



## THE JWC NEW MOON

Tishrei 5770  
September 2009

### Reaching In, Reaching Out

by Malke Frank

The full moon of Elul encircled us with her halo as we prepared to welcome in a New Year – reaching out to embrace a beginning and all its potential, while at the same time, reaching in to acquaint ourselves, once again, with who we are and who we want to be. This period of Jewish time offers the opportunity for each of us to reach out to those whom we have hurt or wronged and to ask for forgiveness. For this to happen, we have to reach within ourselves to ask the questions, to seek the answers, and to arrive at the right place.

Rabbi Leila Gal Berner wrote this commentary to Hillel's famous words as a guide to enter into the New Year:

"If I am not for myself, who is for me?" This can refer to *tikun haneshamah*/ repair of the soul. If I do not engage in the deeply personal work of inward turning (*teshuvah*), no one else can do it for me.

"And when I am only for myself, what am I?" This may refer to *tikun ha'olam*/ repair of the world. If each of us is only self-focused, then ultimately what are we? What makes us human is our relationship to others; what makes us human is our "response-ability," our understanding of responsibility – to ourselves and to the world.

"And if not now, when?" What better time than at the birth of a New Year to begin the journey toward self-repair and world repair.

Reaching In, Reaching Out is the theme for this year's programs of the Jewish Women's Center. We began in 1992 as a group of women who desired to better understand our-

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selves as Jewish women and our role and responsibility in the larger Jewish community. We created rituals, developed prayer services, wrote Pesach haggadot, established a library—with the kavannah (intention) to educate and to nurture ourselves. After a number of years, we saw that other Jewish women's groups in the community were beginning their own journeys toward similar goals. They, too, desired to create rituals and develop programs that focused on Jewish values which were in sync with their feminist ideals (although they may not have used this word!). And so we came together -- the autonomous and independent Jewish Women's Center (cont'd on p. 4)



## The Jewish Women's Archive

### JWC Tzedakah Project 5770

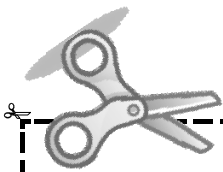
Our history as Jews and our history as women share a common problem: too many of the records and artifacts that documented our lives are gone, either purposely destroyed or sim-

ply allowed to disappear. The Jewish Women's Archive exists to counter that problem and see that the history of Jewish American women is honored and preserved.

The JWA's mission is to uncover, chronicle, and transmit to a broad public the rich history of American Jewish women. The JWA has taken up the capacities of the internet fully, archiving and analyzing all kinds of media. Their website has photos, online exhibits, a blog, an encyclopedia of American Jewish women, and much more. It has created educational tools for use with adults and others specifically for girls, so that we can start early to value our experiences. A film on Jewish American female comedians is in production and will be available for sale soon. Perhaps most importantly for the future, the JWA provides resources so that each of us can be a historian. We can collect stories and photos of artifacts from our own lives and the lives of the women who are important to us, so that in an increasingly paper-free society, those stories and artifacts don't disappear. And we now have a place that will store them and study them, treating them as the important historical documents they are.

Since its creation in 1995, the JWA has been extraordinarily creative in using the ever-broadening resources of the internet, as well as designing posters, stationery and other hard copy material, hosting conferences and workshops and sending out speakers. The JWC is lucky to have a museum in town, the Heinz History Center, which is archiving our papers and artifacts as we submit them. Not every Jewish women's group, or Jewish woman, is lucky enough to have such a resource at hand. But with the Jewish Women's Archive, all Jewish women in the US have a repository for their stories. We salute the JWA for its groundbreaking work and encourage you to support it with your tzedakah donations this year.

Check it out at: [www.jwa.org](http://www.jwa.org)



### Support the JWC with your 5770 dues:

\$18 \_\_\_\_\_ Reduced dues                      \$36 \_\_\_\_\_ 1-year Basic Membership  
\$54 \_\_\_\_\_ 1-year Supporting Membership    \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ 1-year Special Friend

I am adding \$\_\_\_\_\_ to my dues for this year's tzedakah project, the Jewish Women's Archive.

Mail your check to: JWC, P.O. Box 81924, Pittsburgh, PA 15217

## **JWC PROGRAM CALENDAR: 5770 (2009-10)**

### **Theme: Reaching In, Reaching Out**

EVENT	DATE	TIME	PLACE	TOPIC
Tashlich	Sunday September 13	11:00 AM	Nine Mile Run	---
Cheshvan Celebration and Fall Shabbaton	Saturday October 31	Noon to 5:00 PM	Member's home	Witches, Spirits and Crones
Rosh Hodesh Kislev	Monday November 16	7:30 PM	Beth Shalom	With Beth Shalom Sisterhood & led by Rabbi Donnie Aaron, Pgh's new- est female Rabbi
Rosh Hodesh Tevet	Wednesday December 16	7:00 PM	Riverview Towers	Our Bubbes, Ourselves: Sharing Memories of Hanukkah
Rosh Hodesh Shvat	Saturday Janu- ary 16	Sent via e-mail	Your home	Do-It-For-Yourself
Tu b'Shvat Seder	Sunday January 31	6:30 PM	LZC	Tu b'Shvat with a Women's Focus
Rosh Hodesh Adar	Sunday February 14	7:30 PM	LZC	Jewish Concepts of Love
Women's Shabbat	Saturday March 6	10:00 AM	LZC	With Rabbi Sharyn Henry
Rosh Hodesh Nisan	Monday March 15	7:30 PM	Beth Shalom	With Beth Shalom Sisterhood: Passover Inspirations
Women's Pesach Seder	Thursday April 1	6:00 PM	LZC	---
Celebration of Iyar & Annual Meeting	Tuesday April 13	7:30 PM	LZC	Massage the Body / Massage the Soul
Celebration of Sivan and Shavuot	Monday May 17	7:30 PM	TBD	Pre-Shavuot Study with Temple Sinai Rosh Hodesh Group
Rosh Hodesh Tammuz	Sunday June 13	7:30 PM	LZC	Jewish and Muslim Women
Rosh Hodesh Av	Monday July 12	Sent via e-mail	Your home	Do-It-For-Yourself
Rosh Hodesh Elul	Sunday August 8	11:00 AM- 1:00 PM	Member's home	Potluck Family Brunch

## Can You Believe It? It's Been Thirty Years!

From: Jewish Women's Archive

This Week in History

August 1, 1979: Congregation appoints first woman to serve as senior rabbi

Reconstructionist rabbi Linda Joy Holtzman was appointed the spiritual leader of Beth Israel Congregation in Coatesville, PA, on August 1, 1979. The appointment made her the first woman to lead a Jewish congregation in the U.S. Although Sally Priesand had been ordained as a rabbi seven years earlier, no woman rabbi prior to Holtzman had won appointment as the leader of a synagogue. Women ordained as rabbis in the 1970s generally either served as associate or assistant rabbis, or found jobs outside the synagogue. In hiring Holtzman, Beth Israel broke with tradition in a second way; the congregation was affiliated officially with the Conservative movement, which had not yet authorized the ordination of women.

Holtzman's appointment was greeted with excitement by supporters of women's ordination, who understood that she had opened a door that more women rabbis would then be able to walk through. Holtzman told the *New York Times* that she believed her appointment was "very significant for women and for the Jewish community." Similarly, Rabbi Wolfe Kelman of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly called it "an historical breakthrough and simply fantastic," noting that Holtzman's hiring would make it easier for other congregations to move forward with hiring women without having to feel that they were breaking entirely new ground.

Holtzman remained at Beth Israel for six years. Following her tenure there, she moved to Beth Ahava in Philadelphia, a gay and lesbian synagogue. While at Beth Ahava, she founded the Reconstructionist Hevrah Kadishah of Philadelphia, or traditional Jewish burial society. Later, Holtzman helped to found Kavod v'Nichum [Honor and Comfort], an organization which works to educate Jewish communities about the traditional practices [cont'd on p. 5]



[Reaching In...: cont'd from p. 1] and congregational Rosh Hodesh groups and synagogue sisterhoods. The JWC also reached out to the women residents of Charles Morris and Weinberg Village who lived at a time when their voices were not heard, when indeed they did not have a voice. They happily discovered their voices at our Pesach Seders.

As we prepare ourselves to welcome in the New Year, we look forward to continuing these collective efforts and to uncovering more opportunities to fulfill our spiritual growth.

*Sheyemalu kol mishalot libeynu l'tovah.* May all the dreams of our heart be fulfilled.

*L'Shanah Tova u'Metukah.* May you and those you love be blessed with a Good and Sweet Year.

Mazal tov to member Malke Frank and her husband Ivan on the marriage of their daughter and our friend Michal to Derek Molliver in July.



Another Mazal tov to Malke who was interviewed for an article on Feminist Funerals published in the Summer 2009 *Lilith* magazine. Subtitled "Reclaiming the ultimate ritual, visionary women are taking this ceremonial passage into their own hands," the article recounts how Jewish feminists are turning their attention to their own and their friends' deaths and considering how to make traditional Jewish funeral customs and rituals meaningful in a modern egalitarian context.

Malke was described as "a co-founder of the Jewish Women's Center of Pittsburgh, which introduced Rosh Chodesh observance, feminist seders and new rituals to an enthusiastic following, [who] decided with a few other women to start a non-Orthodox chevra kadisha [sacred society that performs the ritual washing and purification of the dead]." We're proud of Malke for bringing the JWC to a national audience and for speaking in a strong voice about our Pittsburgh experience. Find a link to the article by going to <http://www.lilith.org> and then clicking on the PDF logo to the right of the article titled Feminist Funerals.



[Thirty Years: cont'd from p. 4] of honoring the dead and comforting the bereaved, and to help communities and families adapt the rituals to their own needs. After leaving Beth Ahava, Holtzman served as interim rabbi for Philadelphia's Congregation Mishkan Shalom, and then for five years as that synagogue's Education Director.

Holtzman is currently an associate professor of practical rabbinics and director of the Department of Practical Rabbinics at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. She has published extensively, including chapters in *Twice Blessed* (1989) and in *Lesbian Rabbis: The First Generation* (2000).

[Reprinted from "This Week in History," a project of the Jewish Women's Archive, <http://jwa.org>. Subscribe to receive "This Week in History" by email at <http://jwa.org/signup/twih>.]

The newsletter is one of the few things we print on paper and send to you through the mail. If you would prefer to receive your newsletter via e-mail in PDF format, just let Mimi Reznik know at [mimireznik@msn.com](mailto:mimireznik@msn.com).

# Local Jewish Domestic Abuse Task Force Restructures

By Marilyn Asimow

As the JWC representative on the Jewish Domestic Abuse Task Force (JDATF), I want to give you an update on our October, 2008, program and the current restructuring of the Task Force Coalition (TF). The TF was formed in December, 2001, with the encouragement of Jewish Women International, and has presented community programs and quarterly Lunch and Learns since its inception.

The TF presented a very successful community program on October 26, 2008, titled "Tools for Teens: Building Healthy Dating Relationships", at the Jewish Community Center. We brought Hedda Matza-Haughton to Pittsburgh to present her program "Words Not Spoken" to over 60 teens from the greater Pittsburgh area including AJL youth groups, congregation classes and other youth groups. Local teens were recruited to perform roles for the program they developed with the guidance of Ms. Matza-Haughton for the program. These same teens served as discussion leaders for small discussion groups to process the scenarios and clarify information presented in the program. This type of participatory format enhanced the learning experience of the teen attendees and created an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation.

A rabbi, a Jewish youth educator and an abuse survivor comprised the panel that presented information to parents, educators, youth group leaders and other interested adults about helping adolescents build and maintain healthy teen dating relationships. Bari Benjamin, JF&CS psychologist, moderated the panel.

The TF is currently restructuring, expanding into a larger coalition, developing an executive steering committee and defining goals. Next steps are to attain non-profit status, select executive board positions, seek a fiscal agent, identify committees, establish future programming and write grants to fund both the TF and its expanded programming. The TF welcomes anyone interested in educating the Jewish and greater Pittsburgh community about relationship abuse.

If you are interested in being involved with the TF or want to discuss our mission, please contact Shelly Sufirin, Acting TF Director, at 412-363-1013 or Marilyn Asimow at 412-398-6305.

## JWC Board for 5770

The board of the JWC met for its annual board retreat in July to prepare for the upcoming year's activities and programs. 5769 board members Debbey Altman-Diamant, Barbara Baumann, Pat Cluss, Malke Frank, Adi Rapport and Mimi Reznik were pleased to welcome past board member Laura Horowitz back onto the board.

Laura was a founding member of the JWC who previously served on the board for many years. Life got busy and she resigned a few years ago, but we are thrilled that she has agreed to join us again, with only a minimum of arm-twisting. We look forward to having Laura's ideas, computer and writing skills, love for the JWC, and enthusiasm for chocolate inspire us again this year. Welcome back, Laura!

## The JWC Book Group, Revisited

In a 2005 article in the JWC newsletter, Stefi Kirschner described the Jewish Women's Center Book Group. She wrote: "Right here in Pittsburgh, a group of extraordinary women have gotten together to read and discuss our own Herstory. Our group of women meets approximately every 6 weeks, alternating in each other's homes, to read and discuss books in paperback written by Jewish women. The group has been meeting since 2001, accepting the challenge to locate books on subjects that are appealing to all. Reading short stories, poetry, Yiddish literature, novels, non-fiction, fiction, whatever...we have discovered some great literature while proudly supporting diverse women authors."

The Book Group is still going strong and invites interested JWC members to join them for their interesting discussions. A recent selection was Dearest Anne:

### Review of Dearest Anne by Sherri Roberts

A loner, a cast-off and buried diary, and a woman forlorn over a lost love become the jumping-off point for an unexpected story of love, lust and loss in Judith Katzir's book, Dearest Anne.

Katzir's many-layered story, translated from Hebrew by Dalya Bilu, takes place in 1970's Israel. It builds innocently. A fourteen-year-old girl, Rivi, has written a touching tribute to Anne Frank. Anne is her muse, a budding writer and a young woman on the cusp of sexual discovery, much like Rivi herself. Meanwhile, her literature teacher, Michaela, becomes her mentor and sounding board.

But, as Rivi's story unfolds, she becomes embroiled in an intense and lengthy affair with Michaela. Inevitably, the affair and betrayals are revealed, but not before we see a slice of Israeli life and how a girl scrambles, at first, to avoid emotional and social isolation and, eventually, to find her way through to what she feels is a healthy adulthood.

I found Dearest Anne a page-turner. It also triggered my memories of Israel. Despite a somewhat implausible and rushed ending, Katzir's book was unique and worth reading.

The Book Group meets next on Wednesday, October 28, 7:30 p.m. at the home of Stefi Kirschner. We will be reading The Illuminated Soul by Arye Lev Stollman. Call Malke Frank at (412) 422-8044 for directions and for more information about the group.

# Jewish Women's Center of Pittsburgh

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**[** We're on the web:  
www.jwcpgh.org **]**

TO:



## The JWC Mission:

The Jewish Women's Center is a community of women of all backgrounds that provides educational opportunities and spiritual experiences rooted in Jewish values and feminist ideals. The JWC is a supportive environment for broadening our knowledge and involvement in Jewish life. The programs and resources of the JWC create opportunities for Jewish women's learning, leadership, spiritual growth and ritual practice.

