



JOFA's Mission:
to expand the spiritual,
ritual, intellectual opportunities
for women within the
framework of halakha

From Our President Who's Afraid of Feminism?



By **Blu Greenberg**

For many Orthodox women, feminism — the word and the idea — arouses fear.

Even in the modern Orthodox community, women who, by any objective standard would be described as feminist, distance themselves from the word. Two examples: following our conference 2000, women from 11 countries met to form an international Orthodox feminist organization. A major discussion (still unresolved) was whether “feminism” should be part of the title. And during the past few years, trying to garner support for JOFA, it has frequently been suggested to me to drop the red flag word.

Perhaps it would be a politically expedient move, but each time I consider it, I hang back. To excise feminism from our lexicon would be an act of ingratitude, for we have all reaped the fruits of labor of the founding mothers. While there is still a long way to go, the countless legal protections and opportunities which they set in motion warrant recognition and honor.

Furthermore, feminism has done “*teshuva*” these last three decades. Its radical edge — threatening to many of traditional bent — is off. Men are perceived not as the enemy, but as important partners in the enterprise. The family is viewed not as a locus of abuse, but as the natural choice for most women, with equality wrapped around women's unique biology.

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Our Tradition, Ourselves

By **Tova Hartman-Halbertal**
with **Tamar H. Miller**

Feminism has shaped a radically different reality for modern Orthodox women. It has posed a challenge to those of us who balance our deep commitment to Jewish tradition with the compelling feminist ways of being and living. At the crossroads, we ask whether it is necessary to walk only one path.

In the 12th century Maimonides described the following dilemma of the perplexed:

“Hence he would remain in a state of perplexity and confusion as to whether he should follow his

intellect...and consequently consider that he has renounced the foundations of the law, or whether he should hold fast...and not let himself be drawn after his intellect, but rather, turn his back on it, understanding that he has brought loss to himself and harm to his religion. He would be left with those imaginary beliefs to which he owes his fear and hardship and would not cease to suffer from heartache and great perplexity.” ([Introduction to Guide to the Perplexed](#))

Modern day religious feminists face a similar bind; do we put on our secular liberal feminist hats and stride down the road to gender

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At Whose Expense?

By **Janet Dolgin**

The shift in the Orthodox Jewish world toward greater stringency in *halakhic* interpretation and observance is obvious. The effect of this shift on Orthodox Jewish women is not obvious, and merits attention.

Increasingly, stringency in religious observance has been equated with stringency regarding women. Increasingly, Orthodox communities have chosen to measure their religiosity by how strictly they regulate the self-definitions, habits, clothing, and experiences of their women. Increasingly, Orthodox communities have proven how pious they are by showing how narrowly they restrict their women.

The communities in the three stories below are Orthodox, and are attempting to increase their level of observance. What they are doing constitutes a warning that must not be ignored.

Case #1

Several years ago, a community established an Orthodox synagogue in a suburb of New York. Its founders are religious centrists and professionals comfortable in the secular world — accountants, lawyers, health care providers, computer programmers and teachers. Many of the women work outside their homes. Their school-age children attend *yeshivot* and day schools. The men wear knitted *kipot*, and most of the women do not cover their hair. They are, in short, a typical modern Orthodox community. When designing their new synagogue, they originally built a *mebitza* close to the *bima* that allowed women to see (through tint-

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Who's Afraid...

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Feminism is a model of how all social movements need time to re-balance and mature.

There is another reason to retain the word: precisely because it continues to rankle! Even in the midst of fundamental societal change, the temptation to revert to ancient systems of hierarchy is everpresent. Feminism is the steady watchdog that prevents that slide.

But there is a different kind of fear in the air, one which relates to the demands feminism makes upon us as Orthodox Jews. I recall two conversations from long ago. In 1973 my synagogue sisterhood asked me to inquire into women's membership and voting rights. In canvassing the practices of 10 leading Orthodox syn-

agogues I heard the familiar refrain of "when women show up at the 7:00am minyan we'll give them the vote." Following a Mizrahi (now AMIT) discussion meeting about "equality" my friend Sarah pleaded, "Please, I have enough on my plate, I don't need any more *mitzvos*." Her words sum up what many of us, already overburdened with the demands of raising children and pursuing a career (not to mention cooking for Shabbat and cleaning for *Pesach*), feel about the new responsibilities that come with new rights.

If resistance can be attributed to our laden schedules, then why are we reluctant to adopt rituals which do not make demands on our time and energy, such as reciting the *kiddush* at the *Shabbat* table or dancing with a *sefer* Torah at women's *hakafot*? What is the source of this hesitation?

It is not one thing, but many. For centuries we have been conditioned to shy away from public religious expression. Perhaps we feel immodest in this new space, certainly we feel self-conscious. At its core, Orthodoxy is powerfully structured in terms of role differentiation, and women's roles were properly distant from the public eye. Within the thousands of details that constitute *halakha*, we are comfortable knowing who does what. Challenging accepted roles creates a fuzziness and tension that is difficult to navigate. A woman reciting the *hamotzi* begs the question: What's next?

Furthermore, there is widespread lack of knowledge that women's performance of certain rituals is *halakhically* permissible. There are even efforts to mis-educate and misinform women about their *halakhic* rights.

Which brings us to an even more powerful deterrent: the reaction in the larger Orthodox community to women taking on new roles is one of

skepticism, if not outright ridicule. Why subject ourselves to such response?

These are not easy matters to negotiate. The pressures are not only external, but internal, as we strive to define our religious identities as committed Jews and feminists.

What are the tasks that lie ahead?

- Engage in open dialogue across all points of the spectrum. We must discuss not only objective points of *halakha*, but also the fears surrounding the social realities and new challenges of women in Orthodoxy.

- Continue the search for historical precedent of ritual adopted by women. Practices that were once considered radical are now the accepted norm in the Orthodox community (women studying Talmud is one example).

- Re-negotiate our personal and familial responsibilities to create greater space for religious ritual in our lives. This involves the cooperation of husbands, sons, and fathers who understand our desire for spiritual growth.

- Recognize that emotions, psyche, and social construction play a great role in the decision to accept any new responsibility. We must not be suspicious of women who rush to adopt new roles, nor judgmental of those who are reluctant.

Finally, we must never forget that the purpose of adopting any new religious responsibility is to develop a relationship with God. My friend Carol cites the biblical Miriam as a model of women's religious spirit. Miriam took the timbrel and sang and danced, and Moshe did not call out "*kol isba*." We await the day when we can all express genuine religious emotion undeterred by self-consciousness or criticism. ■



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New and Noteworthy

Compiled by Abbie Greenberg

Israel

Israel's first lady, Gila Katzav, inaugurated the International Advisory Hotline, a development which has the potential to revolutionize the lives of Orthodox women.

The hotline is staffed by seven *Yoatzot Halakha* (*halakbic* advisors) who have undergone rigorous training at Nishmat in Jerusalem to qualify to respond to questions regarding *tabarat hamishpaha* (family purity) in an anonymous, discreet, comfortable and accurate manner.

In their short history *Yoatzot* have already been called upon to answer questions dealing with

everything from menstrual cycles to fertility issues to medical procedures which have *halakbic* implications. The Hotline may be reached by dialing 972-2-642-9801 from abroad and (02) 642-98101 in Israel.

New York

How can women and men connect with holiness and spirituality in the workplace, in the home, in the broader community? Infusing spirituality and ethics into everyday activities is a theme that will be covered at this year's Edah conference on modern Orthodox Judaism. There will be a number of sessions dealing with the struggles and opportunities of women in the mod-

ern Orthodox community. The conference will be held on February 18-19 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Manhattan. For more information, and to register, go to www.edah.org, or call (212)-244-7501.

On Sunday, February 11th, from 10am to 2 pm, the Drisha Institute in New York will host a workshop on the topic "*Kriat Hatorah* (Public Torah Reading) by Women: The *Halakbic* Argument." The workshop will be led by Mendel Shapiro and will consider the possibility of women participating in public Torah reading in a *minyán* of ten men. Men and women are welcome. For information call Drisha at (212) 595-0307. ■

Abbie Greenberg studied at Pardes and Nishmat in Jerusalem, and is currently a member of the boards of Pardes and JOFA.

Book Corner

What Makes Women Sick: Maternity, Modesty and Militarism in Israeli Society

By Susan Sered

Brandeis University Press, 2000

Drawing on the fields of anthropology, medicine, and gender studies, Sered tackles the question of why Israeli women are weaker and sicker as compared to women in other countries. She links the health problems of Israeli women to the low degree of authority they are granted over their own lives and their own bodies in particular. Among the stresses Israeli women face are exclusion from the political and religious establishments, objectification by the media, lack of control over reproductive decisions, and idealization of the male soldier's body. These factors lead women to view themselves as weak and powerless. Sered's cogent and original analysis, combined with her engaging writing style make this book required reading for anyone interested in Judaism and feminism.

The Women's Torah Commentary: New Insights from Women Rabbis on the 54 Weekly Torah Portions

Edited by Rabbi Elyse Goldstein

Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000

This book challenges the notion that there exists a singular "feminine voice" or "feminist" reading of text. Arranged according to the weekly *parsha*, *The Women's Torah Commentary* offers a variety of women's perspectives and interpretations, encompassing the entire Pentateuch. Some of the essays address feminist issues that are clearly embedded in the text, such as Rabbi Sarra Levine's analysis of the inequities inherent in the biblical laws of the *sotah* (unfaithful woman) presented in *parshat Naso*. Other essays draw biblical women from the background to the foreground, such as Rabbi Julie Ringald Spitzer's discussion of the wife of Noah presented in *parshat Noah*. But the most intriguing essays are those which deal with biblical texts which do not explicitly discuss women, and open up these texts to new questions and new interpretations. In

her essay on *parshat Terumah*, Rabbi Sharon Sobel observes that the notion of God dwelling in the *mishkan* (sanctuary) among the people is a deviation from the patriarchal concept of a transcendent God. Observations like these, which challenge the reader to consider familiar texts in new ways, make this book worthwhile.

The Particulars of Rapture: Reflections on Exodus

By Aviva Zornberg

Doubleday, 2001

As in her previous book on Genesis, in *The Particulars of Rapture* Aviva Zornberg combines her knowledge of traditional Jewish sources with her background in literary analysis and philosophy. In her exegesis of the *Exodus* narrative she draws heavily upon the *midrash* of the ancient rabbis to uncover the hidden stories and emotions lurking in the gaps of the biblical text. Weaving together text and interpretation, Zornberg creates a new narrative – one which is not strictly Bible or *midrash*, but which explores the dreams and fears of the human

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Reshut: Individual Discretion in Halakha

By Rabbi Saul J. Berman

The exemption of women from 14 *mitzvot* of the Torah has been subjected to much analysis, generally related to the rationale for exemption. I would like to explore the legal meaning of such exemption. While the rationale for exemption defies simple explanation, the form of exemption is perfectly consistent. The 14 *mitzvot* from which women are exempt are all behaviors which, by Torah law, are mandatory for men, but are neither mandated nor forbidden for women.

To explore the meaning of this particular form of Jewish law, first do a rapid inventory in your mind of all the actions, conversations, feelings and beliefs in which you engage during a single day. I assume it is a long list, but just keep it in mind...

Discussions of *halakha* tend to focus heavily on questions of authority. Upon being informed that a particular act or omission is required by *halakha*, the natural first question is, "by what authority?" Is the duty or prohibition a matter of revealed law, written or oral, (*d'oraita*); rabbinic law (*d'rabbanan*); universal custom (*minhag*); or communal legislation (*takkanat hakahal*)? The answer to this core question then becomes the grist for much subsequent discussion.

But notice how we have already fallen into a trap in assuming that the substance of *halakha* is exhausted in the identification of that which is required and that which is forbidden. The realms of *biyyuv* (duty), and *issur* (prohibition), occupy large places in *halakha*. Indeed, Rambam classifies all of the 613 *mitzvot* into the categories of duty — *mitzvot aseh*, and prohibition — *mitzvot lo taaseh*.

Now return to the mental list which you compiled in response to my opening request. How many of those items fall neatly within the categories of duty or prohibition? I would venture a guess that only a small percentage fit within that framework. Does Judaism then consider the bulk of

our daily activities to be outside the framework of *halakha*?

In reality, *halakha* classifies human experience into three broad categories. There are those actions and beliefs which are duties (*mitzva* or *bova*), those which are prohibited (*assur*), and those which are discretionary (*reshut*).

This latter realm, that of the discretionary, is identified in rabbinic literature as *patur u'mutar*. For example, the Talmud in *Kiddushin* 29b determines that women are *patur u'mutar* with regard to the *mitzva* of *talmud* Torah. The Talmud thereby explicitly rejects the tannaitic position of Ben Azzai, who maintains that women are equally obligated with men in this *mitzva*. It also confirms the amoraic teaching of *Sotah* 21b, that even Rabbi Eliezer could not

"Our sages understood that the goal of Torah is not the creation of the perfect automaton."

possibly maintain that women are actually forbidden to study Torah. Interestingly, of the 613 *mitzvot*, the 14 from which women are exempt purely in consequence of gender all fall in this category of *patur u'mutar*.

If there is neither duty nor prohibition, what is the Jewish attitude towards performance of these acts? They fall within the realm of the discretion of the individual. But while they are discretionary, rabbinic counsel is brought to bear encouraging or discouraging engagement in these acts. There are key phrases in the Talmud which indicate the presence of rabbinic persuasion in regard to discretionary activities.

What does it mean when the Talmud urges us to act "*lifnin mi'sburat badin*," beyond the requirement of the law? It means that the act itself is not obligatory, but that the rabbis urge us to consider doing it anyway. Having announced and safeguarded a lost object for over a year, the finder is entitled to keep it as his or her

own even if the original owner now appears. There is no residual duty to return the property; doing so is purely within the discretion of the finder. However, the sages urge us to consider returning the article.¹ The act remains discretionary, but the rabbis encouraged the behavior.

Other ways in which the rabbis persuade us to engage in discretionary behavior are by identifying the behavior as *middat hasidut* (behavior of the righteous)² or by indicating that a person is *bayav b'dinei shamayim* (liable according to the law of heaven).³

Conversely, there are times when the rabbis dissuade an individual from engaging in a discretionary act. For example, the victim of a penitent thief who had stolen clothing due to his poverty is encouraged not to take his clothing back. If he does so, *ein ruach hakhamim noba heimeno* (the spirit of the sages is not pleased with him).⁴

If the Rabbis felt strongly enough about matters of *reshut* so as to persuade or dissuade us from engaging in these activities, why did they not just legislate the requirement? Why did they allow the discretionary capacity to remain intact?

Our sages understood that the goal of Torah is not the creation of the perfect automaton. Rather, the goal of Torah is to evolve our free will and ethical personalities to the point that we make appropriate ethical decisions out of our own free conscience. Therefore, the preservation of a distinction between legal governance and persuasion is vital.

Beyond the element of ethical autonomy, there is the value of spiritual subjectivity. Much as ethical sensibilities need to be cultivated, so do the subjective capacities for perceiving the presence of God in our lives. *Halakha* helps us achieve this goal by regulating our interactions with God through prayer and ritual activity. But *halakha* does not exhaust the capacity for intimacy between a person and God; it only frames it. To enhance our relationship with God, we need to be aware of what makes us sense the presence of God, of what divine qualities

we can emulate while still preserving our individuality. Limits on ritual duties create the space within which spiritual subjectivity can grow.

The realm of *reshut* is thus not just empty space available to be stuffed with new laws and detailed rules. The realm of *reshut* is critical religious space left open for the formation of the ideal personality of each unique Jew.

Jewish women have used the autonomy and subjectivity granted to them by Torah to fulfill *mitzvot* from which they are exempt. Taking into account rabbinic counsel, they have integrated into their religious regimen 8 of the 14 discretionary *mitzvot*. These *mitzvot* are *shofar*, *sukkab*, *lulav*, *k'riat shma*, *sefirat ha'omer*, procreation, rejoicing in the first year of marriage, and *talmud Torah*.

In regard to 4 other discretionary *mitzvot* my observation is that

“The realm of *reshut* is critical religious space left open for the formation of the ideal personality of each unique Jew.”

women are defining a significant role for themselves in the ceremonial structure, without undertaking the performance of the obligatory act itself (circumcision, *pidyon haben*, writing a *sefer Torah*, and *birkhat kohanim*). In regard to the 2 remaining *mitzvot* which fall within the category of *patur u'mutar*, namely *tefillin* and *tzitzit*, there has thus far been only marginal interest in experimentation. This may reflect general rabbinic counsel against women adopting these *mitzvot*.

It remains essential to preserve

the balance between authority and autonomy, between objective rules and subjective opportunities, between the exercise of rabbinic power and the role of rabbinic persuasion. The category of *reshut* is vital in our struggle for individual religious identity. ■

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1 *Bava Metzia* 24b.

2 *Ibid.* 51b-52b.

3 *Gittin* 53a.

4 *Bava Kama* 97b. Treatment of these and other such expressions of rabbinic persuasion in cases of *reshut* can be found in [Equity in Jewish Law](#) by Aaron Kirschenbaum, New Jersey: Ktav, 1991.

At Whose Expense

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ed glass) and hear the services. A respected communal rabbi unaffiliated with the new synagogue approved the design and placement of the *mehitza* and declared it “kosher.”

Yet, after a few months, the members of the synagogue decided that the *mehitza* did not suit their needs. They replaced it with a much higher one located to the side of the synagogue. The new *mehitza* reached from floor to ceiling, and was covered with a curtain. Soon after, when renovation of the synagogue began, yet another *mehitza* was designed. The women now sit towards the back of the synagogue, cordoned off by two walls, and blocked by curtains. They can neither see the *bima* clearly, nor listen with ease to the services. The “women’s section” would be at home in Mea Shearim.

Case #2

Recently, a Rosh Yeshiva in New York decided that at the wedding of his first daughter men and women would sit separately. At his own wedding men and women had sat together, at his insistence. His

Rebbe had had a “mixed” wedding; and surely, what was good for his Rebbe was good for him. Why then, he was asked, would the seating at his daughter’s wedding be separate? “Because,” he said, “I’m afraid of them.” He did not identify “them.” He did not have to.

Case #3

In a shiur given in a modern Orthodox synagogue recently, the speaker — a rabbi ordained at Yeshiva University and a practicing lawyer, asserted that a woman cannot make *kiddush* for her husband. When told that she could, he responded in a loud and angry voice, “That’s wrong!” Shown the relevant passage in the *Shulhan Arukh*, he admitted that the *halakha* does permit a wife to make *kiddush* for her husband. “But,” he asked, “Would any man here let his wife make *kiddush*?” And several dozen men laughed.

All three of the stories are true. All three show the same danger. And all three demand it be opposed.

The danger is that as stringencies take hold, Orthodox Jewish women will be increasingly marginalized, supposedly in the name of *halakha*, but in fact frequently despite *halakha*. And often they will be

intentionally marginalized. The original *mehitza* in the community’s new synagogue was kosher. The men and women at the wedding of the Rosh Yeshiva’s daughter could have sat together. A woman can make *kiddush* for her husband. And the people who opted for stringencies knew they were not demanded by *halakha*. The community that opposed the original *mehitza* knew it was kosher. The Rosh Yeshiva knew men and women could sit together. The rabbi knew a woman can make *kiddush* for her husband.

Acting as though *halakha* demanded stringency in these cases debars women from the duties and pleasures authorized by *halakha*. Worse, they mis-educate, disempower, and trivialize women.

This is oppression. And oppression must be opposed. Because if it is not opposed our self respect is diminished. And the *halakha* is diminished. And the Orthodox Jewish community is diminished. If nothing is done, more than should be endured will be lost. ■

Janet Dolgin is an anthropologist and a professor of constitutional law at Hofstra University. She and her family reside in West Hempstead, NY.

Our Tradition, Ourselves

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equality, or do we abandon those notions of justice and apply another set of values to our religious path?

This brief essay will point to some of the major tenets of feminism as they come to bear upon Orthodox feminism.

What is Feminism?

Today and at its inception, at the end of the 18th century, feminism was and is, not a monolithic response to what was called the “women’s problem.” Historically, it is diverse and culturally varied, perhaps because women are many and not one. One cannot speak of feminism but rather of feminisms. Liberal feminism and radical feminism are two of the major theoretical and practical branches of the women’s movement.

A basic tenet of liberal feminism was and still is that the subordination of women is rooted in a legal system that blocks women’s entrance into the public domain. Exclusionary policies are both the source and the result of this discrimination. Liberal feminists demanded that the rules of the game be fair and just, so that women could enjoy the same rights and access to opportunities as men.

Radical feminists, on the other hand, questioned the essential nature of societal arrangements. They posited that the truths emanating from political, legal, and social establishments served the interests of male hegemony, which was firmly rooted in power, dominance and hierarchy.

Radical feminism stressed gender differences, primarily based on the biological reproductive powers of women. However, they completely rejected using difference as a basis to justify inequality, as did their conservative counterparts. Most radical feminists do not adhere to the notion that biology is destiny. Rather, they claim that many of the differences between men and women are deeply socialized and embedded in an environment where male power is at the root of social construction.

“What our critics miss is that the impetus for our feminism comes precisely from our passionate Jewish commitment.”

All feminisms, including modern Orthodox feminism, claim that what “is” does not serve as a justification for continuing the status quo and certainly is not necessarily what “ought to be.” All feminisms are concerned with exclusion and invisibility. And so we ask: is gender inequality in Orthodox Judaism really God given? Perhaps there are other ways of conceptualizing and expressing the nature of our womanhood, our rights, our obligations, and the character of our relationships. These matters are central to the Orthodox feminist agenda.

The Challenge of Jewish Orthodox Feminism

One of our essential dilemmas derives from the fact that in many aspects of our secular lives we are equal and full citizens. We would not tolerate our daughter’s rejection from medical school based upon her gender. If she were to sit behind the wall in law school and not be granted the degree in the end, we would be outraged and act upon our anger.

However, with regard to our Jewish identity and practice we are largely spectators and enablers. Even those with broad and deep mastery of Judaic knowledge continue to have limited access to formal power. Women can be lawyers and judges but not *dayanot*; women can be political advocates

but remain *agunot*; women can be public speakers but not *bazaniot*; women can master Torah *she’baal peh*, but not be *poskot*. These circumscribed roles create spiritual, psychic and social predicaments for us. They heighten dissonance in our thinking and hurt our spirits. As Orthodox feminists, we are trying to make sense of our inequality. We are giving voice to something that for so long remained unspoken.

The vehemence of our critics attests to the potency of the threat they sense to patriarchal Judaism. Beginning from the time of Rav Kook, rabbinic authorities perceived feminism as a secular movement by and for the “*goyim*” (see Rav Kook’s *teshuva* of 1919 barring women from participating in the *yishuv* voting). Rabbi Meir Twersky calls our feminism “ideational assimilation;” Rabbi Meiselman terms our struggle “sundry topics in feminism.”

Perhaps one of the striking differences between the women’s movement and Orthodox feminism is that the former not only believes in change but also that women are powerful agents of change. Orthodox feminists hope that our knowledge will get us power, yet we still abide a system where change is legitimate only when sanctioned by the interpretations of *gedolim*, who seem to be reluctant to explore relevant *halakha* even in legitimate ways.

What our critics miss is that the impetus for our feminism comes precisely from our passionate Jewish commitment. We are accused of betraying Jewish tradition by introducing alien notions into it. We are challenged to forever demonstrate our religious commitment and obedience. We are constantly proving that we are *frum* enough, motherly enough, and that we also never burn the *chulent*.

We must not engage in this conversation from an apologetic stance. On the contrary, we are raising pressing questions and are attempting to craft viable answers.

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Our Tradition, Ourselves

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As part of the traditional community, we believed the problem to be *halakbic* and therefore, we looked for *heterim* (dispensations) and legal precedents. Yet, when we found them, we were surprised that not only were they not adopted by a majority of the religious community, but that the conversation then became meta-*halakbic*, delegitimizing our options. Secular feminists learned this same lesson. Legislation for equal education and suffrage did not end women's subordination. Long-time limited roles had petrified notions of the ideal woman, and oppression endured. Attitudinal changes simply cannot be legislated. It is our challenge to find heter-

im but also to struggle with the socially constructed images of women and men that frame our basic visions of ourselves and our understanding of *halakha*.

Most important, Orthodox feminism must not be seen only as a women's movement for solving the "women's problem." Discrimination and the silencing of women in the tradition are problems for all of *klal yisrael*. Orthodox feminism asks what it means to be *nivrah betzelem* (created in the image of God). This is not a women's struggle. It is one that summons everyone. Our success — without knowing what the final product will look like — will be measured against

how completely we enlist the whole community to join the struggle. I look forward to the day that our rabbis, husbands, fathers, and sons feel spiritually compromised in a community where *kavod hatzibur* (respect for the congregation) means the absence of women. ■

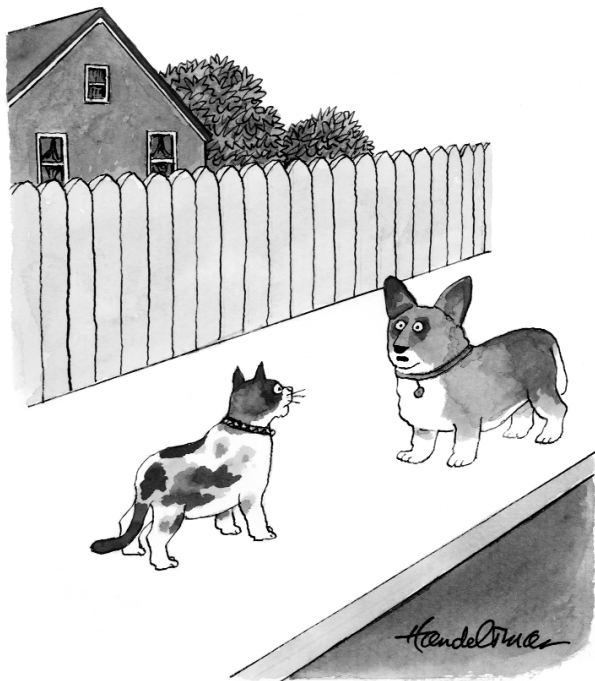
We wish to thank Moshe Halbertal, Yehudah Mirsky, and Shira Wollofsky for their helpful comments.

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Visit the JOFA Web site

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Projects, events, weekly sedra, agunah advocacy and more.



"It's a dog tradition. Every morning and evening, we thank God that we're not cats."

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Book Corner

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condition. Zornberg has a gift for weaving the particulars of the biblical text into its larger themes; she is able to see in the symbol of the unleavened bread the Jews' lack of readiness and uncomfortability with the notion of freedom, a theme which reverberates throughout *Exodus*. In explicating the grand themes of redemption, revelation and betrayal, Zornberg shows that the book of *Exodus* is not simply the story of a people leaving Egypt, but the story of all humankind. ■

Save the Date!

Shabbat T'lamdeini 2001

Shabbat T'lamdeini: Women, Learning, and Community, a program through which Orthodox synagogues around the world join together to recognize and celebrate women's contributions to our communities will take place on **Shabbat parshat Emor, 5761, May 12, 2001.**

For more information on how your synagogue can participate, call JOFA at (212) 752-7133, or email jofa@rcn.com.

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