewish Women's Names

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names from biblical times on to see what patterns can be ascertained and what these patterns might mean for an understanding of Jewish communities, past and present.

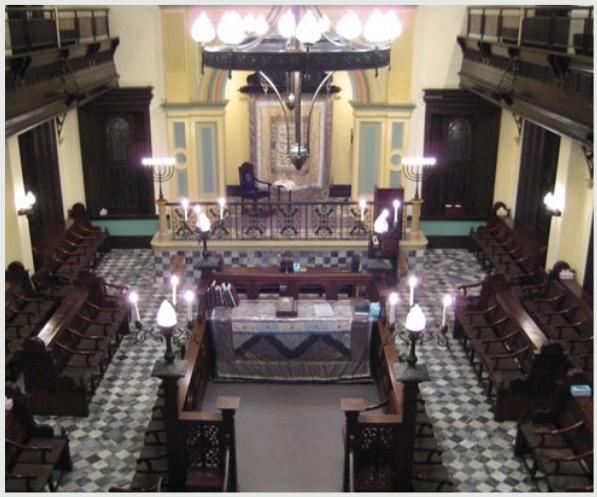
The given name expresses the thoughts and wishes of the parents for their new-born child. Very often, the child will be given a name in memory of an older member of the family. If the family is of Ashkenazic origin, then they probably will name the child after someone who has died in order to perpetuate his or her memory. In a Sephardi or Oriental Jewish family, the firstborn might be named in honor of a living grandparent. Whatever the case, the child's first name is a living link with the historic past of that family and an expression of the desire for continuity to the next generation. Above all it is a concretization of the positive value concept of *kibbud av va'em*–honoring one's parents.

There are far fewer female names in the Bible than male ones. The main biblical names that have lasted through the generations are those of the matriarchs—Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, and Miriam and Esther. Ironically, Esther, one of the most popular Jewish names, is not Hebrew in origin but rather derived from a Mesopotamian/gentile name of the goddess Ishtar. Some of the biblical women were nameless. The rabbis of the Midrash often sought identifications for these women from other biblical texts. For instance, Noah's wife is identified as his cousin Na'ama (Gen. 4:22). Pharaoh's daughter, who raised Moses, is assumed to have converted and married Caleb. She is identified with the appropriately named Bitiah (literally "daughter of God") mentioned in Chronicles (I Chron. 4:18).

During the latter part of the Second Temple period after the Maccabean revolt, several names become very popular– Miriam, Shlome (Salome) and even Hannah, the mother of the seven boy martyrs. It is no wonder then that these feminine names were also prominent in the fledgling Christian Jewish community. In the early rabbinic period – that of the Mishnah – two women stand out – Rachel, the wife of Rabbi Akiva, and Beruria, the wife of Akiva's disciple Rabbi Meir. While some scholars derive Beruria's name from the Latin Valerie, certainly the Hebrew root emphasizing "clarity" fits her role as a scholar, while Rachel is an appropriate name for a woman whose life is dramatically described as one of self sacrifice and love for her "Jacob" (the original form of the diminutive Akiva).[1]

Rachel/Rahel has been a consistently popular name. Besides the Ashkenazic *Rochel*, it has been absorbed and fused into Sephardi culture in a variety of ways such as *Rahelika* (particularly in Ladino), *Rashel, Reche, Rakel, Keli.* The Kabbalists went a step further by identifying the spiritual characteristics of Mother Rachel – the *sephirah* of *malkhut* (majesty) – with the *Shekhinah* itself. Support for this mystical identification is found in the permutations of Rahel into Ruah-El, i.e.,"The Spirit of God".[2]

The Rabbis emphasized the principle of what is termed in Aramaic *shema garim*, that is, that one's name has a formative influence on one's behavior and perhaps on that of one's descendants. (Compare the general adage "*Nomen est omen*–A name is a sign.") An example of this approach is found in the explanation of the name Ruth which the Rabbis derived from the Hebrew root *raweh* "to satiate" (Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot* 7b). The Rabbis claimed that the name is echoed in Ruth's great grandson David's desire to satiate the Lord with prayers and supplications as manifested in the Book of Psalms. In the context of the



Ohel Leah Synagogue, Hong Kong
Photograph coutesy of Tal Raviv.

Built in 1901-2, the Ohel Leah synagogue in Hong Kong is named after the mother of Sir Jacob Elias Sassoon, the noted Baghdadi Jew living in Hong Kong. A few years later, he paid for the building of Ohel Rachel in Shanghai to be named after his wife, Lady Rachel Sassoon. He died before the synagogue was opened in 1920, and the community decided to dedicate it to both Sir Jacob and his wife. While Hong Kong's Ohel Leah is very much used today by the city's active Jewish community as well as by tourists, Ohel Rachel serves as a museum and is only open on rare occasions for services.

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story of Ruth, one should mention that it is Naomi, the dominant character of this book, who most seems to understand the significance of names and the relationship of a name to a person's existential condition. Her name means "wholesomeness" or "goodness" and in her despair she asks that she be called Mara "bitterness" (Ruth 1:20).[3]

In all the different Diaspora communities in the Pre-Modern period, the majority of masculine names tended to be Hebrew; while women's names were more likely to be derived from the vernacular or local languages. This phenomenon was probably due to the fact that men took part in formal communal ceremonies, like the weekly Torah reading and synagogue worship, where they were more likely to use so-called "sacred" (Hebrew) names. For a social historian, women's names are actually more interesting because they reflect contact with, and influence of, the surrounding gentile world, as well as migrational patterns. Prime examples are the Yiddish feminine names, Yentle, Sprinza, and Tulsa, derived respectively from the Romance languages, Gentile (gentle from Adina), Esperanza (hope from Tikva), and Dulce (sweetness from Metuka). A name like Frumet was derived from *vro mout,* (good cheer or cheerful) in Middle High German, as spoken by Jews living in the Rhineland (12-13th centuries). Brought to Eastern Europe, it was given the folk etymology of "pious" and pronounced in Yiddish as Fruma or Frima.[4]

Several years ago I studied a seventeenth century manuscript listing the names of the deceased in the Jewish community of Kaifeng, China. These Jews had been cut off in the 10th century from the main centers of the Jewish world, particularly from their Persian Jewish co-religionists at the western end of the Silk Road; yet they maintained their Jewish identity and observance. One of their ethnic markers was the use of biblical names for both men and women, and Arabic names such as Nur (light), and Qamar (moon), and Persian names such as Dur (pearl), and Shad (happy), for a proportionately higher number of the women.[5]

Other feminine names reflect objects of beauty, wealth and status especially in the Sephardi Diaspora, such as Oro (gold), Reina (queen), Mazaltov and Fortuna (good luck), Sol (sun), and Luna (moon). The name Bienvenida (welcome) was also popular among Sephardi Jewish families. Traditional Yemenite women's names tended to be in vernacular Arabic, e.g., Hamama (pigeon), Warda (rose), Ralya (dear, as something expensive), Shama (candle i.e., brightness), and Sinia (having a fair complexion as the Chinese).

There are traditional commemorative names celebrating special days in the Jewish calendar. For a girl born on Passover, a name like Shulamit might be given since it appears in the Song of Songs read during the holiday in synagogue. Esther Malka or Hadassa might be chosen for a girl born on Purim, Yehudit (Judith) for Hanuka, and Nehama (comfort) for a child born on Tisha B'Av.

From the 16th century on, the formation of double names became popular in Eastern Europe – one in Hebrew and the other its Yiddish equivalent as in Esther Itta, and Zippora Feige. Other double names reflect a greater degree of knowledge of the biblical text, such as Chaya Sora (Gen 23:1), which might have been introduced because the girl was born the week of that Torah reading.

Beginning in the early 20th century, modern Israel has seen a renanaissance of creativity in Jewish names. After World War I and the establishment of the Mandate, came the hope of realizing a Hebrew-speaking Jewish state, and there was a break from the traditional stock of names. At first, the names were innovative representing the early Zionist endeavor: female names such as Balfoura, Herzlia, Ziona and Nili.[6] In the 1920's, a new *aliya* of young highly motivated Jews wanted to strengthen their connection to the Land of Israel based on the Bible rather than on rabbinic tradition. This expressed itself by taking names of minor biblical characters that had been forgotten or even avoided because they were negative characters. Among the female names were Hagar, Asenat, Na'ama, Ruhama and the Canaanite goddess Anat. Some innovative configurations were Hanita and the feminization of traditional masculine names like Meira, Ariella, Gavriella, and Rafaela. At the same time, with the rejection of the *Galut,* many Yiddish names were Hebraicized, either by being translated so that Golda became Zehava, which in turn became Pazit; or through assonance, so that Perl became Pe'er-li. Similarly, this has also been the case with Sephardi and Yemenite names such as Spanish, Oro (gold) becoming Ora (light) or Yemenite, Rumia (light skinned) becoming Re'uma. Other girls' names were taken from nature, such as Ilana, Karmit and Deganit. These were followed by the "Li" names: Orli, Lior or Liora, Linora and Lital. The last decade and a half has seen an increased popularity in Israel of monosyllabic, unisex names with a foreign ring. Other than being Hebrew, these "new" names like Tal, Gil, Dor, Or, Bar, Ben, Tom and Dean carry little Jewish cultural content and commitment. As these names become more popular among Israelis, they become a matter of fashion and less a statement of ideology. In fact, as more modern religious families choose them and even find traditional allusions and symbolism in them, there is a tendency to add a second Jewish name in memory of an ancestor. At the same time, other families are seeking more innovative and creative names to express their child's individuality (Nofar, Ilai, Nov, Tai and Si), only to find in five years that there are another ten children in the kindergarten with the same name.

Turning to the American scene, if you look at the Social Security Administration's "popular baby names" web site[7]

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Torah Ark
Ohel Rachel Synagogue, Shanghai

Reflections on the Ethics of Naming in a Community of Prayer

By Elie Holzer

Naming and Names in Life

"שלושה שמות נקראו לו לאדם:
אחד מה שקוראים לו אביו ואמו,
ואחד מה שקוראין לו בני אדם,
ואחד מה שקונה הוא לעצמו.
טוב מכולן מה שקונה הוא
לעצמו" (תנחומא, ויקהל)

"People are called by three names: One is the name the person is called by his father and mother; one is the name people call him/her; and one is the name the person acquires for him/herself. The last is the best one". (Tanhuma, Vayakheil 1)

This beautiful *midrash* invites us to reflect on the human phenomena of naming and being named. Indeed, names are not a small matter. We carry them through our lives, and they become inherent to our identity in the world. Naming a person is a relational act involving at least two human beings, thus its ethical character. Let us further reflect on what this action of naming entails.

What does one do when one calls someone by name or when attributing a name? On the surface of things and in our daily use, the act of naming is purely instrumental as, for example, in calling for a person's attention. Providing people with first names or, more generally, relating to people by their names, helps us also to single them out and thus to acknowledge their singularity, as when Adam names the animals (Gen. 2:20). However, the verse in Genesis concludes by saying: "but for Adam no fitting partner was found". These words point to an additional dimension of naming, its *relational* dimension. In naming the animals, Adam wasn't only looking to sort and classify the beings, but also to see in what way they related to him, as beings with whom he could intimately act in partnership in the world. In other words, the act of naming is an act of identification and connection, which establishes a relationship between human beings.

In this perspective, it is interesting to point to the three different agents with the ability of conferring a name on a person that are mentioned by the *midrash:* one's parents, people in the society one lives in, and oneself. Given the end of the *midrash*, "the name one acquires for oneself", which points beyond a formal act of naming, we are invited to move towards a more philosophical meaning, that is, to those agents who contribute to one's own name, to one's identity. Indeed, "to make a name for ourselves" (Gen. 11:4) refers to a reputation, an identity, the way someone is and would like to be perceived. A more subtle reading of the *midrash* invites us to think about the role of these three agents and the potential impact they may have on a person's life and evolving identity. Here, I agree with Paul Ricoeur, and not with the popular myth about the existence of a fixed "true authentic self". Following Ricoeur, it is only through a complex web of relationships and the internalization of experiences and meaning that one develops an identity over time. In this philosophical perspective, the third part of the *midrash*, "the name one acquired for oneself" may also refer to our different internal voices and the identity that one shapes for oneself out of these.

> "The act of naming is an act of identification and connection."

The *midrash* may also be hinting at a chronological perspective of one's life: initially a person's identity is significantly shaped by his interaction with his parents, then with the surrounding society. Finally, adulthood is about the ability to become more self reflective and, consequently, to also make decisions for oneself.

While carrying a name appears to be something quite static (after all, the vast majority of people do not change their "given" or first names), the *midrash* seems to suggest a more dynamic view of things. One's name, in terms of one's identity, is something that evolves, as it is infused by interactions with various agents in life. The famous poem of Zelda (1914-1984) beautifully reflects this intrinsic relationship between one's name and one's identity, and how one's name is a product of ongoing life experiences and interactions:

EACH OF US HAS A NAME

Each of us has a name
given by God
and given by our parents
Each of us has a name
given by our stature and our smile
and given by what we wear
Each of us has a name
given by the mountains
and given by our walls
Each of us has a name
given by the stars
and given by our neighbors
Each of us has a name
given by our sins
and given by our longing
Each of us has a name
given by our enemies
and given by our love
Each of us has a name
given by our celebrations
and given by our work
Each of us has a name
given by the seasons
and given by our blindness
Each of us has a name
given by the sea
and given by
our death.

At the end of his book "The Visible and the Invisible", the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty notes that naming is the visible side of the threat of a person's non-recogni-

tion, which is the invisible side of naming. To name is "to accredit objectivity, self-identity". Furthermore, acquiring a name is a symbolic invitation into the community of language. First, the child engages in what Merleau-Ponty calls "egocentric language", that is a use of language that is more a matter of self expression than a means of communication with other people. Over time, the child begins to use language and attempts to integrate the world of language and thought. In this context, the child first uses the names of others and then its own name, as a way to mark his or her place besides others. The name, therefore, plays a role in the emergence of the *self* and the achievement of meaning through one's interactions within the world. In this perspective, when parents attach a first name to their child, it is a moment in which they are calling a subject forth into the world. These different perspectives show us in what sense the act of naming is an act of making visible, thus its ethical dimension.

Naming and Names in a Community of Prayer

Beyond its various and very different claims, feminism has taught us the extent to which women have been made invisible in various societies and cultures. Language in general, and language used in worship in particular, is one example which reflects this invisibility. It was therefore most natural that, at the establishment of *Shira Hadasha* as a halakhic egalitarian *minyan* in Jerusalem, the most elementary aspect of communal prayer where we could do something about the language of worship was to make women's Hebrew names visible and present in the public worship. This is especially the case since no halakhic issue whatsoever seemed to be in the way of such a move. In other words, women's presence and acknowledgment in *shul* were not only to be dealt with, in and through, their active participation in Torah reading, *aliyot* and prayer leading, but at the most basic ethical level, through the public mentioning of their personal names in ritual, for example, inserting mothers' names when a person is called to the Torah. In fact, this feminist awareness had an impact on men as well. Indeed, despite what an alien may think while visiting some shuls during Torah reading, men were all born from a mother. As a matter of fact, to be identified by both of your parents' names when called up to the Torah is not a small thing as you are about to act as a responsible person and call the entire congregation to bless God's name in public (*Barkhu et Hashem Hamevorakh*). By inserting mothers' names when calling individuals to the Torah, it is not only those women in shul who are made visible, but those women who are and were mothers of our congregants, who are made visible and present as well.

"Meaning does not just occur by itself in ritual"

However, limiting ourselves to adding the names was not enough. Indeed, *Shira Hadasha* was established to promote among its members an ongoing striving for meaningful prayer, feminism and community life, as well as to develop and cultivate the fine and subtle connections between these three so that they may contribute in tandem to our ongoing striving to grow and serve as *Ovdei/ot Hashem*.

There are at least two specific instances related to the act of naming where individual and communal lives merge: at the naming of a new-born baby and during one's first Torah *aliya*, at a *bar* or *bat mitzvah*. The former is the formal act of naming a baby. While boys are named at their *Brit Milah* and girls are often named at their *Zeved Habat* or *Simhat Bat* ceremony, at *Shira Hadasha*, we find it important to also celebrate this meaningful moment on Shabbat, as a community of prayer, joining our individual thanksgiving and prayers of petition together and being able to rejoice with the parents and family of the new baby. Regarding a *bar* or *bat mitzvah*, this is the first time that one is called in public to the Torah as an adult by her or his full Hebrew name and thus serves as an important act of naming for the young boy or girl and their family. Once we relate to the act of naming not as instrumental, but as an act of profound religious-existential significance especially in unique moments of life like baby namings and a *bat/bar mitzvah*, the community of prayer is challenged to help make these important moments of naming meaningful in real shul settings. So as I understand it, the issue of naming cannot be reduced to "should women's names be mentioned in shul ritual?" The challenge for all of us, men and women, seems to be as follows: Since religious ritual should seriously be tied to our lives as individuals, families and members of a community, what are the ways which may be conducive to make life-cycle events like namings meaningful within the synagogue context?

More is required in order for both those celebrating and the rest of the congregants to engage and share in meaningful ways in the act of naming. Meaning does not just occur by itself in ritual. It requires preparation, presence, attention and the labor of the soul. It is important for co-*daveners* to cultivate a sense of empathy with their fellow congregants both in moments of joy and moments of sadness, and spiritually share with the celebrating family at the moment of naming. While the specifics of how a congregation can do this is beyond the scope of this article, reflecting on naming may help us to appreciate the significance of what otherwise tends to be seen sometimes as a simple act.

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Vist Our Website @ www.jofa.org

Growing Into the Legacy of Beruria

By Beruria Steinmetz-Silber

My name never fails to elicit a response. On one extreme, I am told, "I don't even know how to think about how to begin to pronounce that," and on the other, I hear, "Oh of course, I know your parents." But what interests me far more are those responses that fall somewhere in the middle—the responses of people who recognize the name, and are, therefore, puzzled as to why I bear it. I am not, of course, talking about those who say: "Why would your parents name you after a high school in New Jersey?" but rather those who ask: "Why would your parents name you after a woman who killed herself?"

Why indeed would my parents, Devora Steinmetz and David Silber, both outspoken feminists, name me after a woman who—according to a Rashi in Tractate *Avoda Zara* 17b—strangles herself after failing to resist one of her husband's students' attempts at seducing her? This question that I am often asked has provoked me to examine the bumpy life-long relationship I have had with my name.

It is hard to know whether I shaped what my name means for me or whether my name shaped who I am. As a member of a tradition which so emphasizes the importance of naming—some would go so far as to say that a name shapes a person's destiny—and as a child of parents who are renowned for their creative naming capabilities (my siblings' names include ImaShalom, She'arYashuv, Noadia, Pelaya, and Abaye), it would be a wonder if my name did not contribute to who I am. My parents chose my name because of what it meant to them—it is hardly surprising that the child of these two feminists carries both a legacy and the name of a woman who captured this legacy.

Recently, I sat at a Shabbat meal with a large group of high school girls. As a way of introduction, we went around the table and each said what we wished our name could be, given the opportunity to change it. I racked my brain, but couldn't come up with anything more fitting than what my name actually is.

This connection with my name, however, was not always present; on the contrary—it got off to a late start. My first grade *humash* homework assignments bear the name "Princess Sara" scribbled in my six year old handwriting. I got over the Princess Sara stage as soon as I realized that it wasn't going to catch on, but I continued to hate my name, dreading having to introduce myself.

As I learned to pronounce my name more clearly and gained the patience to repeat it to strangers, I started to search a little deeper. I asked my parents and teachers what "Beruria" meant. The first definition I was given was "Clarity of God," using the Hebrew letters ב ר ר as in the word ברור (clear). This definition continues to intrigue me, but I cannot fully connect with it, because I cannot wrap my head around what "Clarity of God" means. The second definition I was told was "Chosen of God," using the Hebrew letters ב ר ר as in the word בררה, or choice. It is this definition of my name that I have continued to find to be truly beautiful—what could be more meaningful than to be chosen by God?

It was in fourth grade, though, that my current relationship with my name began. I distinctly remember a conversation I had with my teacher at the time. We were discussing wrongdoers. One student had suggested that evil people be killed, and I remember piping up and asking—wouldn't it be better to hope that they would stop being bad? My individualized homework assignment that night was to learn the first piece of *gemara* I ever encountered, Tractate *Berakhot* 10a; I pored over three lines of *gemara* which tell of an identical conversation that the Beruria of old had with her husband Rabbi Meir, one of the most famous second century *Tannaim*. I fell in love with this woman whom I had unknowingly echoed almost two thousand years after she died.

> "...it would be a wonder if my name did not contribute to who I am."

My relationship with my name moved forward another step in tenth grade *Gemara* class, when we studied a unit entitled "Women and *Talmud Torah*." Although theoretically aimed at understanding why modern women can and should be learning *Torah She'be'Al Peh*, we spent three of the four weeks reading source after source explaining the prohibition against women learning Torah. But tucked in between tens of sources which decry traditional Torah study for women was a short passage from Tractate *Eruvin* telling of my namesake Beruria, who kicked a man for studying Torah silently. Despite Rabbi Eliezer's all too famous statement in Tractate *Sotah* that teaching women Torah is like teaching them *tiflut* (usually translated as "immorality", "licentiousness" or "triviality"), here was a woman who was feisty enough not only to learn Torah, but to show up in the *Bet Midrash*—a space to which women were not invited—and critique a male scholar for his quiet, and perhaps overly passive, approach to Torah study. In fact, this same passage of Talmud goes so far as to tell of a student of the very same Rabbi Eliezer quoted in Tractate *Sotah* who also studied in a quiet tone and proceeded to forget all he had learned. Not only is Beruria's message supported by this story, but by mentioning that this was a student of Rabbi Eliezer, the Talmud seems to be favoring the actions of a woman who learned Torah while criticizing the man who said that she should not be doing so.

Since high school, when people ask me why I'm named after a woman who killed herself, I tell them that Beruria's suicide appears in a Rashi with no prior known source. One could wonder why he presents such a story. Rashi is commenting on a text which describes how Rabbi Meir fled to Babylon because of an incident with Beruria. Rashi is filling in a gap left in the text, which is, to borrow a phrase from literary critic Erich Auerbach, "fraught with background."

One could ask why the tradition that Rashi cites developed, a tradition that depicts Beruria as a woman who succumbs to weakness and takes her out of the *Bet Midrash* and puts her in the bedroom. Rachel Adler discusses this question in her article *The Virgin in the Brothel and Other Anomalies: Character and Context in the Legend of Beruriah*. I prefer to pore over the pages of the Talmud which tell tales of the woman who crit-

icized a man in the *Bet Midrash* for not fully appreciating the words of Torah, the woman who learned more than most of her contemporaries (Tractate *Pesahim* 62b), and the woman who stepped out of the traditional boundaries in order to do so.

The question that concerns me more than explaining why such a tradition would develop around Beruria, is why the name Beruria reminds people of a fallen woman, rather than the strong-minded and determined woman who learned Torah in the *Bet Midrash* and who outsmarted some of the greatest rabbis. Why is it that in this modern day, so many of us are educated with this one tradition, found only in Rashi, when there are so many other stories in the Talmud itself about Beruria which portray her in a very different light.

Of course, there is another Rashi—one of my favorites—that provides a very different message. The Talmud in Tractate *Kiddushin* 32b discusses whether a Rabbi has the capacity to forgo his honor since, after all, this honor is due to him because of the Torah he has learned. This raises the question of to whom the Torah belongs. Rashi comments that the Torah belongs to God, but once the individual learns it, he or she acquires the Torah; upon learning it, the Torah belongs to the individual.

The Torah that so many girls and women learn is a Torah that tells them that it is not for them. The more they learn, the more they feel that the *Bet Midrash* is not for them, that engagement in Torah discussion is not for them, and that their way of life should be one of deference to others, rather than respect for themselves and active participation in learning and shaping Torah.

And here is where the story of Beruria has such a powerful message. Beruria learned Torah—in Tractate *Pesahim,* she is held up as a paradigm of scholarship, as she was said to have studied three hundred laws from three hundred teachers in a day (Tractate *Pesahim* 62b)—and by learning the Torah, she made it her own. Her Torah empowered her; she engaged in discussions about its meaning and she chastised others about the way it should be learned.

Despite the advances that have been made to open the doors of Torah and Talmud study to women, I am a member of a generation that is too-often afraid to proclaim its feminism, a generation which goes to Israel to expand knowledge and comes back from seminary worrying about being too outspoken. This is the generation that immediately associates the Beruria of old with a tradition about her weakness as a woman cited in a single comment of Rashi. In such a generation, I feel privileged to carry the name of a woman whom I associate with the Talmudic descriptions of her scholarship and strength. But this name is also a challenge.

It is incumbent upon me, a modern woman who bears the name Beruria, to change the way Torah is translated in our lives. I know that the Torah I have learned has shaped me in many ways, but I also know that my background has shaped the way I have learned Torah. I have been privileged to have learned in many settings, all of which opened texts to me and taught me to learn more. Bearing the name Beruria reminds me to feel empowered by the Torah that I have learned, to make it my own, and to use this Torah to open doors for all people and challenge the world to let us in.

Beruria Steinmetz-Silber *is a second year student at the University of Chicago, leaning towards majoring in Philosophy and minoring in Gender Studies.*

Jewish Women's Names ...continued from page 3

for the last few years, you will see that among the ten most popular women's names in the USA are Hannah and Abigail, and within the top fifteen – Sarah. This does not mean that Bible study is catching on in the United States, nor does it reflect a growing Jewish influence on American naming patterns. On the contrary, this general fashion probably influences the choice of baby girl names for young Jewish families. These names sound "right", carrying enough sense of upward mobility, class and style as they evoke a fashionable image of female Jewish identity.

Plaque on outside stone wall Ohel Rachel Synagogue, Shanghai

As for the more religiously committed and better Jewishly educated segment of American Jewry, there is an increase in giving more modern Hebrew names. This presumably shows an increased comfort level in America, a strong identification with Israel and a perceived acceptance of a multicultural American society. Checking the roster of Jewish day schools, we find names like Ma'ayan, Meital, Avital and Yakira. This is not a new phenomenon: there is evidence of this trend over forty years ago when the more committed American Jews who had received a modern Jewish education named their daughters Elisheva, Ilana and Yael. But it is more common today.

As we enter the 21st century, it will be interesting to watch the directions taken by names in Jewish communities around the world and in Israel for new sociological and historical directions.

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[1] See S. H. Dresner, *Rachel* (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1994), 41-43.

[2] Ibid., 181-184.

[3] A. Demsky, "Names and No-names in the Book of Ruth", in A. Demsky et al. (eds.) *These are the Names: Studies in Jewish Onomastics* vol. 1 (Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, 1997), 27-37.

[4] A. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names* (Avotaynu, Bergenfield, 2001), 505-506.

[5] A. Demsky, "Some Reflections on the Names of the Jews of Kaifeng, China", in A Demsky (ed.), *These are the Names: Studies in Jewish Onomastics* vol. 4 (Ramat-Gan, 2003), 91-107.

[6] Nili is the acronym of "*Netzah Yisrael Lo Yishaker* – The Glory of Israel does not deceive" (I Sam. 15:29) for the underground group founded by Aharon Ahronsohn and his family in the war against the Turks.

[7] www.ssa.gov.pressoffice/pr/baby-names. For 2006, Abigail was sixth in popularity and Hannah eighth.

Naming Eve

By Alieza Salzberg

At the beginning of the book of *Bereishit*, the power to name is reserved for those atop the hierarchy; God labels his creations, Adam names the animals and, finally, Adam defines Eve. Does naming always have to be an act of control, emanating from the more powerful to the weaker, dependant one? Or can we envision a naming that emerges from a mutual sense of partnership and out of intimate knowledge of the Other? Adam names Eve twice in the days following creation: first *Isha*, a feminine version of his own name, and later after their act of disobedience, *Chava* or Eve, "mother of all living." Why was there a need for a new name? What do these names tell us about the couple, and how did their sinning change their relationship?

Language is the most important resource in the Garden of Eden. God constructs the world with the building blocks of words. And after God creates, he names: "God called the light day, and the darkness God called night" (*Bereishit* 1:5). God names the sky, the land, and the seas. Through definitions, God finishes creation.

At the end of creation, we are told that humanity is made in God's image and, as such, is given the power of creativity – "be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and master it," (*Bereishit* 1:28) – just like God. It follows that mastering the world must include the power of speech, the ability to define our reality through language. This responsibility to name is made explicit when God parades the animals in front of Adam, curious as to what he will label them. Moreover, Adam's appellations become official: "whatever man called each living creature, that would be its name," (*Bereishit* 2:19). In naming each animal individually, Adam takes up the mantle of creativity.

In the process of classification, God hopes man will find an "*ezer kenegdo*," a partner to cure Adam's loneliness, "but for Adam no fitting helper was found" (2:20). The naming process does not produce a mate—instead, it emphasizes Adam's uniqueness. Adam labels the animals from a distance, lacking communion with the objects of his creativity, alienated by the realization that he is alone as the only speaking and naming being in Eden. God is still his only companion.

Midrash Bereishit Rabba, inspired by the compatibility of Man and God, imagines the two communing with one another through the process of naming. God asks man what he would like to call himself and he replies, "I would enjoy being called *Adam* because I was created from the earth (*adama*)" (*Bereishit Rabba* 17:4). Remarkably, God then asks Adam to name God. Adam responds: Ado-nai, "*Adon kol Briyotekha*, Master of all of Your creations." As opposed to Adam's naming of the animals, this moment in the *midrash* is intimate and mutual, as God, the creator of the world, empowers Adam by inviting him to participate.

> "Language is the most important resource in the Garden of Eden."

This *midrash* presents a model of mutual respect, where God reaches across the power differential and opens up a space for Adam, an invitation which he accepts with reverence. While the act of naming God seems quite brazen, Adam uses the opportunity to humble himself and highlight his dependence on God. In the etymologies of both names, Adam describes the relationship of created and Creator: *Adam*, created from the ground (*adama*), and *Ado-nai*, Master of His creations. Despite Adam's reciprocal experience with God, this model of mutual respect will not be emulated in the coming relationship with his wife.

Woman's creation follows on the heels of Adam's disappointment in encountering the animal kingdom; Adam notices that she is similar to himself, unlike the mute beasts. But as he has been trained, Adam's first reaction is to name her as well, fulfilling his divine impulse to master, lowering her status to that of an object. One can imagine that he feels that he has birthed her, created her and so has a right to name her. Unlike the midrashic scene in which Adam respectfully names God, when meeting his partner there is no reciprocity or permission granted to define the Other. Speaking about his wife in third person, perhaps in conversation with God, Adam says, "This one at last is bone of my bones flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called woman (*isha)*, for from man (*ish*) she was taken." (*Bereishit* 2:23). Adam fails to converse with his wife, to listen to her, or to discover her independent personality. Rather, he makes a quick estimation that she is just like him and produces a name that is the mirror of his own.

While the text records no conversation between the couple in all of *Bereishit*, *Isha* does know how to speak. Before the sin, she talks not to God, nor to Adam, but to the snake. She internalizes Adam's treatment of her as a lesser being, sensing that he has not accepted her as an equal, leaving her in the company of the animals. After she and the snake animatedly debate the consequences of eating from the tree of knowledge, *Isha* silently hands Adam the fruit, and he silently accepts and eats.

Later, in conversation with God, Adam will claim that the sin was not his fault: "the woman you provided me, she gave me from the tree and I ate" (*Bereishit* 3:12). Adam talks again in third person about his wife and his partner is silent, not defending herself or taking part in what might have been a three-way discussion. When analyzing Adam's alibi we must ask: why did he not engage her in conversation? Why didn't *Ish* try to reason with *Isha* and stop her? Did he even ask her which tree this fruit was from? They seem to live in silence! Adam does not fully grasp her independent agency and her very real power to speak, reason, and sin.

When the dust settles after the act of disobedience and God lays out punishments for the couple, Adam names his wife yet again. This time he names her "*Chava, Em Kol Chai*"- "Eve, mother of all living," (*Bereishit* 3:20). There is no obvious reason that woman requires a new name or that Adam should feel the need to continue to play the role of namer. This oddity begs us to contrast her new name to the first one.

If, in Adam's first attempt to name his partner, he ignored almost all difference, putting *Isha* in his back pocket, like a diminutive version of himself, this

new name does highlight the difference between the two. The title 'Adam' and the newly minted 'Eve' both reflect the punishments as well as the newly articulated gender roles. Adam will spend his days toiling in the field, fighting back weeds in order to feed himself and his family; "the *adama* (earth) is cursed" because of him (*Bereishit* 3:17). In contrast, woman is punished with the harsh labor pains of child bearing that only Eve, "mother of all living" will experience.

In changing his partner's name in the wake of the sin, Adam acknowledges in awe, or maybe confusion, that there is a fascinating being standing in front of him, one who can do something he cannot – bear children. The naming, however, is recorded in the text before Eve actually gives birth and thus relates to her potential to create in general. Just as Adam and God define and shape the world, the name Eve represents woman's creative nature. If we recall the earlier Midrash, "Master of Your Creation," the source of the name Adam gave to God is parallel to the concept of "Mother of all Living," the source behind the name Eve. In both, Adam recognizes the power of the Other. Further, Adam admits that he is dependent on Eve if he is to have a reproductive role in the world, just as, in the midrashic naming of God, Adam recognized his dependence on his creator. Perhaps Adam finally recognizes his wife's fullness of being, and repents for his initial naming of her, which missed the mark of her agency and potency.

At the birth of Cain, Eve echoes the sentiments embedded in her new name. The text records her naming of Cain: "I have gained a male child with the help of the Lord" (4:1). In giving birth, she recognizes that she is continuing the work of creation in partnership with God. Further the work of physical creation is tied to her linguistic power, as she takes the role of naming her son. This passage raises other questions. Where is Adam in the naming of the two children? Why does the text not explain the reasoning behind Abel's name? These silences require analysis beyond the scope of this article, but for the purpose of our reading, we might imagine that silence persists between the couple—the initial break has not been healed by Adam's realization and subsequent renaming of his wife.

While I have suggested that the name Eve may reflect a positive change—

> "…the name Eve represents woman's creative nature."

though not a complete revolution—in the first couple's relationship, the midrashic literature is not as optimistic about mutual respect after the sin. One *midrash*, also curious about the extraneous renaming, describes a less flattering meaning for "*Chava:*" Adam accusatorily says Eve was meant "to give life (*lechayoto*)," but instead she "gave advice like a snake (*chiva)*" (*Bereishit Rabba* 20:11). In this *midrash,* there is no hint of intimacy. Rather, the new name reflects the recriminations Adam directs at his wife, holding himself as an innocent victim, tricked by his wife, who is akin to the snake who misled her. Despite the negative tone of this interpretation of the name, here too, Adam admits to Eve's creative powers, albeit to their dangerous side. She is not a meek "e*zer kenegdo* (helpmate)" upon whom Adam can blindly rely to do his bidding.

Another distressing *midrash* questions why Adam would identify Eve as a mother, seeing as the couple do not produce any children between the birth of their first two sons, Cain and Abel, and Seth who is born 130 years later. According to the *midrash,* Adam repents and fasts for 130 years after the sin, during which time he is celibate. Still, says the *midrash*, Eve is called "mother of all living" because during these years she and Adam arouse the demons or spirits with whom they reproduce and populate the spirit world during their abstinence. Their separation, which is a result of the sin, and perhaps an outgrowth of their lack of communication from the start, continues to "birth" harmful spirits in the world.

These latter *midrashim* suggest a sad ending to the story of Adam and Eve—not managing to be each other's mate as God had hoped. During their years of separation they do not create human children, failing to fulfill their potential as mother and father, as creators in God's image. One could only imagine Eve continuing to chafe under a name that identities her as a mother, as Adam demands abstinence and prevents her from fulfilling that creativity. Perhaps they struggle with conversation for 130 years until they finally reach reconciliation, signaled by the birth of Seth late in their lives.

According to the simple reading of the biblical text, the name Eve does not reflect recrimination or distance on Adam's part, as some of the darker *midrashim* suggest. Rather, in our reading we have privileged the positive relationship described in the first *midrash* we raised, and rely on the model of God and Adam's mutually respectful naming as a way to redeem this couple. The name Eve, given immediately after the sin, may hint at a moment of realization, the start of reconciliation. Adam trades the bland title *Isha* for *Chava,* a name that embodies his wife—a living, breathing, independent woman, who may surprise him, may tempt him, may support him, and may create children with him—if only they can learn to talk to one another.

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JOFA's Gender-Sensitive Curriculum • *Bereishit:* A New Beginning

"If They are Not Prophets, Then They are the Children of Prophets"[1]

By Debby Koren

The suggestion that both parents' names should be used to identify someone for various rituals, such as being called to the Torah for an *aliya*, is often met with the objection that using the mother's name in such a context would constitute a change of *minhag* (custom), and that customs are not to be changed. The reason that this objection is raised is because there is no actual legal, i.e., halakhic, implication in adding one's mother's name when being called to an *aliya* or in reciting the *mi sheberakh* after the *aliya*. I also assume that God knows whom we have in mind, in any event, and I don't believe He would be so easily confused by my being called Devora bat Binyamin v'Haya rather than Devora bat Binyamin.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that in response to a question about whether there is any halakhic reason not to use both the mother's and father's names for various ceremonies, the rabbis at Yeshivat Eretz Hemdah in Jerusalem after first stating the basic principle: "One doesn't change Jewish customs, for their 'foundation is in the holy mountains'"[2], continued as follows:

> *These days, when in various communities around the world there is an awakening of proper Jewish women for learning Torah and for more active participation in communal life, an awakening that in most cases is founded in praiseworthy holy sentiments, if there is a request to mention the mother's name, it is [perhaps] appropriate to respond [positively] to such a request. However, any change from the accepted [custom] should be prevented if the desire to make [such change] derives from an inclination to imitate the gentiles and the like.*[3]

Our rabbinic literature is replete with cases of customs that **have** changed over the centuries, whether new prohibitions and stringencies have been introduced—something that we are all too familiar with—or whether old customs have been abandoned or adapted to new circumstances.

The value of studying these cases lies in the lessons to be learned: Customs do, in fact, change, and frequently the claim that they must not is polemical in nature. Historical reality affects both the behavior of the Jewish people at large and the rabbinic response to that behavior, and both the behavior and response to it vary according to the time, the place, social conditions, and other factors. Space only permits us to briefly examine a few such cases of changes to custom.

The evolution of the custom of the mourner's *kaddish* since its inception in the Middle Ages is one of the most fascinating examples of a custom that has changed over time. A particularly interesting case arose in 1853 when Rabbi Beer Oppenheim, the rabbi of Ivancice (Eibenschitz) in South Moravia, sent a question to the chief rabbi in Altona, Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger.[4] Though Rabbi Oppenheim was a scholar in his own right, a congregational dispute prompted him to consult with Rabbi Ettlinger, a scholar of great reputation and accomplishment.

Due to the unification of two synagogues—one of which had become so dilapidated that it had to be destroyed—it was decided by the newly unified congregation that all those who needed to say the mourner's *kaddish* would do so in unison, to avoid the daily disputes and fights that would otherwise break out over who had precedence to say *kaddish*. It must be understood that prior to this decision, the community custom had been for individual mourners to recite *kaddish* each time it appears in the service according to an order of precedence that was specified by Rabbi Moses Isserles (16th century)[5] and in greater detail by the *Magen Avraham* (17th century),[6] which sometimes left some mourners without the opportunity to say *kaddish*. The consolidation of synagogues and *minyanim* only exacerbated this problem.

Rabbi Oppenheim ruled that the congregation, in overriding the existing practice, had made an appropriate and correct decision, given the fact that the mourner's *kaddish* is a custom that does not appear in either the Babylonian Talmud or the Jerusalem Talmud, nor in Maimonides' code nor in the *Tur* (14th century), but only as a later custom. There were congregants who objected to this ruling, claiming that a custom cannot be changed, but Rabbi Oppenheim maintained that to make peace and avoid fights in a holy place, one can certainly change a custom – he had even seen someone hit another man in the face because of a dispute over who has priority to say *kaddish*! Rabbi Oppenheim gave detailed and citation-laden arguments to explain why reciting *kaddish* in a group was just as effective as when said by individuals. He also pointed out that the Sephardi custom is to recite *kaddish* in unison and he cited other communities in which this was done and other rabbis who approved the practice. It is reasonable to think that Rabbi Oppenheim was expecting a "stamp of approval" from Rabbi Ettlinger.

But Rabbi Ettlinger was not in the least pleased with Rabbi Oppenheim's ruling and responded:[7]

> *I was surprised at how the honorable Rabbi could call this a "worthy and correct decision"–to change the Jewish custom for mourner's kaddish to be said individually as has been practiced in all the countries of Ashkenaz and Poland for more than three hundred years, and to follow the footsteps of the Reformers in our time who have changed matters in the prayers, and who have also practiced this custom of the mourners saying kaddish in unison.*

Rabbi Ettlinger follows this opening statement with a detailed, point-by-point argument against such a practice, concluding by stating that, for those who were prevented from saying *kaddish* because of the *halakhot* of precedence, "their silence is better than their words".

Regardless of whose arguments are more convincing or more "halakhically sound" – Rabbi Oppenheim's or Rabbi Ettlinger's, – the fact is that the practice of saying *kaddish* in unison (and sometimes a cacophony of voices not in unison) has become the normative custom

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רבקה בת פרומט ואברהם שמואל

Yesterday I attended the funeral of Erica Jesselson. I heard eulogies extolling Mrs. J, as I always called her, for her munificent charity, magnificent aesthetic and the vision she brought to the world of Jewish education and Jewish culture. Mrs. J would never characterize herself as a feminist, and it was a source of contention between us on a number of occasions. But for me, an avowed and proud feminist, she was a role model on what a woman of strength, commitment and taste could accomplish.

Mrs. J's Hebrew name was Rivkah like our biblical matriarch whose blessing was to be a multitude.

אחתנו את היי לאלפי רבבה

This blessing was for Mrs. J, fulfilled through her large family which comprised four generations and her extended family of Torah scholars, teachers, artists, musicians and many others who benefited from her generosity.

We at JOFA are committed to redeeming women's names and to ensuring they live on for future generations to appreciate and emulate. In our long history of unrecorded Jewish matriarchs Erica Jesselson is an important name to remember and to honor.

תהי נשמתה צרורה בצרור החיים

May her soul be bound up among the living.

Belda Lindenbaum

***Emahot,* 2008**
Sharon Binder (www.sharonsukkah.com)

In her silkscreen in honor of Pesah, Jerusalem artist Sharon Binder integrates the names of the four matriarchs with the 4 Cups and the 4 Promises of Redemption.

TA SHMA: COME AND LEARN

Watch for "*Ta Shma:* Come and Learn – The Halakhic Source Guide Series" which provides the halakhic texts informing women's obligations in *mitzvot*. Sources are presented in the original and are translated and analyzed. The first two subjects addressed are "May a Woman Touch a Torah Scroll?" by Devorah Zlochower and *"Kiddush"* by Rahel Berkovits.

Meineket Rivka

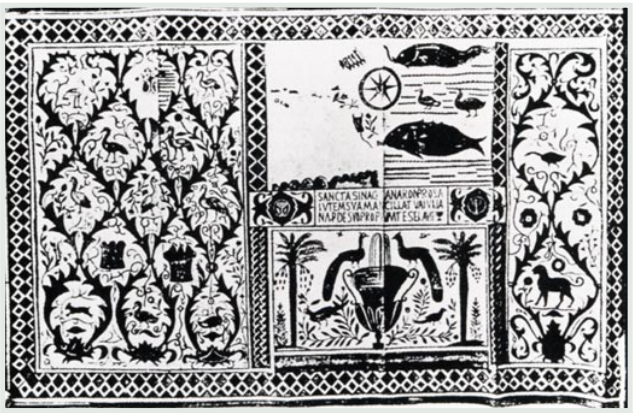
While there are Hebrew and Yiddish books written by men that incorporate the names of Jewish women in their titles, *Meineket Rivka* (Rebekah's Nursemaid) is unique in that it is a book of ethics written in Yiddish by Rebekah Tiktiner, a woman who lived in Prague in the 16th century. This is considered the first such book written by a Jewish woman. In the scholarly tradition, Tiktiner wrote an elaborate poem in rhymed Hebrew as a preface to the book. The printer of its first edition states: "This book is called *Meineket Rivka* (Genesis 35:8) in order to remember the name of the writer and in honor of all women to prove that a women can also compose a work of ethics and offer as good interpretations as many men." Tiktiner also wrote an extensive Song for Simhat Torah to be sung over the *Sefer Torah* in synagogue. (A Hebrew edition of the song and an introduction to Tiktiner's life and work can be found in *Simkhes Toyre Lid LeRivka Tiktiner* by Yael Levine [2005] and an English version is included in *Seyder Tkhines* by Devra Kay [2004]). Rebekah Tiktiner died in 1605 and her tombstone states: "She preaches day and night to women in every faithful city."

The Generosity of Our Foremothers

The most valuable sources for exploring the names and lives of Jewish women in the past are tombstones, and what is often most significant is to see how the women are described. In many cases, honorifics such as *isha hashuva* (an important woman), or *isha raka beshanim* (a young woman, "soft" in years) are added to the names. Some inscriptions give even more information. A tombstone from thirteenth century Worms tells the following about a woman called "Urania, the daughter of the chief of the synagogue singers. His prayer for his people rose up to glory. And as for her, she, too, with sweet tunefulness officiated before the women to whom she sang the hymnal portions".

While an examination of Hebrew books of the past will reveal few female writers, it will reveal many females names as copyists of manuscripts, as typesetters, printers and women who brought books to press, and women to whom the books are dedicated.

The names of the women who preceded us can be found in municipal registries, in wills and legal documents, and even in Inquisition records. But one of the most important sources of exploring and redeeming the names of Jewish women of the past are the inscriptions on donations, particularly of gifts to synagogues. In the mosaic floor from the synagogue dating from the second half of the fifth century at Hamman Lif in Tunisia, illustrated above, is inscribed the following: "Thy servant Juliana, at her own expense, paved with mosaic the holy synagogue of Naro for her salvation." A synagogue in Apamea, Syria also has the names of numerous female donors preserved on its mosaic floor.



Drawing of the mosaic floor from the synagogue at Hamman Lif (Naro), Tunisia.

From the exhibition The Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World *Yeshiva University Museum,1996.*

Parochet: **(Ark curtain), Vienna,1887.**

Silk, embroidered with silk and metallic threads. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Halpern

Photograph from Yeshiva University Museum exhibition The Sephardic Journey *1492-1992*

Many synagogue textiles bring to life those women who made them, paid for them or in whose honor they were donated. The *parochet* (Ark curtain), illustrated on the left, has inscribed on it the names of fourteen individual women from the Russo family who worked on its elaborate embroidery before it was donated to the Sephardi synagogue in Vienna in 1887. Perhaps the most moving items in the Precious Legacy Exhibit from Prague were two iron Ark curtain hooks mounted on simply painted wooden plaques with inscriptions on them. One painted inscription shows that it was donated by the "women of the synagogue" but the other actually gives the name of the donor of the second curtain hook – "the important and modest woman, Perl Kauffler". In this way, even a woman who could not afford to make a lavish embroidery could be remembered by her modest but significant donation.

And You Shall Teach Your Daughters

Schools and other institutions are often named after women. In particular, girls' schools and seminaries are named after biblical women and other women of renown, or after philanthropists. One example is the famous school in Jerusalem named for Evelina de Rothschild. In the Lubavitch community, many institutions and many girls are named after Chaya Mushka, the wife of Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson. In the 19th century, Sir Moses Montefiore established a yeshiva/theological college in Ramsgate, England, called the Judith Lady Montefiore College in memory of his wife. (This has recently reopened in London as an institute to train Sephardi rabbis). Many institutions for girls world-wide are appropriately named after Beruria, the second century scholar. Perhaps it is too soon to see if there is an emergent pattern of educational institutions for women and girls named after Nehama Leibowitz, the great twentieth century Torah scholar.

Children of Prophets

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in the present day,[8] with the exception of a small minority of congregations that have maintained the earlier custom. Indeed, whether *kaddish* is recited by individuals or in unison is only one facet of the custom of mourner's *kaddish* that has changed over the centuries. The number of times *kaddish* is said,[9] who says it and for whom,[10] and other details have all changed, demonstrating clearly that custom, in fact, does change.

Let us briefly review two other cases of change in custom. Unlike *kaddish*, which began as a custom after the finalization of the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, our next case will demonstrate that customs regarding commandments from the Torah can also change, sometimes in spite of rabbinic objections.

The *mitzvah* of *tzitzit* is explicitly stated in the Torah. Based on his understanding of *Menahot* 41b, Maimonides ruled regarding the color of the *tzitzit* that should be tied to a *tallit* that is all red or all green.[11] Red and green presumably are examples of all colors other than *tekhelet* - or white, i.e., not dyed at all - as a *tallit* that is the color of *tekhelet* has its own specific rules regarding the *tzitzit*. The ruling itself is not of interest to us here; rather, what is of interest is the fact that Maimonides expressed no concern or judgment about the color that might be used for a *tallit*. What is of importance to him is the color of the *tzitzit* that one is required to affix to the *tallit*. The commentators on Maimonides' ruling, and later codifiers such as the *Tur* and the *Beit Yosef*,[12] present differing opinions about Maimonides' ruling – may the *tzitzit* on a red or green garment be white, or must they match the color of the garment, but, again, we do not see any reservation regarding wearing any variety of colored *tallitot*.

However, about 150 years following the time of the *Tur*, we find the following in a responsum by Rabbi Israel ben Hayyim Bruna, a leading halakhic authority in 15th century Ashkenaz:[13]

> *I was asked if a wealthy person from the land of Russia is permitted to make a silk tallit in red or green for the Sabbath and Festivals. I responded that he should not do so, but rather [should do] as our ancestors in all of Israel [i.e., all Jewish communities] have practiced, that the tallit should be white, and I have not seen and not heard of the custom being changed.*

Rabbi Israel ben Hayyim Bruna presented evidence for his opinion from some of the same sources that were used to define the ruling for colored *tallitot*, and he also used aggadic sources to buttress his ruling, and continued:

> *One should not change the custom even though Maimonides wrote at the end of the laws of tzitzit that all the colors are proper for a tallit, whether red or green.*

Since Maimonides made no statement about the permissibility of a red or green *tallit*, Rabbi Israel ben Hayyim Bruna inferred from Maimonides' ruling about the colors of the *tzitzit* that colored *tallitot* are permissible. It is curious, then, for Rabbi Bruna to claim that our ancestors used white and to forbid changing that custom. If our ancestors always wore white, it seems doubtful that Maimonides, the *Tur*, and all the commentators would have bothered discussing and debating the requirements of the *tzitzit* on a colored *tallit* to the extent that they did, or at least one of them would have commented that the custom was to wear white. Thus, what Rabbi Israel ben Hayyim Bruna perceived as the prevalent custom probably developed over time. It is also interesting that Rabbi Bruna made no mention of stripes or colors of stripes, though in our time, traditionalists either wear white stripes on white (a Sephardi custom) or black stripes on white (the custom of most other communities today). We also find that in many communities today stripes of all colors and colored *tallitot* have become quite acceptable, demonstrating the evolution of custom and perhaps the revival of an old custom.

The last example of changing customs that we will briefly look at will bring us back to our original motivation for this article: the names that are used when calling someone for an *aliya* to the Torah. The rabbis from Yeshivat Eretz Hemdah, who were quoted above, based their response on the assumption that the widespread custom is to call someone to the Torah using the father's name. However, a question posed in 1985 to Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, as well as his answer,[14] suggest that there is another custom as well. In a particular synagogue, the *gabbai* gave out cards to those who would be called to the Torah and then they were not called by their name, but rather they were called up as "the Kohen", "the Levi", "the third", "the fourth", etc. Rabbi Waldenberg was asked if it is proper to do this or not. He responded:

> *The essence of the law is that there is no obligation to call the oleh by his explicit name, as the Darkhei Moshe [Rabbi Moses Isserles, 16th century][15] wrote in the name of the Mordekhai [13th century], that "there is no obligation to mention the name of the oleh; rather he can be signaled to come up."*
>
> *However, the Darkhei Moshe[16] already added to this by stating that "one is not required to call the oleh by his name and that to signal to him is quite sufficient; however the widespread custom is to call 'so-and-so son of so-and-so to stand'." If so, one should not change the custom…*

In spite of his instruction not to change the custom, Rabbi Waldenberg called attention to earlier rabbinic literature from the 19th century[17] that provided evidence that not using names to call people to the Torah is not a new phenomenon. He also stated that "our brethren the Sepharadim" practice this custom as their norm, and they do not call people to the Torah according to "so-and-so son of so-and-so", but they signal to the *oleh* to come up to the Torah.

In light of these variations to the custom of how someone is called for an *aliya* and the fact that there is no actual obligation to use any names, using both the father's and the mother's names is not so radical an innovation – the custom has not been fixed in stone from time immemorial. Considering that our prevalent custom today is to use names in calling someone up to the Torah, it is fitting to use both the father's and mother's names as identifi-

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Of Wives and Mothers:

How the Naming of Children Reveal the Historic Destinies of Rachel and Leah

By Arielle Fenigstein

Despite their relatively few numbers, women play a significant role as name-givers in the Hebrew Bible. Of the approximate forty-seven instances in which a name-giver is specified, twenty-nine involve women.[1] From the time of Eve, the right to name children has belonged primarily to wives and mothers. This authority rests likewise in the hands of Rachel and Leah: as the final two matriarchs, Rachel and Leah are in many ways the progenitors of the Jewish nation. Together with their two handmaidens, Bilhah and Zilpah, these women bear twelve sons, who in turn become the twelve tribes of Israel. It is therefore unsurprising that children and the naming of children lie at the center of their story. With each child named, the two women assume more prominence in the destiny of the Jewish people. This article will examine the names that Rachel and Leah give to their children, as a way of gleaning insights into their individual characters and the historic roles that they play in the Jewish nation.

In the biblical text, Rachel is portrayed as the beloved wife of Yaakov. Theirs is a story of instant and intense romance. From the moment that he sees her, Yaakov falls in love with Rachel. It is for her sake that he agrees to work seven years in the house of Lavan: she is the promised bride-wage that makes his lengthy servitude feel like "a few days" (29:20). After their marriage, Yaakov seems to dwell in her tent above all others (Radak 31:33; Rashi 35:32) and it is her tent that he protects most assiduously in case of attack (33:2). When he consults his wives, she is the first thought-of and the first to answer, as "Yaakov called Rachel and Leah to the field…Then Rachel and Leah answered him" (31:4, 14). Rachel is thus the foremost and adored wife in the story of Rachel and Leah.

Yet Rachel does not seem content in her role as Yaakov's primary mate; she wishes rather to be the primary mother of his children. When she remains barren, she gives sharp expression to her desire to bear a child. In the only recorded

> "...children and the naming of children lie at the center of the story."

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cation. In a responsum attributed to Hai Ga'on,[18] Rav Hai writes that Yo'av ben Tzruya[19] is named according to his mother, as are the Sages Simon ben Pazi, Rabbah bar Hanna, and Rabbi Isaac bar Samuel bar Marta. Rav Hai explains the important family connections of these women, which is why it is an honor to name those individuals according to their mothers. These days, we follow the principle that "all of our women are important", as the Mordekhai wrote[20] in the name of the *Tosafot*, when he obligated all women as well as men to recline at the Passover *seder* (also a change in custom). In contemporary society, we consider our mothers as important "in the public sphere" as our fathers and so it makes sense to extend the reasoning of Hai Ga'on and call up an individual using the names of both parents.

Studying rabbinic literature enables us to appreciate that Jewish practice has never been stagnant, but changes for a variety of reasons, sometimes in spite of the reservations of some rabbinic authorities, sometimes with the support of some rabbinic authorities. Limitations of space have permitted me to touch on just a few aspects of this process, but sufficient, it is hoped, to convince the reader that evolving custom **is** in fact our custom.

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[1] Originating in the *gemara*, *Pesahim* 66, this statement is frequently used in responsa literature to uphold a custom that is popularly practiced by a Jewish community.

[2] Psalms 87:1. Rashi and other commentators explain that the holy mountains refer to *Har Tzion* and Jerusalem. The expression that the foundation of custom is in the holy mountains is commonly used in rabbinic literature.

[3] *B'Mar'eh HaBazak* 4:11.

[4] Rabbi Ettlinger's disciples include Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer.

[5] *Yoreh De'ah* 376:4.

[6] *Orah Hayyim* 132.

[7] *Binyan Tzi'on* 122.

[8] In *Iggrot Moshe Yoreh De'ah* 4:60 it is clear that Rabbi Feinstein regards this custom as a given "in these times".

[9] See *Arukh HaShulhan Hilkhot Birkot Hashahar* 55:4.

[10] See Rema *Yoreh De'ah* 376:4 and *Magen Avraham Orah Hayyim* 132.

[11] *Hilkhot Tzitzit* 2:8.

[12] *Orah Hayyim* 9.

[13] *Mahari miBruna* 73.

[14] *Tzitz Eliezer* 17:16.

[15] *Darkhei Moshe Orah Hayyim* 135:8.

[16] *Darkhei Moshe Orah Hayyim* 139:1.

[17] Including the *Arukh HaShulhan Even HaEzer* 129:81. Aside from Rabbi Waldenberg's citations, there is such evidence in responsa by the 19th century *poskim* Rabbi Joshua Trunk (*Yeshu'ot Malko Orah Hayyim* 12) and Rabbi Abraham Bornstein (*Avnei Nezer Hoshen Mishpat* 103) and the late Munkaczer Rebbe, Hayyim Elazar Shapira (19th-20th century) (*Minhat Elazar* 4:49).

[18] Responsa of the *Ge'onim*, (Jacob Musaphia) 12.

[19] II Samuel 2:13.

[20] *Pesahim* 108a.

dialogue between Rachel and Yaakov, she demands of Yaakov: "Give me children—for if not, I am dead" (30:1). In the depth of her yearning, Rachel believes that life without children loses all meaning.[2] In fact, Rachel's passion for children is so strong, that in the incident with the mandrakes she willingly renounces her rights to her husband in the hopes of having children. She introduces a second rival into her household to bear children in her stead. The names that Rachel grants her handmaiden's sons reflect her obsession with her status as a mother. "God has judged (*dan*) me and He has also heard my voice, and given me a son" she declares—and therefore calls her adopted child Dan (30:6). This "judgment" seems to refer to her worthiness as a mother: Rachel acknowledges that she has been found wanting by God—and yet He has blessed her indirectly by allowing her to mother this child (Rashi, Seforno, Radak 30:6). Rachel does not mention or link this child to Yaakov; it is hers alone, a reflection of her personal standing as a mother.

Rachel likewise names Naphtali, Bilhah's second son, based on her anguished desire for a child. "A fateful contest I waged [*naphtule… niphtalti*] with my sister; yes, and I have prevailed" she declares—suggesting that her obsession with children is related to her rivalry with her sister (30:8). Confident of her husband's love, Rachel instead competes with Leah in the realm of childbirth. She sees children, not spousal love and affection, as the primary victory in marriage—and so "wrestles" and seeks to "triumph" in the battlefield of childbirth and childbearing.

Rachel does finally bear a son of her own, and the name she chooses reveals the centrality motherhood has assumed in her life: "God has taken away [*asaph*] my disgrace... May the Lord add [*yoseph*] another son for me" she declares—and so names her child Yoseph, a combination of both elements (30:23-24). Rachel sees her long-awaited child as a panacea for her personal unhappiness: motherhood reverses the barren years of humiliation and pain. Yet the moment that her deepest wish is granted, Rachel begins her yearning again. She eagerly wants another child. Though she remains the beloved wife, it is motherhood alone for which she lives.

Ironically, Rachel dies with the granting of her wish. She dies in childbirth, bearing a second son whom she names Ben-Oni, the "son of my suffering" (35:18)[3]. Her life-long dream is finally realized, but at the tragic expense of her own life. The achievement of her hopes is snatched from her grasp just at the moment of fulfillment. Children have been the guiding force of her life and the center of her love; perhaps fittingly, they mark the beginning and end of her marriage to Yaakov. Rachel, though the beloved and primary wife, lives her life with the sole expectation and ambition to become a mother.

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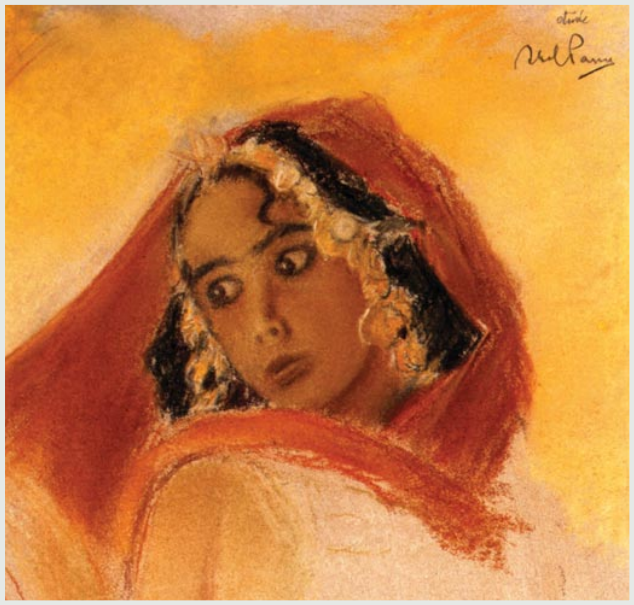
In many respects, Leah is presented as the reverse of her sister. Although Yaakov was tricked into marrying her, Leah remains devotedly and romantically committed to him. From numerous biblical incidents and exchanges, it is apparent that Leah bears an unrequited love for her distant husband. Yaakov "loved Rachel more than Leah"—but it is Leah rather than Rachel who adores her husband (29:30).

It is therefore no coincidence that all of the names chosen by Leah revolve around Yaakov and her relationship to him. Leah's truest desire is to be cherished by Yaakov, and she believes that bearing his children is a means to that end.



Abel Pann, *Rachel*. 1930's

Courtesy of Itiel Pann and Mayanot Gallery, Jerusalem.

Contrary to her sister Rachel, Leah believes that Yaakov, and not her children, is the centerpiece of her life. The names that she grants her children reflect her fixation on her husband.

With the selection of each name, Leah highlights her evolving relationship with Yaakov. Thus, her first two sons reveal her unhappiness in her initial subordinate status. Leah names her firstborn Reuven, declaring that "God perceived (*ra'a*) my suffering; perhaps now my husband will love me," and her subsequent son, Shimon, saying, "God heard (*shama)* that I am hated, and so gave me this one as well" (29:32-3). Though both names express her feelings of rejection, they also demonstrate the slight improvement in her relationship with her husband. Originally, Leah believes Yaakov's dislike of her to be perceptible. It is to her a visible reality, which God can easily perceive. However, by the birth of her second son, Leah's sense of inferiority has slightly diminished. She no longer feels Yaakov's rejection openly, but rather hears it in the nuances of life, in the subtleties of conversation. Though she still is the less beloved, Leah's second child brings with him the evidence of an improved bond between mother and father. With each child, Yaakov seems to return more and more of his wife's affection.

Each successive child born to or adopted by Leah reveals this positively evolving relationship. From Levi's naming and onward, Leah ceases her expressions of suffering in favor of eager words of expectation. "This time will my husband be joined (*lave)* unto me…this time, I will praise *(odeh)* God," she declares upon the births of Levi and Yehudah (29:35-35).[4] No longer does Leah speak of visible or subtle degradation. Now, life is a matter of praise to the Almighty.

The same holds true with the two children born to Zilpah that Leah names in a quasi-adoption. She calls these sons Gad and Asher, saying "Fortune (*gad*) is come[5]" and "Happy (*asher*) am I!" (30:11-13). Each name is successively more

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positive—to the point that Leah actually calls herself fortunate and happy. This is a far cry from the initial portrait of Leah, who constantly suffered from her painfully unreciprocated feelings. As her ever-more positive choice of names for her children suggest, Leah's love for Yaakov has been returned in some measure. After the birth of her final two sons, Leah respectively declares that "God hath given me my reward (*sachar*), because I gave my handmaid to my husband[6]" and "God hath endowed me (*zeved*) with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons" (30:18-20). Both names indicate the positive bond that Leah now shares with Yaakov. She has been rewarded and compensated for her suffering, and now maintains the hope of true unification. The names of Leah's sons thereby become a symbolic manifestation of her relationship to Yaakov. After years of conceiving, birthing and raising children, Leah and Yaakov establish a closer and happier marriage. She is his complement and mate—the unequivocal partner in the creation of his home and family.

The family is augmented once more as Leah bears a final child: Dina. The text remains virtually silent regarding this seventh child. Leah names her daughter without any explanation—but the Midrash fills in the gaps with a story of Leah's righteousness. Leah was concerned that this child would be a male, and as the 12th son, complete the ranks of the twelve tribes of Israel. Rather than assume that honor herself, she prayed that Rachel would bear the final male child, and so remain of equal standing to the handmaidens. Her "judgment" (*din)* caused the child to be born female—and so she named her daughter in remembrance of her ruling. The final portrait of Leah is of a confident woman; no longer must she war with her sister through her children. She is in fact willing to give up a seventh son for the sake of her sister. Leah has grown into the helpmate of Yaakov through her childbirth and childrearing.

Abel Pann, *Leah was Tender-Eyed*. ca.1935

Courtesy of Itiel Pann and Mayanot Gallery, Jerusalem.

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In *Bereishit*, it is clear that Rachel is viewed as the beloved wife—and Leah is compensated by being the bountiful mother. However, a closer examination of the text reveals that these designations are ironically reversed: Leah's sole ambition is to become the beloved wife and partner of Yaakov, and Rachel seeks to become the joyful mother of his children[7]. Significantly, their desires seem to play out in their historical destinies, as Leah assumes the role of Yaakov's principal wife, and Rachel adopts the responsibilities of motherhood. The prophet Jeremiah writes about Rachel crying for her children:

> *Thus said the Lord: a cry is heard in Ramah–it is a wailing and bitter weeping. Rachel is sobbing for her children. She refuses to be comforted for her children, who are gone. Thus said the Lord: Restrain your voice from weeping, your eyes from shedding tears…there is hope for your future: Your children shall return to their country. (31:14-16)*

With this vision, Rachel becomes the symbolic mother of the children of Israel. She desperately struggled to bear her own children, prayed for them, and cherished them—and so *B'nei Israel* are called her children three times in this prophecy. As evident in her choice of names in *Bereishit,* her love for her children is endless and genuine. She is truly the mother figure of the children of Israel, and has so remained throughout Jewish history.

"...ultimately theirs is a story of self-creation and free will..."

In contrast, Leah, who in the biblical text is the embodiment of the mother figure, becomes the pre-eminent wife of Yaakov. Of all the four wives—Leah, Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpah—only Leah is buried in the cave of Machpelah. In other words, at the end of her life, Yaakov too recognizes Leah's role: he realizes that she bore him the majority of his children and ultimately she is the partner with whom he built the nation of Israel. Contrary to the weepy, weak-eyed woman in Genesis, Leah is the fulfilled and complete wife in historical perspective.

Thus, the relationship between Yaakov and his two chief wives, Rachel and Leah, is by no means simple. Though the two matriarchs are often remembered as warring rivals for

Yaakov's love, in reality, they are competing for two separate roles in the nation's future. The status of wife and mother is divided between Leah and Rachel respectively. Unlike the other matriarchs, Sarah and Rebecca, who assume both tasks, Leah and Rachel must divide their historical legacy. Though they are each granted a specific role in the formation of the Jewish nation, the two women reverse their destined course by dint of passion and determination. Through their prayers and resolve, Rachel becomes the beloved mother, and Leah, the principal wife. The names that they give their children, the twelve tribes of Israel, are reflective of their choices and their impressive attempt to redefine their fates. Though procreation is at the center of the story of Rachel and Leah, ultimately theirs is a story of self-creation and free will.

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[1] Karla G. Bohmbach, "Names and Naming in the Biblical World," in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/ Deuterocanonical Books and the New Testament*, ed. Carol Meyers et al. (2000), 37.

[2] Yaakov's incensed response to Rachel's complaint thus becomes comprehensible. As Aviva Zornberg notes in *Genesis: The Beginning of Desire,* "it is painful for him to hear his wife—whom he loves for herself, not as a means of procreation—declare so plainly that her primary passion is not for him." (210).

[3] Yaakov renames the child "the son of my strength," or "Binyamin," picking up on its more positive connotations. As Ramban notes, *"oni"* means both suffering and strength. Yaakov adopts his wife's chosen name, but assumes its more optimistic meaning.

[4] Though the reason for Levi's name is explicit in the text, the identity of the namer is less apparent. In his case, the text deviates from the formulaic expression "*vatikra*," "and she named him," to the more ambiguous "*k'ra shemo*," "and he was named." Hazal understood this nuance to mean that a third party had a part in the naming of Levi—either Yaakov, as Rashbam suggests, or else an angel of God, as Rashi writes based on the *midrash*. Leah's newfound happiness is thus confirmed by the voice of God or her husband.

[5] Rashi offers a second interpretation for the meaning of the name, suggesting that "Gad" derives from the word "betrayal." Leah is then expressing her discontent with this additional rival, who further detracts from her relationship with her husband. In this interpretation as well, the name that Leah chooses echoes her feelings regarding her relationship with Yaakov.

[6] Alternatively, the name derives from the language of *sachar,* meaning hiring price: Leah is acknowledging that she has hired her husband in her desire to bear him more children.

[7] This reversal of roles is noted by Gabriel H. Cohen in his article "Rachel and Leah: Wife and Mother," in Bar-Ilan University's Parashat Hashavua Study Center. Parashat Vayetze 5766.

Claiming and Reclaiming Our Mothers' Names

By Seth (Shaul) Farber

It is generally assumed that the reclaiming of mothers' names within the context of traditional Orthodox liturgy is a modern phenomena which emerged out of a desire to bring an egalitarian spirit to ceremonies which otherwise have a distinct patriarchal tone. As such, practices such as mentioning mothers' names in the context of memorial prayers, including them on tombstones, employing them in baby naming ceremonies and *aliyot,* may be criticized publicly or discouraged privately within Orthodox circles. Moreover, and perhaps even more damaging, many sincere Orthodox Jews recoil from using mothers' names in many liturgical ceremonies for fear that they will be labeled in a certain manner, despite the fact that they find meaning in the use of these names within these contexts.

This article argues that the halakhic literature which addresses the introduction of mother's names into texts and ceremonies encourages such inclusion. In fact, halakhists whose credentials clearly place them outside of the liberal arm of Jewish Orthodoxy even demonstrate a preference in many liturgical matters for the use of mother's names, in certain circumstances.[1]

While surveys of the matronymic in the *mi sheberakh* prayer[2] or in other liturgical contexts[3] appear in rabbinic literature, a clear and concise analysis of the general issue of using mothers' names is presented in the responsa, *Betzel HaHohma* by Rabbi Betzalel Stern.[4] His responsum specifically address the use of a mother's name on tombstones and in prayers. Central to Rabbi Stern's analysis is a Talmudic statement (TB *Shabbat* 66b) that insists on the using of mothers' names in the context of the writing of incantations. (In Talmudic times, incantations were regularly used for protective or medicinal purposes.)

> *Abaye said: Mother once told me, all issues of numbers (Rashi: i.e., incantations) should go after the mother...*

Rabbi Stern notes that the Talmud is peppered with examples of incantations that utilize the mothers' name. Although Abaye's statement did not enter the halakhic canon, it was applied in two ways by various *poskim* (halakhic decisors). One approach sees incantations as a model for all prayers. Any time one seeks to pray on behalf of someone or in memory of someone, employing the mother's name–in contrast to the father's name–would be preferred. An alternative suggestion, made by a contemporary of Rabbi Stern, Rabbi Moshe Mordekhai Epstein (author of the *Levushei Mordekhai*) limits the scope of the Talmudic passage to the mystical magical world. According to Rabbi Epstein, had Abaye meant that mothers' names ought to be employed for other liturgical functions, he would have included them in his statement.

Two possible explanations may be suggested for the approach that understands Abaye's statement as creating an archetype for prayer. The first assumes that utilizing the mother's name invokes the *zechut*/merit of the mother, or

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perhaps more broadly, the mystical dimensions of the feminine, which are particularly apt at moments of prayer. This explanation may equally be relevant to Rabbi Epstein's position which limits Abaye to the specific mystical context.

However, a more compelling explanation relates to issues of identity, particularly *vis-à-vis* prayer. From a legalistic–formal perspective, the knowledge of the identity of one's mother is more accurate than the knowledge of the identity of one's father. Generally the choice to identify a person by his or her father is based upon the legal principle of "*rov*" or majority, (which assumes that most likely a married woman's sexual relations are with her husband) rather than the certainty which with we may identify the mother.

In addition to this factor, it may be argued that reciting prayers on behalf of someone ought to be said utilizing the mother's name, as to do anything other might constitute a falsehood. Inserting the wrong name in a prayer service of any sort would be inappropriate both because one ought not to utter untruths before God and additionally, one might in fact, not be praying on behalf of the individual he or she had in mind. This explanation accounts for the practice in Ashkenazi circles to utilize the mother's name when reciting the *mi sheberakh* for the sick. (Rabbi Epstein, in his responsum, questions this practice).

The interpretation that mothers' names ought to be employed for proper identification in prayer is highlighted by a number of customs discussed or mentioned in responsa literature. In a responsum relating to the writing of mothers' names in divorce documents (*gittin*), *Hatam Sofer* testifies to the fact that various *tekhinot* (traditional women's prayers in Yiddish) recited in eighteenth century Hungary were recited in honor or memory of individuals who were then identified by their mothers' names. *Hatam Sofer* also intimates that the usage of mothers' names for *gittin* or other legal documents might sometimes might be advisable when the identity of the father is unknown.[5] In addition, other rabbinic authorities suggest that the *Kel Maleh Rahamim* prayer should be said with the mother's name (in Sephardic circles, the *Hashkava prayer*—an *Kel Maleh* equivalent—is in fact said this way).[6]

In contrast to each of these prayers, the calling up of men to the Torah in the synagogue is usually done by referring to the father's name. This may be unique to the reading of Torah, perhaps because of the law that forbids calling a parent and child consecutively or perhaps because there is a critical issue of identifying someone's tribal affiliation (*Cohen/ Levi/ Yisrael*) which is generally identified with the father.[7] Essentially, one might distinguish between identifying someone for purposes of "calling" in its denoting sense which can be done using either the mother or father's name and sometimes should include the father's name, and "prayer" which should make use of the mother's name. Legal documents would generally fall into the first category while liturgical texts would fall into the second.

This distinction can often lead to strange blends of customs, the sort of which we experience almost every week in standard Ashkenazi synagogues. Generally, men are called up to the Torah using their fathers' names. *Mi sheberakh* prayers on behalf of the sick (and in today's synagogues, prayers on behalf of the missing soldiers) invoke the mothers' names. And yet, the same *mi sheberakh* prayer– when said for the person called to the Torah–utilizes the father's name. It is possible that this strange practice was adopted simply to avoid confusion on the view that it would most certainly be odd to call a man up using his father's name prior to his *aliya*, and then use his mother's name immediately following the *aliya* in the *mi sheberakh*.[8] To the best of my knowledge, women's prayer services call women up to the Torah using both parents' names.

While most legal documents generally use the father's name, the issue of putting mothers' names on tombstones, either exclusively or together with fathers' names, appears as a debate among authorities and is cited by Rabbi Stern as an open question. Conceivably, the debate around utilizing the matronymic for tombstones might hinge upon the way tombstones are viewed. The general formulation of a tombstone is פ"נ or פ"ט, or תנצב"ה – תהא נפשו\ה צרורה בצרור החיים loosely translated as "May his/her memory be bound up in the binds of life". The fundamental distinction between these two acronyms is that the first is a marker of sorts, and thus, would fit the pattern that utilizes the father's name. The second is a prayer (perhaps to be recited by the visitors to the grave). Because of this, it would seem more appropriate to utilize the mother's name. Nowadays, certain Sephardi communities utilize just the

***Matzeva* of Rav Moshe Feinstein, *Har Menuhot* cemetery, Jerusalem.** The inscription includes his father's name, 'Rabbi David Feinstein,' as well as his mother's, 'Rabbanit Faya Gittel'. His wife's tombstone, adjacent to his, only carries her father's name. Also in *Har Menuhot* is the grave of Rav Yehiel Jacob Weinberg, famous twentieth century halakhic authority, whose tombstone includes the names of both his parents.

Historically, certain communities have used both parents' names on tombstones. This is the case in a number of Jewish cemeteries outside Amsterdam in Holland. In America, examples can be found in the Adas Ye'arim section of Beth Israel Cemetery in New Jersey. The Syrian communities of Brooklyn also generally use both names on the *metzevot*. These, and other examples, are given by Sylvia Herskowitz in "Reclaiming a Mother's Name" in *Death and Mourning*, *The Orthodox Jewish Woman and Ritual*: *Options and Opportunities* (2000) also available at www.jofa.org.

mother's name while others use both.

If one accepts Rabbi Stern's basic distinction, then it would appear that in liturgically based baby naming ceremonies, the mother's name should be utilized, either independently or together with the father's name. In fact, there is an emergent trend within some Orthodox circles to include both the name of the father and the mother at baby naming ceremonies.[9] From the literature described above, it would seem that there is little halakhic objection (and to some extent, it may be preferable) to name children using their mothers' names.

Another new practice has emerged of including mothers' names in *ketubot* (marriage documents). Though the issue of using matronymics in *ketubot* appears in halakhic literature (when texts describe the writing of a *ketuba* for children of Jewish mothers and non-Jewish fathers), it is generally assumed that the father's name takes precedence in marriage documents (unlike the prayer for the sick, and the mourning prayers and tombstones in Sephardi custom). Primarily, the choice of the father's name in the *ketuba* emerges from the application of the biblical phrase used in connection with the census in the wilderness *l'mishpahotam l'vet avotam* (Numbers 1:2), which implies that a man is generally identified through the patronymic. However, in all likelihood, the insistence upon using the father's name today emerges out of a conservative predilection and an aversion to change within Orthodox circles.

In contemporary Israel, the use of

Graves of Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Rebbetzin Tonya Soloveitchik in West Roxbury, Massachussetts.

The Rebbetzin's *matzeva* has her mother's name as well as her father's while that of the Rav only has his father's.

MI SHABERAKH PRAYER FOR THE SICK

While a *mi shaberakh* for a sick person uses his/her mother's name as Seth Farber's article explains, the prayer in most synagogues invokes the God of our male ancestors only. Some congregations now add the names of the *imahot* (see below) to this prayer as well as to the prayer for the soldiers of the IDF.

מי שברך לחולים וחולות

מי שברך אבותינו, אברהם יצחק ויעקב, משה אהרן דוד ושלמה, ואמותינו שרה רבקה רחל ולאה, הוא יברך וירפא את החולים...בעבור שאנו מתפללים בעבורם.

בשכר זה הקדוש ברוך הוא ימלא רחמים עליהם, להחלימם ולרפאתם, להחזיקם ולהחיותם, וישלח להם מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים, בתוך שאר חולי ישראל, רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף. שבת היא מלזעק ורפואה קרובה לבוא, השתא בעגלא ובזמן קריב. ונאמר אמן.

May He who blessed our forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moshe, Aharon, David and Solomon, and our foremothers Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, bless and heal those who are sick..... on whose behalf we pray.

As a reward for this (in the merit of our prayers), may the Almighty be filled with compassion for them, to heal them and restore them to good health, to strengthen them and give them new vigor. And may He send them speedily from heaven a complete recovery among all the other sick people of Israel, a healing of the soul and of the body. Although we refrain on Shabbat from making requests of You, we know a cure is close. May it come quickly, without delay, and let us say Amen.

> "The use of mothers' names is a case study of halakha in evolution."

mothers' names within each of the contexts is something with which I am familiar through my daily encounters with Jews from all walks of life who are celebrating life-cycle events. In general, there is little hesitancy to utilize a mother's name in liturgical events, although there are some licensed *mohalim* (ritual circumcisers) who refuse to utilize the matronymic when naming a baby boy.[10] The purchasing of tombstones is no longer controlled by the local *hevra kadisha* and thus the decision as to the wording of the text is left up to the family. On the other hand, in mourning prayers, only a few *hazzanim* are willing to allow mothers' names to be included, even if the family requests this. The booklets published by ITIM: The Jewish Life Information Center encourage couples writing *ketubot* to consider including their mothers' names. While few marriage registrars would promote such a practice, one marriage registrar – who is also a rabbinical court judge – has assured me that if a couple appeared before him and insisted on the inclusion of the matronymic, he would readily acquiesce. In fact, I am unaware of any rabbis who would render a *ketuba* invalid if the mothers' names were included.

Ultimately the use of mothers' names is a case study of halakha in evolution,

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And the Rebbetzin will Keep Her Name

By Viva Hammer

One of the great debates during my engagement to a rabbi fifteen years ago was how I would be addressed by his congregation. I did not plan to change either my first or my last names after my wedding, but how would this decision be interpreted by my fiancé's congregants?

The world seemed clearly divided between those who could not imagine why one-half of a couple would change one-half of her names upon entering into the holy bond of matrimony, and those who could not imagine *not* doing so. The members of my fiancé's congregation fell into the latter category, and so after I agreed to wed both Moshe and his position, we debated how I should introduce myself without unduly violating their delicate sense of propriety.

"Viva Hammer, the Rebbetzin Bleich," was one brilliant suggestion. It was in the fashion of the British royalty, a la, Sophie, the Duchess of Wessex. This was somewhat of a mouthful, though, and soon it deteriorated to, "Hello, this is Viva, ah, err, the rabbi's wife." There was always a hesitation after the "Viva," as if I had to remember to delete my last name, in deference to the sensibilities of the congregant on the other end of the phone.

> "My name has always been Viva Hammer and I could not see any good reason to change it."

The members of the community, in their consummate wisdom, renamed me Mrs. Bleich. This particularly annoyed my husband, "If you're here at all, it is purely in the capacity as my rebbetzin. You certainly would not have chosen this uplifting crowd as your community if you had been untitled!"

I never corrected anybody, though, whatever they chose to call me. Keeping my name is not a moral crusade for me. My name has always been Viva Hammer and I could not see any good reason to change it. To provoke an argument over my naming philosophy every time I introduced myself was futile. Either you understood the concept or you didn't.

My in-laws were in disbelief that they had acquired themselves a daughter who would not take on their name. My father-in-law had written a well-publicized article denouncing the practice of keeping two names in a family. He argued that it detracted from the wholeness of the marital unity, and cited the biblical phrase: "*l'mishpahotam l'vet avotam*–by their families according to the houses of their fathers" (Numbers 1:2).

After Moshe and I read the article together, I became worried and thought Moshe might start getting cold feet about my decision. He laughed. "This is my guide: is it written in the *Shulhan Arukh*, the Code of Jewish Law? If there is an obligation to change your name under Jewish law, of course I couldn't be an accomplice to your keeping your name. But family names are a gentile addendum to our own naming system, in which a person is the child of its father and mother from birth to death. I'm not going to forbid your keeping your last name based on some extra-legal mumbo-jumbo."

What a relief! There were certain benefits of marrying a man who was a strict interpreter of the law…

Still, my husband's family always addressed me in person and in writing as Mrs. Bleich, and I did not correct them. In fact, letters that were addressed to us as Rabbi Bleich and Viva Hammer were so rare that I created a special file for them, the Hammer-Bleich file.

Things became more complicated when I found I was pregnant. I had never made the children's names an issue between us. Following my original philosophy, I was concerned to preserve the name I had used since birth, but did not feel strongly about how one acquired the birth name, since it was such an arbitrary process anyway. Either Offspring Bleich or Offspring Hammer would have been fine with me. But my husband felt differently. He had always wanted both of us to hyphenate our names, but knew that this would make *him* a laughing-stock with his congregation and the rest of the religious world. Moshe believed that if the children only had his name, it would belittle the enormous physical and emotional sacrifice I would make to have them. He wanted our partnership in their lives to be manifest wherever they went. Besides, if the children started out double-barreled, they and the world would be used to the concept when they became spiritual leaders of congregations, or whatever profession they pursued. I was so proud and grateful to have married a man who argued with me this way.

So we navigated the bumpy territory between Moshe's world and mine, and sometimes I found myself Mrs. Bleich and sometimes Viva Hammer, and sometimes Viva Hammer-Bleich. At work, I was the master of my title; I had started my career as Viva Hammer and never changed. It turned out, however, that my venerable consulting firm was just as old-fashioned as my husband's congregation. One day, an invitation to a holiday party arrived, addressed by hand in florid calligraphy.

"Mr. and Mrs. Moshe Hammer," it read.

"What's *this* about?" Moshe asked, outraged at the error.

I smiled. "Darling, now you know what it's like to be retitled to appease one's spouse's employer's sensibilities. I think it's quite a good compromise, don't you? *And God created the human, man and woman He created them*. A single, indivisible unit with your first name and my last…"

And I cut out the lovely lettering and added it to the Hammer-Bleich file.

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High School Yom Iyyun, March 16, 2008

Sarah's Name

A divine name change is considered something of great significance. The biblical figure of Sarah is the only female to have her name changed by God. Men whose names were changed by God were Abraham, (17:3), Jacob (*Bereishit* 32:27-29 and 35:19), Joshua, (*Bamidbar* 13:16), and Gideon (*Shoftim* 6:28-32). Sarah's name was Sarai and God changed her name before he blessed her saying "As for Sarai your wife, do not call her name Sarai for Sarah is her name. I will bless her; indeed I will give you a son through her; I will bless her and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples will rise from her." Though there is little difference in actual meaning as both words relate to a "princess", after the name change, Sarah, like Abraham, stands in a special relationship to God.

Named and Unnamed Women in the Bible

It would seem that there is a biblical bias against naming women. Although in actual numbers, anonymous men outnumber anonymous women in the Bible, there are a larger proportion of female characters that are unnamed. It is clear that many biblical women are identified not by name but only as wives and mothers.

Listings of named and unnamed women can be found in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament,* edited Carol Meyers et al. (2000).

The most detailed study of unnamed biblical characters is that of Adele Reinhartz in "*Why Ask My Name?" Anonymity and Identity in Biblical Narrative* (1998). Reinhartz challenges the view that anonymity is associated primarily with women characters. She explores the extent to which the individuality and personality of biblical characters are effaced by the absence of a proper name. She argues that there are many different cases of anonymity in the Bible and that in many of them, personal identity emerges in spite of anonymity and indeed in some cases because of it.

Havot Yair

Hava Bacharach of Prague (1580-1561) was the granddaughter of the Maharal of Prague and a very scholarly woman, as her mother had also been. Her grandson, Rabbi Yair Bacharach, titled his book of responsa *Havot Yair* (literally "the tents of Yair" but also "Hava's Yair"). In the book's introduction, he explains the breadth of his grandmother's knowledge saying: "These things I wrote in my book in her name." It is especially fitting that he himself, as often happens, became known by the title of the book, thus further memorializing the name of Hava Bacharach.

Tova Hartman at Brandeis University, March 2, 2008

Every Appelation Tells a Story: Naming a Daughter

By Francesca Lunzer Kritz

Checking the clock to be sure that Torah reading had already taken place that Thursday morning (which would mean that while I was in the hospital, just hours after my daughter's birth, my husband had been called to the Torah to name our first child) I called my mother to tell her my first baby's name. "We've called her Dina," I said, excited. "Lovely," said my mother, but nothing else. "Dina, her name is Dina," I tried again. "Yes, I heard you, it's a lovely name," my mother replied. "Mom", I said, this time somewhat exasperated, "Her name is Dina, for your mother." "Oh," my mother said, "that's very nice, but my mother's name was Henia Dina."

I knew that. In fact I had wanted to call our daughter Henia Dina, but my husband didn't like the Henia part—too old-fashioned sounding, he said. So, for Dina's second name, we settled on Hadara, the feminization of the Hebrew word for *etrog*, to reflect her Sukkot birthday. When we came up with the compromise, with me lying on the couch wondering exactly how late a first baby could come, I was delighted that I'd be able to please both my husband and my mother. And, I hope I did. My mother didn't mention the truncated name again and lovingly called her Dina for the almost five years they adored each other.

"Naming a child is no easy feat."

Naming a child is no easy feat. In a single name that can be no longer than the blocks offered on identification forms, parents need to pay homage to ancestors, fashion an identify for a child younger than the milk in their fridge, determine whether the name should declare their commitment to Zionism, or to American pop culture, and try hard to come up with something that won't get the attention of the school yard bullies.

Actually, Dina was not my first choice. My grandmother died forty years ago, and at least two other girls were named for her. I did want our branch of the family to claim a Dina too, but I very much wanted to name a daughter Rachel, for my Aunt Rochelle who died in her 90's. Not just because no child had been named for her and not just because she had had no grandchildren of her own, but because she, though a decade gone before I became engaged, had a role to play in my deciding to marry my husband. One day over tea in her London apartment, she turned to me and announced she had some marital advice. "Don't marry," she said, "unless you can have endless conversation." "Was that your life with Uncle Ferdie?" I asked. "Not one bit," she smiled—bequeathing me advice hard won.

So, more than ten years later, having had my heart broken by a man I never should have spent time with in the first place, I had no interest in dating, much less marrying when I moved to Washington, D.C. But my now husband coaxed me, on my second Shabbat to join him after *havdala* for a drink at a pretty hotel near my apartment. We talked all night, never looking up until the exhausted hotel staff, having swept and vacuumed, begged us to leave so that they could go home, too. Just a few weeks later, when he asked me to marry him, having passed the Aunt Rochelle test was my reason number one for saying yes.

But her advice notwithstanding, Rochelle's life was a sad one, her two sons died very young and had no children of their own. I called my mother in tears one night in about my eighth month of pregnancy because Neil was adamant that his child would not be named for someone whose life had been so tragic. I expected a comrade, but my mother sided with my husband, saying that it was reasonable for him to look ahead and hope for a much happier life for his child. Henia Dina had given birth to nine children, raised eight of them and saw each begin homes of Torah and good deeds.

When we named our daughter Dina, we thought only of the grandmother who died when I was ten, and in whose apartment I would happily eat potato kugel on days I got home from school while my mother was out. But a few days after our baby was born, my father told me that he had told his relatives that she was named Dina for two ancestors—his mother-in-law, but also his grandmother, Dina Eisenmann, who died in Bergen Belsen, one of only very few of our family to perish in the Holocaust. When it came up, we largely only spoke about the one side of her name—the connection to my grandmother Henia Dina; but Dina is proud of her two sided heritage—of being named for matriarchs on both sides of my family. Dina paid homage to the other part of her name a few weeks before her *bat mitzvah*. On a trip to Israel, staff at Yad Vashem took her to the computer room to look up testimony related to Dina Eisenmann's death at Bergen Belsen and we laid flowers and lit a *yahrtzeit* candle in the Garden of the Communities—a tie that has now focused our Dina on current genocides, including Darfur.

Now at age 15 when asked about her name, Dina will say she does not relate to the tragic figure of Dina in the book of *Bereishit*, daughter of Jacob and Leah, who is most closely associated with a rape. My Dina, currently the very modest, lone girl among 13 boys on her high school mock trial team, and in the running to head the social action committee at her day school next year, identifies herself with the root word of her name, *din*, for law or justice, and indeed talks of becoming a lawyer. "I think about it sometimes," she says, "and feel that my name is pulling me to help seek justice in the world."

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Thank God for Woman: Blessings of Praise for the New Arrival

By Rochelle L Millen

Expressing gratitude is not only a mark of good manners, but also an essential component of the religious life. Praise and gratitude to God are characteristic of liturgies of all traditions.

In Judaism, these qualities of our relationship with Hashem are encapsulated both in daily prayer and in the regular recitation of various kinds of blessings. The special occasion of the birth of a child is included among those times which call for our acknowledgment to God of gratitude and praise. Halakhic sources recognize the birth of a child as a gift bestowed by Hashem upon the love between a man and a woman. They discuss as well the transformative effect of the birth of a son or a daughter in terms of human purpose, emphasizing especially the role of inheritance, in both its tangible and figurative meanings. This short essay will delineate some of the halakhic analyses and their implications surrounding the recitation of *birkot hoda'ah* (blessings of praise) upon the birth of a child.[1]

When a woman gives birth to a baby boy, both parents are required to recite a *birkat hoda'ah* called *"hatov vehametiv."* The blessing states, "Blessed are You our God, King of the universe, Who is good and does good," or "Who does good [for me] and causes good [for others]."[2] Each is required to recite the blessing even if, as might occur, they are separated when the father hears the news. The mother recites the blessing at the completion of delivery; the father, if he is not with her, whenever and wherever he hears the news.[3] Even if the couple already has several sons, each must still recite the blessing upon the birth of another baby boy.[4]

Rabbinic sources state that only the parents may say this blessing upon the occasion of the birth, since they have *hana'at to'elet* (the pleasure of a benefit or advantage from a son).[5] The benefit is that he is a *yoresh*, i.e., he inherits from the parents. The blessing of *hatov vehametiv* is made only in cases where the benefit is a shared one. In 1982, for instance, when I co-organized the first Women's *Tefillah* Group for *Simhat Torah* in Detroit, our *posek* said we should recite *hatov vehametiv.* In the case of a newborn, the benefit is shared by the mother and father, and the object that causes the blessing to be made, namely the child, leads to a practical advantage for those making the blessing. Here the benefit is to have an inheritor, one who by virtue of his maleness will gain the family property and is obligated to recite *kaddish* after their deaths.

***Simhat Bat* of Noa Ahuva Schlaff-Pearlberg, seen here with her mother Lisa Schlaff**

But what is the rabbinic text implying? Is it affirming an advantage in the utility of having male progeny because of the laws of inheritance? The case is unclear. Despite inequities in the laws of inheritance due to the structure of a tribal and patriarchal society, widows and unmarried daughters always had first claim on any estate in the event of the death of the husband/father.[6] The text points beyond property *per se* to mean property in the cultural sense. That is, since the daughter will become part of another family through marriage, the family legacy, in terms of name and public role, remains with the sons. Reciting the blessing then, is acknowledgment of the importance of continuing the family traditions and legacy through the sons, who would continue to carry the family name in the community.

There are some provisos given in the halakhic literature, however, regarding the recitation of *hatov vehametiv*. After stating that the parents must say the blessing for the reason "*sheyesh lahem hana'at to'elet meben*–they have the pleasure of a practical benefit from a son,"[7] the *Encyclopedia Talmudit* continues, "*ve'od*–in addition." The appearance of this term in halakhic texts, similar to Rashi's stating in his biblical commentary, "*vedavar acher*– and another matter", indicates that the first reason given is incomplete in some way, needing an additional support to clarify and validate the halakhic ruling. And what is the "*ve'od*"? The text in *Encyclopedia Talmudit* states,"*Ve'od, shehu kayerekh ha'av veha'em. Kol adam te'avim lo leyorshon*–In addition, he [the baby boy] is the progeny, the seed of the father and mother, and all persons desire successors or heirs."[8] This clarification can be seen either as supporting or detracting from the original ruling. It is supportive in that it emphasizes the human desire to continue oneself through one's children. But it weakens the conclusion that a blessing must be said only upon the birth of a baby boy because the need for succession arguably supersedes any gender boundaries.[9] While the original ruling restricts the recitation of *hatov vehametiv* to the birth of a baby boy, given the circumstances of our culture and our modern sensibilities, the halakha can and should be extended to include the birth of girls and *hatov vehametiv* should be said upon the birth of a baby girl. Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks cites Rabbi Nachum Rabinovitch, *Rosh yeshiva* of Birkat Moshe in Ma'ale Adumim, as approving the recitation *of hatov vehametiv* on the birth of a baby girl. He writes, "If both the father and mother are delighted at the birth of a daughter–if it is good for oneself and for others–they make the blessing *hatov vehametiv.*"[10]

The blessing of *shehehiyanu* was also originally restricted to male infants, although there were rabbinic authorities who amplified the ruling. This blessing thanks God "who has granted us life, sustained us, and permitted us to reach this season" and is both a *birkat hoda'ah* (blessing of praise)–as is *hatov vehametiv*–as well as a *birkat zeman* (a blessing that notes a special time interval and/or a particular occasion).[11] It is recited, for example at the yearly celebration of the three pilgrimage festivals, the wearing of new clothing, or the eating of a new fruit. Many sources suggest that both the mother and father should recite *shehehiyanu* after the birth of a daughter, as well as

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What's in a Title?

The Roles of Female Religious Professionals

By Rachel Kohl Finegold

Recently, a congregant, told me about an exchange she'd had with her daughter. To the usual question of "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Eliana, age eight, replied, "I want to be a Torah scholar." After a moment's thought, Eliana added, "Can girls do that?" "Of course they can," her mother replied. "And in fact, our shul has a woman Torah Scholar on staff; you can meet her yourself."

A few weeks later, when I did meet Eliana, her eyes grew wide with awe, as she whispered to her mom, "Is that the Torah scholar?" I now have a weekly *hevruta* session with Eliana, during which she is broadening her thinking and training for her career of choice.

There are currently five Orthodox women who fill religious leadership roles in synagogues, serving as role models for girls (and boys) and as community educators and spiritual leaders. This is not a passing trend; Orthodox women are becoming a permanent and integral part of professional synagogue leadership.

> "...the lack of title has very real consequences for me..."

We serve in a variety of congregations that range in size and religious outlook. Perhaps most striking is the fact that none of us have exactly the same title. There is a *Rosh Kehilla (*Dina Najman at Kehillat Orach Eliezer) a *Madricha Ruchanit* (Sara Hurwitz at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale), a Resident Scholar (Elana Stein Hain at The Jewish Center), a Director of Jewish Life and Learning (Lynn Kaye at Shearith Israel – The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue), and myself, a Programming and Ritual Director (at Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel in Chicago).

As a group, we lack a name. In a world of labels, we have no label with which to define ourselves to the outside world and to identify ourselves with each other. Because we have no collective name, we tend to be defined by what we are not. We are not rabbis, although we may fill rabbinic roles. We do not have *semikha*, although we have received much of the same training.

Several months ago, another congregant approached me. "I hear you're the new Social Director?" Trying not to cringe, I smiled and corrected him, giving him my actual title. But even my proper job title often does not signify to a congregant, or to a member of the greater Chicago community, that I am part of the clergy team. As Programming and Ritual Director, it is difficult to convey that I do more than organize programs. It is often only when I tell someone that I deliver sermons that he or she understands that I serve as a religious leader.

But perhaps the lack of uniformity, the lack of a collective "name" for women in these congregational jobs, works to our advantage. We have more leeway to define our own roles. We do not face the expectations established by precedent; as such we are able to assume the roles that will most fully serve our communities' needs. Furthermore, the fact that each of us has a different title signifies to me that this is a "ground-up" phenomenon. Women are being hired one by one, synagogue by synagogue, as the opportunity presents itself or a need is perceived. I believe that the organic and non-uniform nature of the development is the sign of lasting change. Since this involves a significant shift in community norms, it will firmly take root only if it happens slowly.

Of course, the question of title remains. Should Orthodox women be rabbis? Should we find an alternate but comparable title for women? (*Rabbanit* has been suggested, among others.) These questions have undergone halakhic analysis and sociological consideration, especially in recent years. Laying aside textual and sociological arguments, I can tell you that personally, I do not want to be a rabbi.

I recognize that other women in congregational positions might be willing and ready to take on the title. My own discomfort with assuming this title relates to my unwillingness to forgo the gender distinctions in Judaism. If I assumed the title of rabbi, I would feel that I am trying to co-opt a male role, rather than carve my own role as a woman. Furthermore, perhaps the title of rabbi has lost its allure for me, since almost any Orthodox man who studies certain portions of *halakha* can be ordained, even if he does not exhibit any leadership ability or desire to serve the Jewish community. Moreover, I do not believe that becoming a rabbi is the key to a woman's achieving serious influence in the Orthodox community. Many women, who are not rabbis, have made and will continue to make significant impact.

My sense is that the vast majority of Orthodox Jews, despite any halakhic arguments to the contrary, feel a visceral objection to having a female Rabbi. It is true that challenging such objections is what has allowed our community to achieve important advances in women's Torah learning and ritual participation. However, when it comes to issues of communal authority in particular, it is counterproductive to create an authority figure when the majority of the community is not on board. Any person in a position of authority relies on the community's acceptance of her or his legitimacy. I have no interest in being called Rabbi if my community will not accept me. If I show up at a CRC (Chicago Rabbinical Council) event and introduce myself as a rabbi, I will be dismissed out of hand. As a female religious leader without that title, at least I stand a chance of acceptance. I would rather work slowly, within community confines, to create greater acceptance of women in leadership roles before moving on to find an appropriate title for those women religious leaders.

Despite my reservations about being called Rabbi, the lack of title has very real consequences for me as a woman working at a synagogue. It has been a struggle for me to receive the tax allowance that is granted to clergy because, although I am a graduate of the Drisha Scholars Circle, the IRS does not recognize a degree that is not formal ordination. And if, in a few years, I were to pursue a promotion from my current position, no such possibility exists. I serve as an assistant to something I can never be.

The question of a uniform title is a conversation that must continue, but it is far from the most important issue to address. There is other work to be done, which will have a far greater impact on Orthodox women's roles in religious leadership:

First, we must achieve a level of normalcy around having a woman in a clergy position. We must demand of our synagogues that if no position currently exists, that a job–whatever the title of that job–be created for a woman to act as a religious force in the congregation. Unfortunately, funding an extra salary may present some difficulty. This is a very real concern, especially for smaller congregations. I contend, however, that any synagogue that is large enough to support an Assistant Rabbi, should seriously consider hiring a woman as a member of the clergy staff, whatever title she may be given. Smaller congregations might consider hiring a woman as a part-time Resident Scholar, or sharing some of the financial burden with a neighboring synagogue so that the woman can serve two small communities instead of one large one. The lack of uniform title leaves room for each congregation to assess its own needs and recruit the kind of professional that would best serve its constituents. Whatever the job title, language should be used that will allow the community to feel comfortable, while making it clear that this woman is a religious professional. It must become accepted practice for every major Orthodox shul to have a woman on the clergy staff.

Second, even if Orthodox women in religious leadership roles do not have a single name, we must have a single address. We must develop a network, an organization, some way for women in positions like mine, to find each other and work together. Even as I write, I recognize that there may be Orthodox women who serve as synagogue professionals, of whom I simply am not aware.

Before we have one name, we must have a working framework. And here I do not speak only of the five women who work in congregations. A male pulpit rabbi is very different from a rabbi who has chosen a career in academia or law or social work; but they are still all called "rabbi", which, in a sense, unifies them. In addition to women who serve as congregational professionals, there are countless others who take on religious leadership roles as day school teachers, university professors, informal educators, and *Rashei Beit Midrash*. A single network to which we could all claim membership would provide opportunities to meet, to learn from each other, and to organize educational events that will inspire the next generation of women leaders. This idea was conceived at the most recent JOFA conference, when a group of women met to discuss this possibility.

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Participants and presenters at Kallah Teacher's Workshop, March 2-5, 2008

Thank God for Woman *...continued from page 23*

following the birth of a son. The *Mishna Berura* states that even though it is not required that either blessing be recited after a girl is born, when a father sees his new daughter for the first time, he should nevertheless say *shehehiyanu*. According to the *Mishna Berura,* since the blessing is recited upon seeing a good friend one has not seen for a least thirty days, one surely can proclaim *shehehiyanu* upon seeing one's newborn daughter for the very first time![12]

As in the cases of *kaddish* and *birkat hagomel*,[13] some halakhic rulings have begun to incorporate a changed sensibility—the perspective of woman as autonomous, a public person and worthy of both honor and dignity—in considering how to welcome the arrival of a new female member of *klal Yisrael*. May each infant girl be blessed in all ways–with both appropriate *berakhot*—by her loving parents.

Rochelle L. Millen, Ph.D. *is Professor of Religion at Wittenberg University, Springfield, Ohio. She has published widely in the areas of Holocaust Studies and women and halakha. Her most recent work is "'Her Mouth is Full of Wisdom': Reflections on Jewish Feminist Theology," in Riv-Ellen Prell, ed.,* Women Remaking American Judaism *(Wayne State University Press, 2007).*

1 Much of the discussion found in this article is taken from my book, *Women, Birth, and Death in Jewish Law and Practice* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2004), esp. 70-74.

2 T.B. *Berakhot* 59b.

3 *Rosh* and *Mordekhai* on T.B. *Berakhot* 59b.

4 *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim, siman* 223*: Taz, se'if katan aleph*, following the opinion of the Rashba.

5 *She'elot Uteshuvot HaRashba, helek* 4, *siman* 77; see also *Bi'ur Halakha* on *Mishna Berura*, *siman* 223.

6 T.B. *Ketubot* 86b-87a.

7 *Encyclopedia Talmudit* vol. 4 (1952) 323 quoting *Bi'ur Halakha* on *Mishna Berura*, *siman* 223.

8 *Encyclopedia Talmudit* (ibid.) quoting *Tosafot* on T.B. *Yevamot* 3a.

9 For a discussion of some implications of the masculine term, *ben*, or son, as gender neutral, meaning also "child," see Rochelle L. Millen, *Women, Birth, and Death in Jewish Law and Practice*, 116-117.

10 Jonathan Sacks, "Creativity and Innovation in Halakhah" in *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy*, ed. Moshe Sokol (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1992), 149-152. The same source is also brought by Joel Wolowelsky, *Women, Jewish Law, and Modernity* (Ktav: 1997), 45-46. One might ponder the implications of the conditional language, "If both mother and father are delighted at the birth of a daughter...."

11 A detailed discussion is given in *Encyclopedia Talmudit*, vol. 4 (1952), 431-451.

12 See *Shulhan Arukh, Mishna Berura, se'if katan beit.*

13 See Rochelle L. Millen, "Birkhat Ha- gomel: A Study in Cultural Context and Halakhic Practice," *Judaism* 43, no. 3 (Summer 1994), 270-278; "Social Attitudes Disguised as Halakhah: *Zila Milta, Ein Havrutan Na'ah, Kevod Hatzibbur," Nashim: A Journal of Women's Studies and Gender Issues,* no. 4 (Fall 2001), 178-196. Also see Chapter 5, "Mourning: Kaddish and the Funeral" in Rochelle L. Millen, *Women, Birth, and Death in Jewish Law and Practice,* 111-161.

Emerging Voices

We congratulate Rebecca Blady of North Shore Academy of Great Neck for her winning entry in the "Name the High School Column"contest. "Emerging Voices" so beautifully captures the promise of the next generation as does Rebecca's column below. We welcome future submissions from all high school students. Please contact www.jofa.org.

In Pursuit of Spirtuality: Looking for My Comfort Zone

By Rebecca Blady

One year ago, I spent a weekend in New York City's Upper West Side with three friends. Shabbat morning presented a dilemma: I preferred a congregation with a *mehitza,* but my friends preferred an egalitarian service. We compromised on a synagogue with a *mehitza*, a *Rabbanit*, and *hazzaniot* for specific prayers. I sat with my girl friend toward the back of the synagogue. As the *hazzan* proceeded through *Shaharit*, a woman approached us. She spoke briefly with my friend, and then turned to me. "Would you like to carry the Torah through the women's section?" she asked.

I hesitated. My instinct was to refuse her offer for the simple reason that I wasn't confident, having never before held a Torah. The woman kindly replied, "It's your first time? Don't worry, we'll help you." Again, I turned her down.

What held me back? The dominant emotion at the time was fear. I saw an image of my mother, firmly Orthodox, adhering stringently to the tradition cherished by my ancestors. Her face bore an expression of bewilderment with a hint of betrayal. At that moment I was not afraid of God. I was not afraid of the congregation. I was not afraid of my friends. I was afraid of someone who was not even there.

• • • •

It is Simhat Torah nearly a year later. I settle discreetly in a corner of my Young Israel shul. I practice chanting the text of *V'zot HaBrakha* under my breath from the *humash* in front of me, knowing that I will not be performing publicly on the *bimah* as the men did minutes ago. This practice of the *trop* is just for me; it is how I bond with the words. Enviously, I watch the men cradling my shul's seven *sifrei Torah*, gingerly raising them above the heads of the dancers with such care and attention. I yearn to understand, explore and connect with the scrolls. Particularly, as it is Simhat Torah tonight, I want nothing more than to establish my personal relationship with the Torah, as men do on a daily basis. However, I sit with the women, banished behind a barrier. I have never touched, carried, or read from a real *sefer Torah*. I seem forever destined to a place in the audience.

> "I do not wish to remain a spectator."

But I do not want to be in the audience. I do not wish to remain a spectator. I have a strong desire to find meaning here. I rise from my secluded area, close the *humash* I have been practicing from, and join the congregation, which has moved outside to celebrate in the street. My father is holding the Torah scroll. He beckons to me. It beckons to me. He offers, and I accept.

The Torah is massive. Its tremendous weight leans directly on my heart, and its delicate, white linen cover presses against my cheek. Here, resting on my body is a scroll of parchment, elaborately written by a scribe with attention to every sacred, perfect letter. In my hands, I hold my history, my culture, and my beliefs. The Torah is mine. After all, it was given to both *B'nei Yisrael* and *Bet Ya'acov* (i.e., not only to men but to women as well).

Other women come. I quickly become part of a circle of women with knotted fingertips. They sing in Hebrew, about their commitment to God and their love for *mitzvot*. I am captivated, practically entranced by the passion on this Simhat Torah night. We pass the Torah around to those women who wish to hold it. The face of each woman shifts from uncertainty to utter joy, as she balances this precious and holy object in her arms.

The feeling of ecstasy ends abruptly as two intertwined female hands are thrust apart and a man enters the circle. He strides toward the woman who is dancing with the Torah. She is alone in the circle's center. Almost violently, he removes the Torah from her arms, declaring, "Women cannot have the Torah. Not in our shul."

There are exclamations of disbelief, misunderstanding, and fury from both males and females in the street outside the synagogue. "I thought it was a great idea," says a man. "They do it in Young Israel of X," says a woman. However supportive, the comments blur together and echo in the distance. I feel the unexpected sting of a suddenly severed spiritual bond. I am silent, even amidst the emerging female rebellion. My eyes are still fixed on the man. I wonder whether I will ever forgive him.

***Rebecca Blady** is a senior at North Shore Hebrew Academy High School in Great Neck, NY. She is currently the editor of her school newspaper, Grapevine. She anticipates studying literature, politics, and religion next year in university.*

Just Devorah and Huldah

It is clear that rabbinic tradition believed strongly that names reflect the personality of those who bear them. After the Talmud in Tractate *Megillah* gives a list of seven prophetesses (Sarah, Miriam, Hannah, Devorah, Abigail, Huldah and Esther), the rabbis show their discomfort with the strong roles played by Devorah and Huldah. Devorah was a judge, prophetess, and leader (Judges 4-5), and Huldah was a "professional" prophetess whom the Kohen Gadol consults above Jeremiah on behalf of King Josiah in at least one instance (II Kings 22). Rabbi Nahman in the following passage pejoratively translates their names into Aramaic:

> *Haughtiness is not becoming to women. There were two haughty women and their names were hateful, one being called a hornet zib-orata (Devorah) and the other a weasel kirkushta (Hulda). Of the hornet it is written, "And she sent and called Barak instead of going to him." Of the weasel it is written, "Say to the man," instead of "say to the king." Megillah 14b*

The ArtScroll translation of *yehiruta*— translated above as haughtiness—follows Rashi in his understanding of the word as meaning importance or prominence. The passage demonstrates a clear discomfort with women taking any public role.

In the Cities of Judah and the Streets of Jerusalem...

In Israel today, there are many synagogues that incorporate the names of women. Examples in Jerusalem include Ohel Rivka and Ohel Nehama in Kiryat Shmuel, Ohel Sarah in Meah She'arim and Bet Rahel in Knesset Israel. The association of synagogues with the names of women is not a new phenomenon and has deep historical roots in the Land of Israel and the Diaspora.

What is unique in Jerusalem is the number of streets that are named after famous women in Jewish history: names such as Rivka and Zipporah from the *humash;* Devora and Yael from the Book of Judges; Michal, Batsheva, Avigail and Avital, four of King David's wives, as well as his sister Zeruiah, the mother of Joab. Walking in Jerusalem, one can also find streets named for Naomi and Ruth; and for Judith after the Hanuka heroine of the Apocryphal book that bears her name (as well as after Lady Judith Montefiore). Rechov Beruria is appropriately next to the street that carries R. Meir's name among others of the *tannaitic* period. The famous Jewish Queen Shlomzion (Salome Alexandra–the first woman to rule Judea and its last independent ruler) has her own street in downtown Jerusalem as does Queen Helena (Helena of Adiabne- in modern day Iraq) who converted to Judaism and came to live in Jerusalem in 40 CE. Twentieth century figures commemorated by streets include poets, Rachel, Leah Goldberg and Zelda; founder of Hadassah, Henrietta Szold; World War II heroines; and, of course, Golda Meir. One hopes that other names of Jewish women from our nation's past and present will be attached to new Jerusalem streets in the future.

There are also places and towns in Israel that carry names of women such as Mazkeret Batya, named after the mother of Baron Edmond de Rothschild and Pardes Hana, named for his cousin. And to return to the Jerusalem area, not only is the matriarch Rachel's name made immediate to us by Kever Rahel, but also by Rahel Imeynu Street in the German Colony and Kibbutz Ramat Rahel in Arnona. Nor should one forget the Hulda gates, the two sets of gates that are now blocked on the southern wall of the Temple Mount, named after the prophetess Hulda.

Ohel Rivkah Synagoge named in honor of philanthropist Rivkah Rothenberg

Kiryat Shmuel, Jerusalem
Photograph courtesy of Zev Radovan.

What's in a Title?

...continued from page 25

We now must find the resources to make this a reality.

This is an important moment. This is the time when a pattern is emerging. Women are and will continue to be major players in congregational life. I hope we, as a community, will support the women who have taken the first steps, while we cultivate the minds and spirits of young girls like Eliana, who are sure to become the future leaders of Orthodoxy.

***Rachel Kohl Finegold** is the Programming and Ritual Director at Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel Congregation in Chicago. She served previously as Congregational Intern at Ohev Shalom-The National Synagogue in Washington DC.*

A Girl and Her Grandmother

While the mother of Rebekah is not named at all in Genesis, even though she has a role in Rebekah's leaving home to go to marry Isaac, her grandmother Milka, Bethuel's mother, is identified by name numerous times. Indeed Rebekah is often called the granddaughter of Milka, possibly to underline the relationship with Avraham and Sarah. Milka is both Sarah's sister and the daughter of Haran, Abraham's brother. The fact that Rebekah's name is linked so many times to that of Milka suggests that the older woman had a strong and positive influence on the upbringing of her granddaughter and makes Rebekah a fitting wife for Isaac, one who can take the place of Sarah.

Book Corner

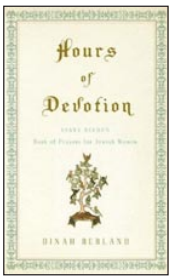
Shaerei Simcha: Gates of Joy:

Edited by Adena K. Berkowitz & Rivka Haut
Ktav, 2007 $5 (quantity prices also available)

This is a volume that should be in the home of all JOFA Journal readers. A remarkable achievement, it is a compilation of prayers, songs, and poetry that transcends the *Birkon* that is at its center. It was conceived and compiled by Adena Berkowitz and Rivka Haut, two women who have strong associations with JOFA. Although written from a clearly Orthodox perspective and with keen attention to Jewish law and tradition, the aim of the editors is to be as inclusive as possible and to increase the meaningfulness and enjoyment of fulfilling *mitzvot*. Including both popular explanations and scholarly sources, it is designed for people of different religious backgrounds, for both singles and married, for those with and without children, Ashkenazin and Sephardim. All prayers are transliterated as well as translated; Sephardi songs and prayers are included as is a *seder* for Yom Ha'atzma'ut. The welcoming ceremonies include a prayer for welcoming an adopted child to a family. Each section also includes songs specifically for children. Included is a prayer for parents to say at a bar or bar mitzvah as well as one to be recited under their children's *huppah*. The volume includes *tekhines* such as one to be said after candlelighting and also an adaptation of a traditional text of a prayer for a woman to direct towards her husband on Friday night as a complement to *Eshet Hayil*. In the *birkat hamazon,* the editors not only provide sources for a regular *zimmun* for women but also for a *zimmun beshem* to show that ten or more women "*bensching*" together may choose to add the word *elokeynu* as is the practice for 10 men, and they advise women to study the sources provided to make their own decision. In the *harahamon* section of the *birkat hamazon,* there is an option for a wife to use the word *ishi* to refer to her husband instead of the traditional *ba'ali* which has a connotation of ownership. The *havdala* ceremony includes a ritual of Miriam's well that can be added, and the traditional text for a *brit* is enriched by the provision of prayers that a mother may choose to add to enhance her participation and that of other female relatives and friends. The editors also note that some communities today have revived the custom known in the Middle Ages of having a *sandeket* at a *brit*. This collection has been prepared with sensitivity, thoughtfulness and love and is sure to enrich the religious and spiritual lives of the individuals and families who use it.

Hours of Devotion: Fanny Neuda's Book of Prayers for Jewish Women

By Dinah Berland
Schocken Books, 2007 $24.00

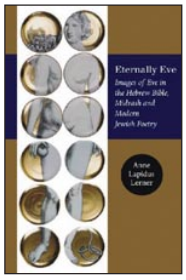


In 1855, Fanny Neuda, widow of a Moravian rabbi, published a collection of prayers and devotions in German for women, in the tradition of the Yiddsh *tekhine* literature. She wrote in German because, by the end of the 18th century, women in German lands under the influence of the Enlightenment no longer understood Yiddish. Neuda was, in fact, the first woman to write a complete book of prayers and devotions for women. While there had been women writers of individual *tekhines,* particularly in Eastern Europe, we know that most were composed by men. Neuda's publication *Stunden Der Andacht* was enormously successful and was reprinted at least 28 times until the 1930's. Parts were also translated into English and the English versions, too, enjoyed great popularity. Women would often receive a copy from their mothers on their wedding day. Berland, a poet living in California, selected 88 prayers out of the original 117 and has presented them in a new verse translation. They include a prayer for a mother for the success of her children, a prayer for an unhappy wife and a prayer for a mother whose child is abroad. Berland also gives an excellent introduction to the life of Fanny Neuda, who herself came from a rabbinical background, and includes a translation of Neuda's original preface and her afterword – an essay on the importance of providing a religious education to young Jewish girls and women. Berland explains how she happened to find a copy of an old English translation of the book and how she felt it spoke to her directly. It also gave her an opportunity for a deeper engagement with her Judaism as she revised the book for modern audiences. The prayers and devotions, even in Berland's fine verse renditions, retain the formality of the 19th century. Yet, through the formal language, one gets a feeling of the hopes and fears of the women for whom they were written. In her preface, Neuda states: "A man however learned and great he may be cannot capture the essential quality of a woman's experience. A woman however need only gaze into her own heart to read the hearts of her sisters." Entwined with the personal story of what the book meant to her, Berland's edition of this important book is valuable for bringing to life the world of the 19th century Jewish woman and is a fitting tribute to the contribution of Fanny Neuda to the history of Jewish women and to women's devotional literature.

Eternally Eve: Images of Eve in the Hebrew Bible, Midrash, and Modern Jewish Poetry

By Anne Lapidus Lerner
Brandeis Series on Jewish Women
Brandeis University Press 2007 $65 cloth $29.95 paper

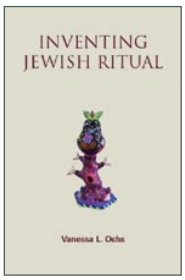
All of us interested in issues of gender and the relationships between men and women recognize the significance of the first chapters of *Bereishit* and the narrative of Adam and Eve. In "Eternally Eve," Anne Lapidus Lerner, Professor of Jewish Literature and Director of the Program in Jewish Women's Studies at Jewish Theological Seminary, explores the role of Eve in the Bible, in rabbinic *midrashim*, in modern poetry and in modern biblical scholarship. She presents a vast array of sources, and explains how both the *midrashim* and the modern poetry enable the reader to understand that the biblical text has many potential meanings. As she brings the different texts "into conversation" with one another, she shows us Eve as a complex personality, not merely as the one who brought evil into the world as many of the rabbinic *midrashim* stress. On the contrary, the biblical Eve can be seen as evolving into an independent and colorful person who reaches the height of her influence when she names Cain. Lerner includes poems in Hebrew, Yiddish and English that all give us insight into the biblical text. The English poems include "Apple Sauce for Eve" by Madge Piercy which applauds Eve as being intellectually curious, a knowledge seeker and the world's first scientist. Piercy praises Eve for the legacy she left, "We are all the children of your bright hunger. We are all the products of that first experiment." *Eternally Eve* is a book of remarkable scholarship that is also highly accessible to the reader. Lerner's close reading of the texts presented is always fascinating; the very last footnote of the book reminds us that Eve is one of the very few women characters in the *humash* who does not have a fertility problem. There are similar gems on every page of this engrossing book.



Inventing Jewish Ritual

By Vanessa L.Ochs
Jewish Publication Society 2007 $25 paper

This book is not just about Jewish ritual practices but about the dynamics of innovation and continuity in contemporary Jewry and the tensions between the two. Vanessa Ochs, an anthropologist of religion and Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, outlines many new rituals and asks several important questions: What gives rise to a new ritual? What gives a ritual authenticity? Does the desire for individual self-fulfillment diminish the community aspect of a ritual? Ochs discusses the impulse to have Jewish ritual respond to many events in the life of a Jew that previously went unrecognized, and considers that the two forces that have influenced the abundance of Jewish ritual innovation in America today are democracy and Jewish feminism; the latter has affected both the adaptation of existing rituals for women and the creation of new ones. Her definition of Jewish rituals is very wide ranging and many of the rituals she describes do not fit into an Orthodox framework. It is hard to take seriously a discussion of a chocolate *seder* or to see Torah yoga sessions as an alternative to Shabbat morning services, and her discussion of *simhat bat* seems to incorrectly suggest that the birth of a girl was never celebrated in Jewish ritual before 1973, whereas there were many precedents in Sephardic communities. However, her analyses of innovations at Orthodox Jewish weddings using two articles from a JOFA Journal wedding issue, the new custom of distributing wedding booklets at ceremonies to explain ritual, and the use of Miriam's cups at the *seder,* are all fascinating. So is the section she devotes to the decoration of tambourines by Lubavitcher women in preparation to rejoice like Miriam when the Rebbe would announce himself to be *Moshiach* (Messiah), and how the association of the tambourines with redemption among the female Chabad community has continued. In this book, which garnered the 2007 National Jewish Book Award in the category of Contemporary Jewish Life and Practice, Ochs teaches the important lesson that the passage of time gives innovations authenticity, even in a traditional community, and that many things, that seem strange when introduced, become accepted over time as rituals are made and remade continuously There are few Jewish communities today for example that do not mark the *bat mitzvah* of a daughter in some public or quasi-public way.



SCREENING OF *MEKUDESHET* – STERN COLLEGE

Panel discussion following screening. Moderated by Audrey Trachtman with presentations by Rabbi Yona Reiss, Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin and Josh Ross.

Rapt audience composed of Stern and Y.U. students, graduate students and community members.

Reclaiming Our Mothers' Names ...continued from page 19

and gradually, mothers' names are gaining more currency across the Orthodox spectrum. As more and more people find meaning in the inclusion of mothers' names, the practice may in fact become normative.

Rabbi Shaul (Seth) Farber *is the founder and Director of ITIM: The Jewish Life Information Center (www.itim.org.il) – an organization that helps Jews navigate Jewish life in Israel. He also serves as the rabbi of Kehilat Netivot in Ra'anana, and is the co-founder of Ma'ayan: Torah Studies Initiative For Women.*

[1] The most elaborate article to date on the use of mothers' names is David Golinkin, "The Use of the Matronymic in Prayers for the Sick," in Aaron Demsky, *Studies in Jewish Onomastics* 3 (Bar-Ilan, Ramat Gan 2002), 59-72. Golinkin's bibliography does not include Rabbi Stern's responsa.

[2] See Avraham Ya'ari, "Tefilot Mi sheberakh," Kiryat Sepher 33 (1958), 244-45, ibid., 36 (1951) 112-113 and Daniel Cohen's comments, ibid., 40 (1965) 550-552.

[3] Beyond the *mi sheberach* prayer, Golinkin lists 1. hasidic *kvitlach*; 2. *kapparot*; 3. the *ribbono shel olam* prayer recited on the holidays at the Torah service; 4. *tekhinot;* 5. a prayer for women who are struggling to give birth; 6. later versions of the name changing prayer; 7. the *pidyon hanefesh* ceremony (where money is given to effect healing for the sick); 8. *tahara* prayers; 9. the study of *mishnayot*. See Golinkin 67-68.

[4] Jerusalem, 1990 3:24.

[5] Hatam Sofer *Even HaEzer* 2:41.

[6] See for example, *Gesher HaHayyim* 1:31.

[7] See *Shulhan Arukh* 139:3 and Babylonian Talmud *Bava Batra* 109b.

[8] Despite this suggestion, such confusion is omnipresent at standard Orthodox *brit milah* ceremonies where the mother's and father's names of the child are used in different prayers said in succession.

[9] Conceivably, using only the mother's name might cause confusion regarding the identity of the father.

[10] In one strange case, when a single mother named her child at the *brit milah*, and the local rabbi insisted on participating in the ceremony by naming the baby, he refused to use only the mother's name, and named the baby using the formula "*ben Avraham Avinu*" generally applied to the children of converts. This opinion highlights how modern sociology can often trump halakha. No doubt the rabbi was uncomfortable with the fact that the newborn had no named father. However, *Hatam Sofer* in the above mentioned responsa is unequivocal about his disapproval of utilizing the "*ben avraham avinu*" formulation in children who are not biological offspring of converts.

In the Jewish Catacombs of Rome

The following poem written in Greek by a husband in memory of his wife Regina is found among the epitaphs in the Jewish catacombs of Rome, the oldest Jewish community in the Western world. The English translation is taken from H. Leon, The Jews of Ancient Rome (Philadelphia, 1960).

Here lies Regina, covered by such a tomb, which her husband set up as fitting to his love, After twice ten years she spent with him one year, four months, and eight days more. She will live again, return to the light again, for she can hope that she will rise to the life promised, as is our true faith, to the worthy and the pious, in that she has deserved to possess an abode in the hallowed land. This your piety has assured you, this your chaste life, this your love for your people, this your observance of the Law, your devotion to your wedlock, the glory of which was dear to you. For all these deeds your hope of the future is assured. In this your sorrowing husband seeks his comfort.

The *Maharsha* and his Mother-in-Law

The name of the famous sixteenth to seventeenth century Polish rabbinical authority and Talmudic commentator, known by his acronym as the *Maharsha*, was R. Shmuel Eliezer Edels. The "Edels" in his name was taken from the name of his mother-in-law, Edel Heilpern, who supported him and his yeshiva for twenty years.

***Ushpizin/Ushpizot* (2008)**
Sharon Binder
(www.sharonsukkah.com)

Jerusalem artist Sharon Binder introduces seven female biblical personalities – Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Tamar, Miriam and Ruth – to the traditional list of Ushpizin *invited to the* sukkah *each night of Sukkot.*

JOFA Programs and Events 2007-2008

Check www.jofa.org for additional programs and events

November 15, 2007
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
"A Female President or a Female Orthodox Rabbi: Which Will Come First?"
Sara Hurwitz, *Madricha Ruchanit,* Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, New York.

November 27, 2007
SCHOTTENSTEIN CULTURAL CENTER, STERN COLLEGE
"Come Learn of the Plight of the Agunah!"
Screening of "*Mekudeshet*" followed by panel discussion.
Co-sponsored by the Social Justice Society of Yeshiva University and Torah Activities Council.

February 2-3, 2008
DC REGIONAL CONFERENCE
"Continuing the Conversation: The Roles of Women and Men."
Co-sponsored by Ohev Sholom - The National Synagogue, Washington DC.

Panel on Gender Sensitivity in Jewish Education at JOFA DC Regional Conference. The panel was moderated by Laura Shaw-Frank and included area educators Mrs. Susan Koss, Dr. Josh Levisohn and Rabbi David Serkin.

March 2-5, 2008
"Demystifying Sex and Teaching Halakha: A Kallah's Teacher's Workshop."
A pioneering program co-sponsored by Drisha Institue and Yeshivat Chovevei Torah to train a new kind of *kallah* teacher – one who sees her role not only as a transmitter of *halakhot*, but as a basic sexual educator and counselor.
New York City

March 2, 2008
BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY
"Resistance and Accommodation: Creating Halakhic Partnerships."
Launch of Tova Hartman's book, *Feminism Encounters Traditional Judaism.* Discussion on the origins and halakhic basis of partnership *minyanim* and how creative tension between Modern Orthodoxy and feminism can lead to unexpected perspectives and benefits.
Co-sponsored by the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute.

March 7-8, 2008
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
"Kol Nashim – A Jewish Celebration of the Arts and Learning."
Shabbaton and Conference
Scholar-in-Residence: Wendy Amsellem, Director of Beth Samuels High School Program, Drisha Institute.

March 12, 2008
UNIVERSITY OF BINGHAMTON
Lecture on the gravity and scope of the agunah problem and a discussion on proposed solutions.
Susan Aranoff, Agunah activist and co-founder and director of Agunah International Inc.

March 16, 2008
A JOFA First-A *Yom Iyun* for High School Students
"Rashi's Daughters: Rebels or Role Models."
New York City

March 27, 2008
CORNELL UNIVERSITY
"Envisioning a Healthy Jewish Sex Ethic."
Sara Hurwitz, *Madricha Ruchanit*, Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, New York, and Bat Sheva Marcus, Ph.D. in Human Sexuality.

March 28-29, 2008
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
Scholar-in-Residence: Tamar Ross, Professor of Jewish Philosophy, Bar-Ilan University.

April 9, 2008
UNIVERSITY OF BINGHAMTON
"Voices of Orthodoxy"
Devorah Zlochower, *Rosh Beit Midrash,* Drisha Institute.

May 18,2008
L.A. REGIONAL CONFERENCE
"There's More to It than the Chuppah….."
Keynote Speaker: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin
For more information, visit www.jofa.org

Mission Statement of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance

The Alliance's mission is to expand the spiritual, ritual, intellectual, and political opportunities for women within the framework of halakha. We advocate meaningful participation and equality for women in family life, synagogues, houses of learning, and Jewish communal organizations to the full extent possible within halakha. Our commitment is rooted in the belief that fulfilling this mission will enrich and uplift individual and communal life for all Jews.

☐ **COUNT ME IN!** I want to support JOFA's work and have an opportunity to be part of a community striving to expand meaningful participation for women in Jewish life.

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All contributions are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. Thank you.

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