

KOL ISHA -  
LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF THE WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

**TARTAK LEARNING CENTER**  
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE  
3077 University Avenue  
Los Angeles, California 90007  
(213) 749-3424, Ext. 267

Lesley Silverstone  
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Curriculum

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Rationale.....	1
Goals.....	3
Notes on the Use of this Curriculum.....	4
Lesson 1: Introduction to women in the Bible.....	5
Lesson 2: Textual Interpretation.....	9
Lesson 3: Creation of Woman and Man.....	12
Lesson 4: Sarah and Hagar.....	16
Lesson 5: Sarah Laughs.....	21
Lesson 6: The Family of Rebekah and Isaac.....	25
Lesson 7: Biblical Women and Their Relationship with God.....	28
Lesson 8: Deborah - A Model for Today?.....	34
Lesson 9: Book of Esther.....	37
Lesson 10: What Can We Learn From Biblical Women?.....	41
Annotated Bibliography.....	47

## RATIONALE

Throughout the generations Jewish women have been involved in many aspects of community life. They have been mothers, teachers, God-seekers, volunteers, activists, healers and beloveds. Even though they have not always been visible, many women have helped in the shaping of our religious heritage. In today's world not only do women play many roles, but their unique contributions are being accepted and valued more and more. Women are visible both as leaders of our society and of our Jewish community. As a result, Jewish women have felt the need to explore the Bible as a way to recover their roots and shed light on their own lives.

However, there is a difficulty in exploring the women of the Bible. The biblical text reflects a society that was essentially patriarchal, and therefore women are in the background. For the most part we read the Bible through male eyes. If we were to read the Bible through the eyes of women we would gain a whole new perspective. Our students must be able to look through both pairs of eyes so that they may discover the totality of our heritage - a heritage that includes both men and women.

In the past, when Jewish education has focused on the women in the Bible it has been for the purposes of presenting Jewish girls with role models. It has been argued that boys have many role models within Judaism to help shape their identity while girls have few, or, at times, none. Yet there are other important reasons for integrating women into a curriculum on Bible. Listening to the women's voices in the text would lead us to ask different questions, look to other sources, create new interpretations and look differently at our own lives. This would also expand

students' self-awareness by encouraging them to ask a variety of unique questions about the text, and ultimately about their own lives. Finally, this diversity would open students' minds and lead them to a richer appreciation of others.

In order to accomplish these goals we must interact with the text in three ways. The first way is by allowing the Bible to speak to us. This ancient text has many insights about the nature of Judaism, our relationship to God and our relationship to each other. We look to the Bible to understand how others interacted and reacted to situations around them. In the context of a curriculum on women in the Bible, we can gather some information about the experiences of the women. At times, we can find examples of women whose lives are rich and varied and whose personalities are many-faceted.

However, many times the Bible only presents certain parts of women's lives. In these cases, we must use interpretation to fill in the gaps. We can rely on the midrashim of the rabbis and view the biblical women through their eyes. This allows us to confront the long history of rabbinic traditions that have shaped our heritage.

The third way of interacting with the text is through the use of our own twentieth century perspective which has been influenced by feminist thought. We can do this by creating our own interpretations of the text. This process makes the relationship with the text dialectical in nature. We must not only take into account the experiences that are inherent in the text, but we must continue to bring our own experiences to the text. Bringing our own experiences to the text is what keeps the Bible alive for each individual in every generation.

GOALS

1. Students will understand the patriarchal nature of the Bible and be able to identify how that nature influences the way in which women are presented.
2. Students will understand, through the study of, selected rabbinic texts, how interpretation expands our view of biblical women.
3. Students will be familiar with both male and female role models of the Bible which will enable them to appreciate the variety of human roles and models in our society.
4. Students will understand how their own twentieth century perspective affects how they read the text.
5. Students will utilize the biblical text as a mirror through which they can look at their own feelings, actions and experiences.

NOTES ON THE USE OF THIS CURRICULUM

1. This curriculum is written for high school students and adults. It is a ten week unit and each lesson takes approximately one-and-one-half hours. Each lesson plan contains the objectives of that lesson, materials, and suggested activities. Teachers should feel free to choose and adapt the activities to best suit their specific situations and styles.
2. Since there are many hand-outs included in this unit, it is suggested that students keep a notebook or file to collect the hand-outs and to keep them in order.

LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

OBJECTIVES:

1. The student will be able to list the goals of the course.
2. The student will be able to differentiate between the concepts of background and foreground.
3. The student will be able to infer what is written in the Bible in terms of background and foreground.
4. The student will be able to rewrite Genesis XII: 1-5 placing Sarah in the foreground.

MATERIALS:

1. A Bible for each student
2. Paper and pencils
3. Any large picture that has a lot of detail
4. A short newspaper article photocopied for all the students

SET INDUCTION:

1. Have the students look at the pictures of the bronze sculptures of the women of the Bible without the descriptions underneath.
2. Ask them to think of one characteristic that describes each of the women and write it down on a piece of paper.
3. List the characteristics on the board.
4. With a partner, have the students choose one of the sculptures and develop three questions reflecting what they would like to know about that particular woman.

For example: Hagar

- a.) Why is she resting?
- b.) Who is with her?
- c.) Are they happy to be together?

SET INDUCTION, CONTINUED:

5. Have each group share their questions with the rest of the class.

TRANSITION:

1. Explain to the students that one of the goals of the course is to make them familiar with both the male and female models in the Bible.
2. Then explain that it is more difficult to become familiar with the female models in the Bible since often the women are in the background.
3. Prepare the students for the next activity by explaining that understanding the concept of background and foreground will be important in helping them understand the presentation of women in the Bible.
4. Have the students sit in a place that is comfortable and informal such as in a circle on a rug.

ACTIVITY:

1. Have the students look at any large picture.
  - a.) What parts of the picture are in the background?
  - b.) What parts of the picture are in the foreground?
  - c.) Do you notice anything new in the picture when you look at it in terms of foreground and background? Why or why not?
2. Have the students list the sounds they hear in the immediate vicinity without being quiet.
3. Have the students close their eyes and listen carefully to the sounds around them.
  - a.) What sounds did you notice with your eyes closed?
  - b.) Compare those sounds with the ones you listened to previously. Which ones are in the background?  
Which ones are in the foreground?
  - c.) What makes the sounds move from the background to the foreground?



ACTIVITY, CONTINUED:

4. Have the students think of a childhood memory that relates to being Jewish.
  - a.) Do you think about this event often?
  - b.) Why do you think that memory came to your mind?
  - c.) What made this memory come to the foreground?
5. Have the students explain the concept of background/foreground.
  - a.) How does the idea of foreground/background help us understand something?

TRANSITION:

1. Discuss the fact that we do not always see a whole picture of something.
2. Tell the students that we are going to examine a written document in terms of background and foreground.

ACTIVITY:

1. Hand out the newspaper article to all the students and discuss the following questions.
  - a.) What information is given to us in this article?
  - b.) What information is missing?
  - c.) Use the concept of background/foreground to describe what is written in the article.
  - d.) Why do you think the writer did not present all the information to the reader?
2. Have the students list other examples of written materials where not all the information is given and discuss why.

For example: a historical document  
The historian might only use the facts that prove her/his point.
3. Have the students use their present knowledge of the Bible and imagination to guess which information might be in the foreground and which information might be in the background of the Biblical text.

**CLOSURE:**

1. Explain to the students that the major goal of the course is to bring the women, who are in the background in the biblical text, into the foreground.

**REINFORCEMENT/EVALUATION:**

1. Have the students read Genesis XII: 1-9.
  - a.) Which characters are placed in the foreground? Describe.
  - b.) Which characters are in the background? Describe.
  - c.) How would you put Sarah in the foreground?
2. Rewrite verses 1-5 placing Sarah in the foreground?

LESSON 2

TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

OBJECTIVES:

1. The student will be able to list the characteristics of our society that would influence the way we read the biblical text.
2. The student will be able to analyze a biblical text using interpretation.
3. The student will be able to define midrash.
4. The student will be able to explain how each generation adds a new layer of interpretation to the text.

MATERIALS:

1. Bibles
2. Photocopies of woman's midrash on Genesis 22: 2
3. Photocopies of rabbinic text
4. Photocopies of Rashi's commentary on Genesis 22: 1-3

SET INDUCTION:

1. Ask the students to retell the story of The Three Bears.
2. Tell the class that there is one thing in the story that has always confused you. Ask them the following question.
  - a.) How could papa bear's porridge be too hot while mama bear's porridge be too cold and baby bear's was just right - all at the same time?
3. Have the students solve the problem by listing all the possible reasons for the three different temperatures.
4. Have the students describe the process they just went through.
5. Explain to them that when the rabbis and scholars write

SET INDUCTION, CONTINUED:

midrash they go through a similar process. They have a question about a text and then they try and answer it by creating stories or solutions to the problem. Sometimes there is information missing in the text and the rabbis create a story to fill in the gap.

6. Define the word midrash as a word from the root "Drash" which means "to search out." As a reinforcement, have the students explain to you what midrash is.

TRANSITION:

1. Explain to the students that we are going to model the process of interpretation and midrash now by looking at one of the most powerful stories of the Torah - The Binding of Isaac.

ACTIVITY:

1. Read Genesis XXII: 1-3 out loud.
2. Ask the students if they have any questions about what we read or see any problems in those three verses.
  - a.) What is unclear or confusing in the text?
  - b.) What information is not given to the reader that we might like to know?
  - c.) Do you think the rabbis and scholars who interpreted the Bible had similar or different questions than us? Why?
  - d.) What factors might influence us to ask different questions than the rabbis about the text?
3. Tell the students that we are going to look at both rabbinic and modern midrashim on Genesis 22: 1-3 to see how they each deal with the Biblical text. Familiarize the students with the name of Rashi - an eleventh century commentator of the Bible.
4. Divide the class into three groups and give each group one of the following texts.
  - a.) Rashi's commentary on Genesis 22: 1-3
  - b.) Midrash from the legends of the Jews
  - c.) Woman's Midrash on Genesis 22: 2

ACTIVITY, CONTINUED:

5. Have each group read the text and compose an interview with the writer or commentator. The interviewer could ask questions such as:
  - a.) What question or problem did you choose to examine?
  - b.) How did you answer the question or solve the problem?
  - c.) Why did you present Sarah in this light?
6. Have the groups present their interviews. Then, as a class, compare the rabbinic and modern interpretations of the text. Ask the students if the rabbis and scholars who interpreted the text had similar or different questions than us and discuss the reasons why.

CLOSURE:

1. Have the students summarize what they have learned about the relationship between the commentator and the text by having them explain how each person adds another layer of interpretation to the text due to her/his environment, background, etc.

REINFORCEMENT/EVALUATION:

1. Make a list on the board of other perspectives that might influence how one interprets a text in the 20th century.

For example: psychological, rational, technological, Western, educational perspectives
2. Have the students rewrite Genesis 22 from one of those perspectives.

take from thy body, concerning which the Lord commanded thee? As the Lord liveth, the God of my father Abraham, if the Lord should say unto my father, Take now thy son Isaac and bring him up as an offering before Me, I would not refrain, but I would joyfully accede to it."

THE JOURNEY TO MORIAH

And the Lord thought to try Abraham and Isaac in this matter. <sup>228</sup> And He said to Abraham, "Take now thy son."

Abraham: "I have two sons, and I do not know which of them Thou commandest me to take."

God: "Thine only son."

Abraham: "The one is the only son of his mother, and the other is the only son of his mother."

God: "Whom thou lovest."

Abraham: "I love this one and I love that one."

God: "Even Isaac." <sup>229</sup>

Abraham: "And where shall I go?"

God: "To the land I will show thee, and offer Isaac there for a burnt offering."

Abraham: "Am I fit to perform the sacrifice, am I a priest? Ought not rather the high priest Shem to do it?"

God: "When thou wilt arrive at that place, I will consecrate thee and make thee a priest." <sup>230</sup>

And Abraham said within himself, "How shall I separate my son Isaac from Sarah his mother?" And he came into the tent, and he sate before Sarah his wife, and he spake these words to her: "My son Isaac is grown up, and he has not yet studied the service of God. Now, to-morrow I will go and bring him to Shem and Eber his son, and there he

will learn the ways of the Lord, for they will teach him to know the Lord, and to know how to pray unto the Lord that He may answer him, and to know the way of serving the Lord his God." And Sarah said, "Thou hast spoken well. Go, my lord, and do unto him as thou hast said, but remove him not far from me, neither let him remain there too long, for my soul is bound within his soul." And Abraham said unto Sarah, "My daughter, let us pray to the Lord our God that He may do good with us." And Sarah took her son Isaac, and he abode with her all that night, and she kissed and embraced him, and she laid injunctions upon him till morning, and she said to Abraham: "O my lord, I pray thee, take heed of thy son, and place thine eyes over him, for I have no other son nor daughter but him. O neglect him not. If he be hungry, give him bread, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; do not let him go on foot, neither let him sit in the sun, neither let him go by himself on the road, neither turn him from whatever he may desire, but do unto him as he may say to thee."

After spending the whole night in weeping on account of Isaac, she got up in the morning and selected a very fine and beautiful garment from those that Abimelech had given to her. And she dressed Isaac therewith, and she put a turban upon his head, and she fastened a precious stone in the top of the turban, and she gave them provisions for the road. And Sarah went out with them, and she accompanied them upon the road to see them off, and they said to her, "Return to the tent." And when Sarah heard the words of her son Isaac, she wept bitterly, and Abraham wept with her, and their son wept with them, a great weeping, also



8

And He said: 'Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering...'

Genesis 22:2

The Angel of God came to Sarah and said, "Take your son, Isaac, up to the mountain and build an altar and give him as an offering to prove that you are loyal and fear God."

Sarah covered her eyes because she was afraid to look upon the face of God's Angel and she shook her head, "No. I cannot sacrifice my son. He is God's gift to me. He is too precious."

All night Sarah could not sleep. Her first thought was to run away with Isaac to the desert and hide. But in her heart she knew that God sees and knows all. She then thought she would find another child among the desert people to exchange for Isaac, but she knew that the deception would be discovered. When she arose from her bed the following morning, she learned that Abraham and Isaac and two of their followers had left the camp--and she understood that the Angel had also appeared to Abraham and that he had left with Isaac to do God's bidding.

She cried out to the Lord. "Oh Master of the World, Creator of the Universe, hear my prayer. Have You forgotten that You gave me a child only after I had waited ninety years? Have You forgotten that You Yourself told me that I would bear an heir to our people, that through Your doing Abraham's son would become head of Your nation? Have you forgotten that special mother's love for her child? Dear God, spare my son.

Do not permit  
offering. I

As she cried  
to appear in  
"Untie Isaac  
God has heard



Do not permit Abraham to slay him. Take me for your peace offering. I go willingly--please stay the hand of Abraham."

As she cried these words, God heard them and caused a ram to appear in the thicket, and the Angel spoke to Abraham. "Untie Isaac and take this ram for the burnt offering, for God has heard the heart of Mother Sarah."



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LESSON 3

CREATION OF WOMAN AND MAN

OBJECTIVES:

1. The student will be able to compare the two biblical stories of creation in terms of the relationships between man, woman and God.
2. The student will be able to identify the view of the rabbis toward Adam and Eve as presented in the midrashim.
3. The student will be able to write a midrash about the creation of the first man and woman reflecting the student's own perspective.

MATERIALS:

1. Bibles
2. Paper and pencils
3. Photocopies of the rabbinic text
4. Photocopies of the midrash entitled "Applesource"

SET INDUCTION:

1. Ask the students if they have ever had the following experience:  

You are talking with a friend about a mutual friend and your view of this mutual friend is completely different than your friend's view.
2. Let the students relate their various experiences. Ask them why such an experience might happen.

TRANSITION:

1. Explain to the class that in this lesson we are going to examine many different views of Eve, Lilith and Adam. Continue by explaining that this will be a common thread in all the classes - examining the biblical characters from many different perspectives.

ACTIVITY:

1. Divide the class into two groups to examine the two stories of the creation of man and woman. Group #1 will read Genesis I: 26-30 and answer the following questions:

- a.) Who does God create? How?
- b.) What is the relationship of man and woman to the rest of nature?
- c.) What does God call them?
- d.) What does God give them?

Group #2 will read Genesis II: 7, 18-23 and answer the following questions:

- a.) Who does God create first? How?
- b.) God decides that man should have a mate. Why?
- c.) What task does God assign to man?
- d.) How does God create woman?
- e.) Who calls her "woman" and why?

2. Make a chart on the board with the answers to the questions comparing the two stories.

QUESTIONS	Gen. I: 26-30	Gen. II: 7, 18-23
Who does God create first?		
How are they created?		
Relationship to nature?		
What does God give?		
What are they called?		

3. As a synthesis of the material have the students create two different cartoons - one for the story of creation in Genesis I and one for the story of creation in Genesis II. In each cartoon, write a dialogue between God, Eve and Adam reflecting:

- a.) the relationship between Adam and Eve
- b.) Adam and Eve's relationship with God

TRANSITION:

1. Explain to the students that the Bible presents us with one view of Adam and Eve and now we are going to look at other interpretations of the story in order to

TRANSITION, CONTINUED:

obtain a different perspective. One will be a rabbinic interpretation and one will be a modern interpretation of the story.

ACTIVITY:

1. Divide the class into two groups to act out the two midrashim. Give one group the rabbinic text and have them prepare a short play. The other group will read the midrash by Judith Plaskow and act it out.

2. Have each group present their play to the class.

3. Discuss the following questions:

- a.) What are the differences and similarities of the two midrashim.
- b.) Describe Lilith according to the rabbis.
- c.) Why do you think the rabbis held such a negative view of Lilith?

Explain to the students that according to Aviva Cantor, a Jewish feminist, the Lilith story was written at the time of the Exile. Since this was a time when Jewish survival was threatened, fears of extinction were projected onto women. (see article)

- d.) Describe Lilith according to Judith Plaskow.
- e.) Why do you think Judith Plaskow wrote this midrash the way she did?

CLOSURE:

1. Summarize the lesson by emphasizing the following points:

The characters in the Bible have many sides to them depending on who is looking at them.

The biblical text presents us with the bare facts.

Each generation adds a new layer of meaning to the text by interpreting it according to their world-view.

REINFORCEMENT/EVALUATION:

1. Have each student create their own midrash about Lilith, Eve or Adam that adds a new perspective to their

REINFORCEMENT/EVALUATION, CONTINUED:

character that is not presented in the blibical text.

heavens, and he refused to do homage unto Adam as he had been bidden." The host of angels led by him did likewise, in spite of the urgent representations of Michael, who was the first to prostrate himself before Adam in order to show a good example to the other angels. Michael addressed Satan: "Give adoration to the image of God! But if thou dost it not, then the Lord God will break out in wrath against thee." Satan replied: "If He breaks out in wrath against me, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will be like the Most High!" At once God flung Satan and his host out of heaven, down to the earth, and from that moment dates the enmity between Satan and man."

#### WOMAN

When Adam opened his eyes the first time, and beheld the world about him, he broke into praise of God, "How great are Thy works, O Lord!" But his admiration for the world surrounding him did not exceed the admiration all creatures conceived for Adam. They took him to be their creator, and they all came to offer him adoration. But he spoke: "Why do you come to worship me? Nay, you and I together will acknowledge the majesty and the might of Him who hath created us all. 'The Lord reigneth,' he continued, "'He is apparelled with majesty.'"<sup>8</sup>

And not alone the creatures on earth, even the angels thought Adam the lord of all, and they were about to salute him with "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts," when God caused sleep to fall upon him, and then the angels knew that he was but a human being."

The purpose of the sleep that enfolded Adam was to give

him a wife, so that the human race might develop, and all creatures recognize the difference between God and man. When the earth heard what God had resolved to do, it began to tremble and quake. "I have not the strength," it said, "to provide food for the herd of Adam's descendants." But God pacified it with the words, "I and thou together, we will find food for the herd." Accordingly, time was divided between God and the earth; God took the night, and the earth took the day. Refreshing sleep nourishes and strengthens man, it affords him life and rest, while the earth brings forth produce with the help of God, who waters it. Yet man must work the earth to earn his food."

The Divine resolution to bestow a companion on Adam met the wishes of man, who had been overcome by a feeling of isolation when the animals came to him in pairs to be named.<sup>9</sup> To banish his loneliness, Lilitith was first given to Adam as wife. Like him she had been created out of the dust of the ground. But she remained with him only a short time, because she insisted upon enjoying full equality with her husband. She derived her rights from their identical origin. With the help of the Ineffable Name, which she pronounced, Lilitith flew away from Adam, and vanished in the air. Adam complained before God that the wife He had given him had deserted him, and God sent forth three angels to capture her. They found her in the Red Sea, and they sought to make her go back with the threat that, unless she went, she would lose a hundred of her demon children daily by death. But Lilitith preferred this punishment to living with Adam. She takes her revenge by injuring babes—baby boys during the first night of their life, while baby

girls are exposed to her wicked designs until they are twenty days old. The only way to ward off the evil is to attach an amulet bearing the names of her three angel captors to the children, for such had been the agreement between them."

The woman destined to become the true companion of man was taken from Adam's body, for "only when like is joined unto like the union is indissoluble." "The creation of woman from man was possible because Adam originally had two faces, which were separated at the birth of Eve."

When God was on the point of making Eve, He said: "I will not make her from the head of man, lest she carry her head high in arrogant pride; not from the eye, lest she be wanton-eyed; not from the ear, lest she be an eavesdropper; not from the neck, lest she be insolent; not from the mouth, lest she be a tattler; not from the heart, lest she be inclined to envy; not from the hand, lest she be a meddler; not from the foot, lest she be a gadabout. I will form her from a chaste portion of the body," and to every limb and organ as He formed it, God said, "Be chaste! Be chaste!" Nevertheless, in spite of the great caution used, woman has all the faults God tried to obviate. The daughters of Zion were haughty and walked with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes; Sarah was an eavesdropper in her own tent, when the angel spoke with Abraham; Miriam was a tale-bearer, accusing Moses; Rachel was envious of her sister Leah; Eve put out her hand to take the forbidden fruit, and Dinah was a gadabout."

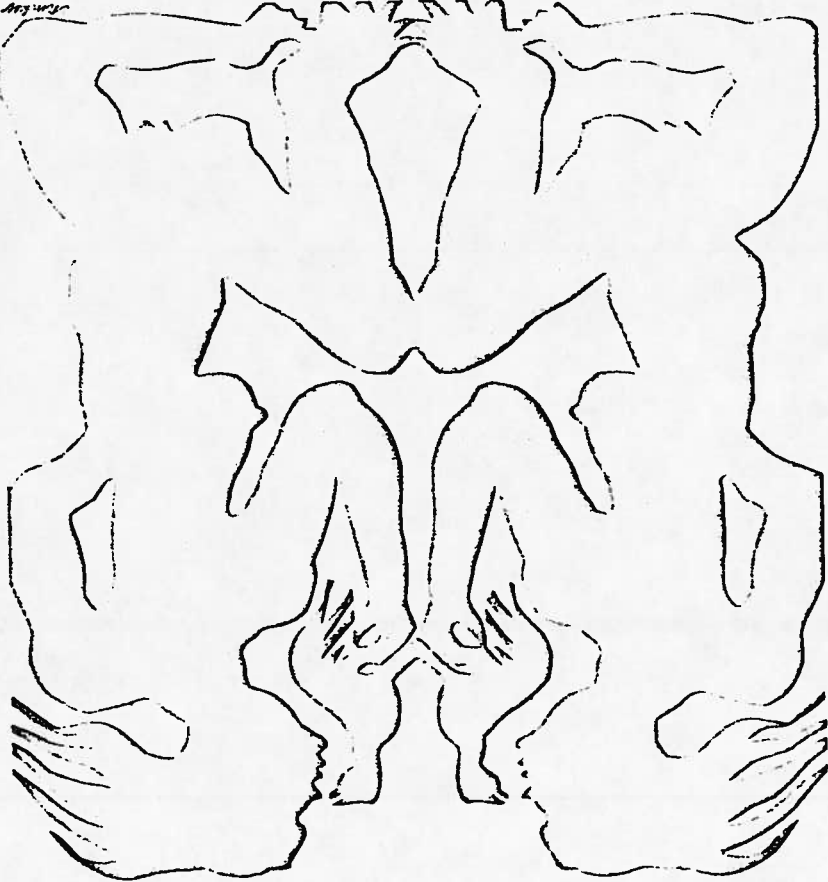
The physical formation of woman is far more complicated than that of man, as it must be for the function of child-

bearing, and likewise the intelligence of woman matures more quickly than the intelligence of man. "Many of the physical and psychical differences between the two sexes must be attributed to the fact that man was formed from the ground and woman from bone. Women need perfumes, while men do not; dust of the ground remains the same no matter how long it is kept; flesh, however, requires salt to keep it in good condition. The voice of women is shrill, not so the voice of men; when soft viands are cooked, no sound is heard, but let a bone be put in a pot, and at once it crackles. A man is easily placated, not so a woman; a few drops of water suffice to soften a clod of earth; a bone stays hard, and if it were to soak in water for days. The man must ask the woman to be his wife, and not the woman the man to be her husband, because it is man who has sustained the loss of his rib, and he sallies forth to make good his loss again. The very differences between the sexes in garb and social forms go back to the origin of man and woman for their reasons. Woman covers her hair in token of Eve's having brought sin into the world; she tries to hide her shame; and women precede men in a funeral cortege, because it was woman who brought death into the world. And the religious commands addressed to women alone are connected with the history of Eve. Adam was the heave offering of the world, and Eve defiled it. As expiation, all women are commanded to separate a heave offering from the dough. And because woman extinguished the light of man's soul, she is bidden to kindle the Sabbath light."

Adam was first made to fall into a deep sleep before the rib for Eve was taken from his side. For, had he watched

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## A TALE OF LILITH



Lilith papercut by Garg, 1975.

BY JUDITH PLASKOW

thinking of women today as it does about this winged witch who preys on us in the dark of night.)

In the beginning, the Lord God formed Adam and Lilith from the dust of the ground and breathed into their nostrils the breath of life. Created from the same source, they were equal in all ways. Adam, being a man, didn't like this situation, and he looked for ways to change it. He said, "I'll have my figs now, Lilith," ordering her to wait on him, and he tried to leave to her the daily tasks of life in

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judith Plaskow teaches in the Religious Studies Department, Manhattan College.

(Eve was not the first woman according to Jewish legend. Lilith was Adam's first companion, but she fled from him after one of their many fights. She became a demonic nymphomaniac who caused sexual impotence in men. She also killed children and had to be warded off with special amulets.

To Jewish feminists, however, Lilith represents the independent woman who refuses to be dominated by men. She was vilified by the rabbis for demanding equal status. This story first appeared in the *Alphabet of Ben Sira* (23 a-b), a satirical story written sometime between 600 and 1000 C.E.

The following modern version of the Lilith story reveals as much about the

men to the most active and powerful positions and leaves most women in supporting roles. The parallels between religious discrimination against women in Judaism and their second-class status in much of Jewish communal life is another reason why activist Jewish women, whether religious or secular, professionals or volunteers, have joined in alliances to remedy all inequities that are detrimental to women.

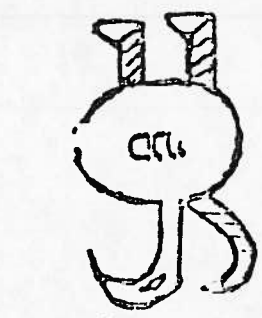
### no longer mere observers

Obviously not every Jewish woman interested in effecting change in Jewish life can fight every battle: divorce reform, free Jewish day care, affirmative action to bring more women into the decision making levels of Jewish organizations, changing the way people see women in the Jewish family (Yiddish: the mamas or princesses?), and on and on. Not every woman sees the struggle in the same way nor hopes for the same outcomes, but we are in touch with each other's activities via networks that have been formed only in the last decade. The next decade will be a period of increasing solidarity among women who will no longer tolerate being mere observers in Jewish life.

Is all this activity toward change good for Jews? How could it be otherwise? As a beleaguered people, we would be foolish not to make the best use of every Jew, male and female. The Jewish community cannot afford the terrible loss that occurs when women are closed out of meaningful participation in every aspect of Jewish life. And Jewish women as individuals cannot afford the continuation of the energy-draining conflicts that we've experienced as a result of the split in our identities—as Jews and as women.

As Jews, we have been in the vanguard of the struggle for human rights everywhere because we believe that full equality for all is a basic tenet of Judaism. How can our commitment to equality for all not include equal rights (and equal rites) for Jewish women?





the garden. But Lillith wasn't one to

take any nonsense; she picked herself

up, uttered God's holy name, and flew

away. "Well now, Lord," complained

Adam, "that uppily woman you sent

me has gone and deserted me." The

Lord, inclined to be sympathetic, sent

his messengers after Lillith, telling her

to shape up and return to Adam or

face dire punishment. She, however,

preferring anything to living with

Adam, decided to stay right where

she was. And so God, after more

careful consideration this time, caused

a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and

out of one of his ribs created for him

a second companion, Eve.

For a time, Eve and Adam had quite a

good thing going. Adam was happy

now, and Eve, though she occa-

sionally sensed capacities within

herself which remained undeveloped,

was basically satisfied with the role

of Adam's wife and helper. The only

thing that really disturbed her was

the excluding closeness of the rela-

tionship between Adam and God.

Adam and God just seemed to have

more in common, both being men, and

Adam came to identify with God more

and more. After a while, that made

God a bit uncomfortable too, and He

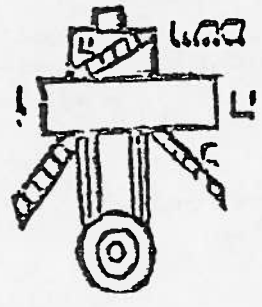
started going over in His mind

whether He may not have made a

mistake letting Adam talk Him into

banishing Lillith and creating Eve,

seeing the power that gave Adam.



Meanwhile Lillith, all alone, attempted

from time to time to rejoin the human

community in the garden. After her

first fruitless attempt to breach its

walls, Adam worked hard to build

them stronger, even getting Eve to

help him. He told her fearsome stories

of the demon Lillith who threatens

women in childbirth and steals

children from their cradles in the

middle of the night. The second time

Lillith came, she stormed the garden's

main gate, and a great battle between

her and Adam ensued in which she

was finally defeated. This time,

however, before Lillith got away, Eve

got a glimpse of her and saw she was

a woman like herself.

"Lillith was a demon"

After this encounter, seeds of

curiosity and doubt began to grow in

Eve's mind. Was Lillith indeed just

another woman? Adam had said she

was a demon. Another woman! The

very idea attracted Eve. She had

never seen another creature like

herself before. And how beautiful and

strong Lillith had looked! How bravely

she had fought! Slowly, slowly, Eve

began to think about the limits of her

own life within the garden.

One day, after many months of

strange and disturbing thoughts, Eve,

wandering around the edge of the

garden, noticed a young apple tree she

and Adam had planted and saw that

one of its branches stretched over the

garden wall. Spontaneously, she tried

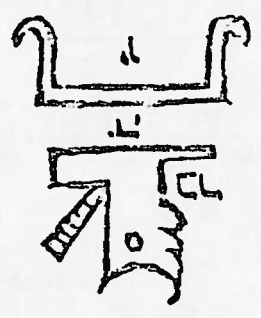
to climb it, and, struggling to the top,

swung herself over the wall.

She did not wander long on the other

side before she met the one she had

**bond of sisterhood grew**



Meanwhile, back in the garden, Adam

was puzzled by Eve's comings and

goings and disturbed by what he

sensed to be her new attitude toward

him. He talked to God about it, and

God, having His own problems with

Adam and a somewhat broader per-

spective, was able to help him out a

little—but He was confused too. Some-

thing had failed to go according to

plan. As in the days of Abraham, He

needed counsel from His children. "I

am who I am," thought God, "but I

must become who I will become."

And God and Adam were expectant

and afraid the day Eve and Lillith

returned to the garden, bursting with

possibilities, ready to rebuild it

together.

Amulets to ward off Lillith.



# The Lilith Question

Aviva Cantor

After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, He said: "It is not good for Adam to be alone." He created a woman, also from the earth, and called her Lilith.

They quarreled immediately. She said: "I will not lie below you." He said, "I will not lie below you, but above you. For you are fit to be below me and I above you."

She responded: "We are both equal because we both come from the earth."

Neither listened to the other. When Lilith realized what was happening, she pronounced the Ineffable Name of God and flew off into the air.

Adam rose in prayer before the Creator, saying, "The woman you gave me has fled from me." Immediately the Holy One sent three angels after her.

The Holy One said to Adam: "If she wants to return, all the better. If not, she will have to accept that one hundred of her children will die every day."

The angels went after her, finally locating her in the sea, in the powerful waters in which the Egyptians were destined to perish. They told her what God had said, and she did not want to return. (ALPHABET OF BEN SIR, 33A-11)

And God created the human species in His own image . . . male and female created He them. (GENESIS:1:27)

THE most ancient biblical account of the Creation relates that God created the first man and the first woman at the same time. Jewish legends tell us that the first woman was Lilith.

Lilith, we learn, felt herself to be Adam's equal ("We are both from the earth") but Adam refused to accept her equality. Lilith, determined to retain her independence and dignity, and choosing loneliness over subservience, flew away from Adam and the Garden of Eden.

Jewish tradition characterized Lilith after her escape from Adam as a demon and embellished this reputation with legend upon legend of her vengeful activities to harm children and women who give birth in rooms without industrial-strength amulets to ward her off. The *Alphabet of Ben Sir* provides us with the most coherent account of the Lilith myth, embodying features of past legends and providing the basis for future additions. The *Alphabet* tells of Lilith's struggle for equality and her escape, Adam's complaint to God, and the dispatching of three angels to bring his recalcitrant mate back. She refused to return and accepted the punishment of 100 of her "demon children" dying daily, for which she takes revenge. The demonic Lilith overshadowed the original independent Lilith in all subsequent legends to the point where the name Lilith engendered only the association of demon/witch. It is this demonic image which has both reflected and shaped men's thoughts and feelings about women for generations. But the time for reassessment of the Lilith myth has arrived.

Who is Lilith? Or, more to the point, which is the true, the real Lilith—the rebel against tyranny or the wild-haired vengeful witch? Is Lilith a myth without historical basis, and, if so, why was it necessary to invent her? Or does she embody a clue to our past and if so, what?

Is Lilith a model for Jewish women and if so, can only part of her history constitute the model? Should we forget her revolt because of her later (alleged!) crimes and thus reject her; or should we forget her later crimes and focus only on her revolt because only this is significant; or do both parts have value for us?

All these are aspects of the The Lilith Question.

Let's begin by taking a close look at Lilith as she appears in the *Alphabet of Ben Siru*. We immediately see how significant it is that she perceived herself as an equal to Adam, to man; her consciousness of equality was not only high, but it was a given, a natural thought process. Anything less than equality was unthinkable of and unthinkable, unnatural.

Not only does Lilith immediately recognize tyranny for what it is, but she immediately resists it, too. Nowhere do we see her complain (as Adam does); she states her case and takes risks for her dignity. She is courageous and decisive, willing to accept the consequences of her action.

Her strength of character and commitment of self is inspiring. For independence and freedom from tyranny she is prepared to forsake the economic security of the Garden of Eden and to accept loneliness and exclusion from society. Her strength of character also comes through in her taking total responsibility for her life. Note that she does not appeal to God to straighten out her relationship with Adam. She draws on her own strength; she is self-nurturing, self-sustaining.

Lilith is a *powerful* female. She radiates strength, assertiveness; she refuses to cooperate in her own victimization. By acknowledging Lilith's revolt and even in telling of her vengeful activities, myth-makers also acknowledge Lilith's power. Even if we accept Lilith's vengeful activities (and whether or not to accept them is a subject we will deal with later), we can regard them as having originated in self-defense against male domination and as a consequence of having to fight on alone, century after century, for her independence. What men are saying, really, is that Lilith "fights dirty." But this is a meaningless concept designed to keep women from developing and utilizing their strength to fight, period. Lilith, it must be emphasized, is a fighter and a fighter in a good cause.

Finally, besides having physical power, she has spiritual power and knowledge. She utters God's secret name and flies off to the Red Sea (significantly, the scene of the Jews' transition from the security of bondage in Egypt to the insecurity of freedom in the desert). Adam did not know or utter the Ineffable Name. But Lilith is a knower of secret wisdom.

We must bear in mind here that the Lilith stories, like the rest of our tradition, were written by men. We know that most of whatever women have invented or created has been destroyed or discounted, and very little has come down to us, certainly nothing in its pure, original form. We must consider the possibility that the story of Lilith's revolt may be one of women's creations which was told by mother to daughter over many generations before surfacing in the *Alphabet* and then being contaminated with male bias.

The Lilith story may be a clue to our own history, reflecting some assertive, rebellious behavior of women in the past. Lilith may represent a whole group, a whole generation: or she may reflect the existence of a type of woman who appeared in generation after generation, a woman who would not be dominated, a woman who demanded equality with man. Or she may embody the thoughts and feelings of women about their equality, even if they could not act on them in their generation. With so few materials about women, particularly of this nature, it would be unthinkable for us to let Lilith be forgotten simply because of the male biases grafted onto the story of her revolt.

These legends of Lilith-as-demon, the vengeful female witch, are, of course, not unique to Jewish culture and tradition. Many scholars theorize that vengeful female deities or demons, like the Greek *hecatae*, represent the vestiges of the dying Matriarchy or are an attempt by men to discredit the Matriarchy.

What we have to explore are the uniquely Jewish aspects of the Lilith story, and how they relate to the Jewish experience, to Jewish history. After all, Jews lived among many different peoples and were subject to a bombardment of cultural and religious concepts and myths from all sides. What they accepted is important because it shows us what Jews perceived as necessary and appropriate to Jewish life and its continuity. How they transmuted what they accepted is also significant for this reason.

The account of Lilith's revolt in the *Alphabet* is, to the best of my knowledge, intrinsically Jewish; no non-Jewish source tells of a female struggle for equality or gives it as a reason for the vengeful behavior of a female demon. This is especially impor-

tant to us in exploring how the Lilith myth connects with our unique history.

What is particularly intriguing about the Lilith myth is that most of the legends about her developed in Exile, either after the Babylonian Exile (586 B.C.E.) and certainly after the Roman deportations of Jews into captivity (70 C.E.). Lilith appears in the Babylonian Talmud in rudimentary form; her character is developed in the *Zohar* and other medieval mystical works. No scholar has dated the *Alphabet of Ben Sira* but all agree it was written in the Gaonic period, before 1000 C.E. The Babylonian Talmud, *Zohar*, *Alphabet* are all texts written or compiled outside Eretz Israel presumably after 70 C.E., although they may draw on earlier legends, oral or written.

The destruction of the First Jewish Commonwealth in Eretz Israel and the deportation of most of the population to Babylonia was a shock; the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth was a traumatic watershed in Jewish history. It marked the Jews' break from life in their own homeland, to existence as an international minority with no control over their own destiny. For the next 2,000 years (until 1948), Jews would live at the fringes of societies, marginal to their socioeconomic structures, their history, culture, religion, politics and passions; subject to the whim of the ruling class; to summary expulsion; to persecution by the law and the lawless; to humiliation; and to murder. Exile was understood and perceived by Jews as a threat to Jewish survival that had to be endured and overcome.

When the Jews went into Exile, they decided that the only way to survive without a land was through study (create one, two, three Yavneh's). *Halakha*—Jewish law—became the constitution of a Jewish "government in exile" under which scholars made basic decisions. The model role for Jewish men was to be scholars (this model, begun earlier, reached its apotheosis during the Exile).

Even before the Exile, Jewish society was patriarchal. The role of woman under patriarchy is that of enabler. The woman is programmed to submit to and please men, doing whatever it is that men of a particular time or place demand in order to enable them to do their thing and to ensure their "manhood" and

power. Part of being an enabler involves withdrawing from the areas of activity that men have marked off as their domain and which, thus, in the absence of women, come to define "manhood." Enabling also means altruism: doing what is in the man's interest, the family's interests or society's interests, not one's own.

The Bible portrays women in various positive model enabler roles. In the Exile, it became even more important that Jewish women continue to function as enablers because of the threat to Jewish survival. The enabler role expanded to include doing everything to make possible men's study of the Torah. Lilith is the embodiment of the woman who refuses to be an enabler. Elizabeth Janeway, in her pioneering study *Man's World, Woman's Place*, points out that every positive role has a negative flip side, a "shadow role." The shrew, she writes, is the shadow role of the public pleasing woman; the bitch, of the private loving woman; the witch, of the all-giving mother. Negative roles support the patriarchal order just as positive ones do; the positive ones are promises, the negative ones, threats.

Lilith is a negative, shadow role, the flip side of Eve. Eve is the enabler ("helpmeet"), Lilith, the disabler; Eve, the "mother of all life," Lilith, a destroyer of life. In creating the Lilith shadow role, men are telling a woman that if she is independent, assertive, free, as Lilith was, she'll end up a frigid nymphomaniac childless witch.

It is especially significant that Lilith, the only important negative female role model invented by Jews, was primarily an Exile invention. Why was her creation as a negative role model so important at this particular juncture in history?

Let's look at the unifying theme behind the three "crimes" of the post-bellum Lilith. She allegedly: kills child-bearing (pregnant and birthing) women; injures newborn babes (boys until the biris, girls until twenty days of age); excites men in their sleep and takes their sperm to manufacture demon children to replace her own. Of all the indeterminate number of qualities a negative role could embody it was precisely these three that were incorporated in Lilith. All three of these embody several crucial male fears: loss of potency and "manhood," loss of a woman's companion-

ship and emotional support, and threat to survival. While all these male fears have been embodied separately in various non-Jewish myths, their coalescence into one Jewish mythical character at this point in history is not hard to understand. The Exile was a stress situation in which Jewish men feared the loss of manhood, the destruction of their morale, and the extinction of the Jewish people.

In patriarchal societies where a man's manhood is defined in whole or part by his ability to father children, the fear that Lilith (woman) can prevent men from having children in one way or another means that she robs them of their manhood. In their powerless condition in Exile, Jewish men needed to prove their maleness to differentiate themselves from women, the group whose condition of ultimate powerlessness they feared being reduced to.

Fathering children also guaranteed survival of the Jewish people, something that was threatened in the Exile and that Jews were anxious about. Another fear was woman's power to withhold herself from man, either by refusing comfort or even her very presence (Lilith actually left Adam). In the stress situation of the Exile, Jewish men may have been especially anxious that women would not fulfill their role of providers of emotional support. All these fears of Jewish men were projected onto woman as if she held the power to make them into reality by refusing to stay in the subservient enabler role.

When the Exile reduced Jews to subservience, it was a discontinuity for Jewish men, a condition they were unfamiliar with, a situation in which they felt they had lost all their bearings—in which the whole order of the universe was turned upside down.

For Jewish women, like all women, it was not different in kind, only in degree—more stress, more problems, but not a discontinuity: the real ruler was still at home. Perhaps they were therefore better able to cope with the practical realities than were the men.

As the men needed them more and perceived their strength, they may have feared that the women would use their strength in their own self-interest and stop being enablers. It had to be made forcefully clear to the women that their strength was tolerable—even desirable—as long as it did not connect with power.

We can ask here, could it be that there was also some rebellion in the women's ranks at this time that also contributed to the men's need to threaten them with a negative role myth? Janeway writes that negative roles often appear in times when there is social change and when power is no longer bound by customary limits. New roles are called for but at the same time, people feel nervous because they do not know what the new role player expects of them. They want to "separate themselves from the troublemaker and hold him at a distance. *The means they find at hand is to call up the negative shadow role.*"

Perhaps women did become more assertive at this time because their situation demanded it. Men must have realized that this assertiveness could be harnessed to altruism, thus creating an even better enabler than before. Thus began the role model of the altruistic-assertive woman, personified in Esther, also an Exile creation. Actually it is Esther, not Eve, who is the flip side of Lilith, the nonaltruistic-assertive woman.

*Megillah* (Scroll of) *Esther*, which tells the story of Purim, is an excellent source for the substantiation of some of the assumptions we have been dealing with here: the threat to Jewish survival in the Exile, and the role of the Jewish woman as an altruistic-assertive enabler.

The *megillah* tells how Jews in Persia were apparently leading a good life but actually lived at the edge of a volcano. When the king, persuaded by his premier that the Jews were bad for his Empire, put his approval on a pogrom, there was nothing the Jews could really do. What saved the Jews? Mostly Esther's action, first in becoming Queen, which necessitated her living apart from her own people and being a closet Jew, all because her cousin, Mordechai, thought it best (altruism, self-sacrifice); and then, taking her life in her hands by asking the king to save her people (assertiveness). Esther's altruistic assertiveness, which is obviously "good for the Jews," is sharply contrasted in the *megillah* with the nonaltruistic assertiveness of her predecessor, Vashai, who lost her crown (some even say her head, too) for refusing to obey the king. The punishment of both Vashai and Lilith states, in effect: Jewish women, be enablers . . . or else. One final word about Lilith as an Exile creation. The real

threat to the Jews, as we know, was not that women would rebel, but the Exile *itself*. For it is the Exile that made Jews powerless and put them at the mercy of the rulers, on the fringes of society and into roles that turned the masses against them. Exile is a threat, but the Exile cultures—or more accurately, the adoption of Exile cultures (assimilation)—is a seductive solution that in most periods was held out by non-Jews as an inducement to fame, fortune and sometimes even life itself. Many Jews were seduced by assimilation, only to find it sterile and unsatisfying.

Lilith is seductive but unsatisfying. She saps a man's "life fluid," a metaphor for strength; she destroys his possibility for achieving immortality. She attacks Jews when they're most vulnerable or unaware. She robs them of their power and of their future. Lilith is thus in some ways a metaphor for the Exile itself.

We have seen how the creation of Lilith as a negative role model served to coalesce the fears of the men and project them onto the woman, thus reflecting a fear of woman's power to refuse to be the enabler; and to warn all women of the fate awaiting a woman who refuses to be an enabler.

Is there anything we can learn from all the negative portrayals of Lilith? Are they of any use to us? Should we reject them outright?

Ahad Ha'am, founder of "spiritual Zionism," once wrote an essay called "Half-Consolation." He asked: how can Jews know if what the non-Jews say about Jewish inferiority isn't really true? Ahad Ha'am cited the blood libel. Look at it, he said. If non-Jews can believe this dangerous nonsense, they're wrong about Jews' "inferiority," too.

Similarly, as we struggle for our liberation, we hear men insult and vilify feminists as man-haters and child-haters, destroyers of the family in particular and Jewish life in general. Is this, we might ask tremblingly, *could* this be true? So it's not at all bad to have in front of us the Lilith story with all its ugly smears. How candid it is about why Lilith is punished! If men could have invented these hateful smears—like non-Jews invented the blood libel—if there is so much hostility toward women inside their addled brains, then there is no need to think there is any truth in the latest pseudo-sociological smears of feminists. Women need

not fear that if they become assertive and independent, they will no longer be "women" but monstrosities, as men say Lilith became. Such smears and lies are, of course, something we should expect. Lilith is a role-breaker and, as Janeway points out, role-breakers should be prepared to find themselves "attacked, regarded as unattractive and frightening [and running] into all kinds of hostility."

Knowing all this now we have the choice of how to look at Lilith, or rather, at what aspect of her character to focus on when we look at her. In doing so, we can bear in mind that mythological characters have never remained constant or immutable; they are always changing in response to human need. The character of Lilith changed—but so did that of Elijah—from the fire-eating prophet of First Commonwealth times to the latter-day jolly beggar who wandered from *shetl* to *shetl*, pack on back. There is nothing in tradition which dictates the acceptance of either the later Elijah or of the earlier Elijah as the "real" Elijah.

Furthermore, Jewish tradition has been very flexible in what it seeks to emphasize in role models. King David is a much-beloved character in Jewish lore. But tradition could easily have emphasized his immoral personal behavior and cavalier political maneuverings instead of his love of God and the Jewish people. Had this been done, David could have become a negative role-model of adulterer and Machiavellian politician. Jewish tradition, however, chose to forget and forgive those reprehensible aspects of his character because it did not regard them as intrinsic to his soul.

It is both necessary and within our tradition to use the same approach with Lilith, bearing in mind the aspect of human needs as a factor in focusing on specific aspects of a historical or mythological character. What is intrinsic to Lilith, what is the most central aspect of her character is her struggle for independence, her courage in taking risks, her commitment to the equality of woman and man based on their creation as equals by God. It is this Lilith who is faithful to her innermost self, her nature and her principles.

The other aspects of the Lilith character can in no way be considered central to her very essence, because they do not flow

out of a commitment to self but are a reaction to an outside event: Adam's refusal to accept her as an equal. Had Adam accepted her equality, these negative traits would be absent; in fact, there would be no war between the sexes at all, a war based on men's unwillingness to accept women's equality.

The traits attributed to Lilith after she lost her struggle for equality are tainted with male bias and fear. Moreover, Lilith's postrevolt "character" cannot be accepted because it is not a character at all but a hodge-podge of negative traits that contradict each other (seductive / frigid; mother of demons / sterile) and thus cancel each other out. We can relegate all these contradictory traits to the realm of differing speculations as opposed to a definite image that all agreed upon. We can thus do what Jewish tradition does with King David: accept the essence, glorify the essence, and reject the later additions as contradictory, contaminated by fear and distrust, and not central to the intrinsic nature of the character of Lilith.

Finally, we must ask ourselves: which Lilith is closer to the spirit of the first account in Genesis, the account that tells us how God first created human beings—the female who accepts the idea of equality and fights for it, or the female who has lost sight of the original struggle and persists in seeking revenge? There is no doubt that the Lilith who claimed her equal birthright with Adam is closer in spirit to both the original biblical account and to Jewish women of today.

Jews have periodically created movements to "return to the source" of Judaism, and Jewish history is replete with such efforts. When we struggle for equality of woman and man and see Lilith as the personification of that struggle, we are part of this tradition of returning to the source and building from its pure, uncontaminated foundation. This pure beauty is contained in the words "And God created the human species . . . man and woman created He them." The equality of man and woman is embodied in that sentence. This equality must be embodied in our lives if humankind and all the values we hold dear are to survive.

## Marrriages Made in Heaven?<sup>1</sup> BATTERED JEWISH WIVES

*Mimi Scarf*

**J**EWES living in the Diaspora have frequently spread much propaganda about themselves in order to keep a low profile, and as a consequence, have tended to downplay social problems of their own. Thus, Jews are not alcoholics, Jewish fathers do not desert their children, Jewish mothers do not batter their children. Jewish men do not beat their wives. Many Jews have come to believe these myths and have convinced themselves that wife beating in Jewish homes is aberrant. Although efforts of the feminist movement have brought to public attention the scope of violence committed against women in general in the United States, until now we did not know that wife beating is alive and well in Jewish families.<sup>2</sup>

Traditionally, Jewish women have been taught, sometimes in very subtle ways, to believe in the stereotypical Jewish husband—that he is smart, successful, of sound mental health, generous with his family, and very little given to violence. They were also taught to believe that a Jewish family is sacrosanct, and that the Jewish home is a bulwark against the "outside" world. Because they have been socialized according to these traditional beliefs, Jewish women who are beaten by their husbands are almost always convinced that it is their fault. *Jewish men do not beat their wives. It does not happen in Jewish families.*

This centrality of the image of the family in Jewish life, indeed,

LESSON 4

SARAH AND HAGAR

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. The student will be able to apply the historical documents of the Ancient Near East to the biblical text.
2. The student will be able to give evidence for their case on Sarah based on biblical, midrashic and historical texts.
3. The student will be able to empathize with Sarah and Hagar by writing a page of one of these women's diary.

**MATERIALS:**

1. A Bible for each student
2. Photocopies of the Code of Hammurabi
3. Paper and pencils
4. Photocopies of the rabbinic text
5. tape recorder

**SET INDUCTION:**

1. Ask the students the following questions:
  - a.) How many of you have ever been to a trial or watched Night Court on T.V.?
  - b.) What is the function of a trial?
  - c.) What are the various components necessary to put someone on trial?
2. Make a list of the components of a trial on the board. Include in the list not only the people involved, but the situation and the facts of the case.

**TRANSITION:**

1. Tell the students that today we are going to put Sarah on trial for her treatment of Hagar. However, before we prepare for the trial we need to know the facts of the story.



ACTIVITY:

1. Have the students read Genesis 16: 1-12 and Genesis 21: 8-14 to themselves.
2. Ask the students to summarize the facts of the story.
3. Explain that we must also know something about the society from which Sarah came. Hand out the sheet with the three texts from the Code of Hammurabi. Explain that these texts were written by the King of Babylon who lived in 1792 -1750 BCE and will help shed light on the society in which Abraham and Sarah lived.
4. Ask the following questions to help them understand the Code of Hammurabi.
  - Text #1:
    - a.) What happens if the wife does not have children?
    - b.) If the concubine bears the child, in reality whose child is it?
    - c.) Apply this text to the situation of Sarah. In this society what must she do?
  - Text #2:
    - a.) How did the man acquire the son?
    - b.) If he has sons of his own, what is his responsibility to the adopted son?
    - c.) Apply this text to Abraham and his sons. According to it, what must Abraham do?
  - Text #3:
    - a.) What do you think the status of the slave girl might be if she were to bear sons?
    - b.) What may the mistress do if the slave girl tries to become equal?
    - c.) Compare this text with what Sarah does in the biblical text.

ACTIVITY:

1. Set up a mock trial to decide whether Sarah is guilty or innocent in her treatment of Hagar.
2. Choose students to play the following roles:
  - a.) Sarah
  - b.) Hagar
  - c.) Defense Attorney
  - d.) Prosecuting Attorney
  - e.) Court Secretary
  - f.) Witnesses - Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac

ACTIVITY, CONTINUED:

3. The rest of the students will be the jury unless they are needed to play witnesses. For instance, if a lawyer wants to put one of Sarah's other slaves on the stand to testify, the lawyer can ask one of the jury members to play that role.
4. The teacher will play the judge in order to facilitate the running of the trial.
5. Give the students time to prepare for the trial. Sarah should meet with her attorney and they should decide on a plan of action. Similarly Hagar should meet with her attorney. Give both groups the midrash about Sarah and Hagar as more evidence. They can also use the biblical text and the Code of Hammurabi for proof. The witnesses should review their role in the story and be ready to help the attorneys in their preparation.
6. While the key characters are preparing, the jury and secretary can act as journalists before the trial begins. They can write an article about the story of Sarah and Hagar and about the upcoming trial. If time permits, they can interview Sarah and Hagar when they are not working with their attorneys.
7. While the students are preparing, ask a couple of members of the jury to set up the classroom to look like a courtroom.
8. Begin the trial with the swearing-in procedure. Give the attorneys a chance to question Sarah and Hagar and call the witnesses to the stand. Have the court secretary record the proceedings.
9. After everyone has been questioned, give the jury a few minutes to reach a decision.

DEBRIEF THE ROLE PLAY:

1. Ask the students for their general reactions to the role play and then ask specific questions:
  - a.) How did Sarah and Hagar feel having to defend themselves?
  - b.) Did anyone feel uncomfortable with their role?
  - c.) Did the attorneys feel that they had a good case? Explain?

DEBRIEF THE ROLE PLAY, CONTINUED:

- d.) Did the attorneys feel successful in presenting their case? Why or why not?
- e.) Did the jury have difficulty in reaching a decision? Why or why not?

CLOSURE:

1. Go around the room and let each student react to the question.
  - a.) What have you learned about Sarah and Hagar's actions now that you have more information about their society and who they were?

REINFORCEMENT/EVALUATION:

1. Have each student pretend they are Sarah or Hagar and write a page in their diary about the trial and their feelings about the whole situation.

CODE OF HAMMURABI

TEXT # 1

If Gillimninu bears children, Shennima shall not take another wife. But if Gillimninu fails to bear children, she shall get for him a slave girl as concubine. In that case, Gillimninu herself shall have authority over the offspring.

TEXT # 2

If a man has taken an infant in adoption for his sonship and has brought him up, has built his house, and afterwards gets sons (of his own) and sets face to expel the adopted child, that son shall not then go destitute.

TEXT # 3

If a man has married a priestess (of certain rank) and she has given a slave girl to her husband and she bears sons, if (thereafter) that slave girl goes about making herself equal to her mistress, because she has borne sons, her mistress may not sell her; she may put the mark of a slave on her and count her with the slave girls. If she has not borne sons, her mistress may sell her.

midst. Had he not done so, Israel would not have been able to resist the power of the four kingdoms. But the birds he divided not, to indicate that Israel will remain whole. And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abraham drove them away. Thus was announced the advent of the Messiah, who will cut the heathen in pieces, but Abraham bade Messiah wait until the time appointed unto him.<sup>13</sup> And as the Messianic time was made known unto Abraham, so also the time of the resurrection of the dead. When he laid the halves of the pieces over against each other, the animals became alive again, as the bird flew over them.<sup>14</sup>

While he was preparing these sacrifices, a vision of great import was granted to Abraham. The sun sank, and a deep sleep fell upon him, and he beheld a smoking furnace, Gehenna, the furnace that God prepares for the sinner; and he beheld a flaming torch, the revelation on Sinai, where all the people saw flaming torches; and he beheld the sacrifices to be brought by Israel; and an horror of great darkness fell upon him, the dominion of the four kingdoms. And God spake to him: "Abraham, as long as thy children fulfil the two duties of studying the Torah and performing the service in the Temple, the two visitations, Gehenna and alien rule, will be spared them. But if they neglect the two duties, they will have to suffer the two chastisements; only thou mayest choose whether they shall be punished by means of Gehenna or by means of the dominion of the stranger." All the day long Abraham wavered, until God called unto him: "How long wilt thou halt between two opinions? Decide for one of the two, and let it be for the dominion of the stranger!" Then God made known to him the four hundred

years' bondage of Israel in Egypt, reckoning from the birth of Isaac, for unto Abraham himself was the promise given that he should go to his fathers in peace, and feel naught of the arrogance of the stranger oppressor. At the same time, it was made known to Abraham that his father Terah would have a share in the world to come, for he had done penance for his sinful deeds. Furthermore it was revealed to him that his son Ishmael would turn into the path of righteousness while yet his father was alive, and his grandson Esau would not begin his impious way of life until he himself had passed away. And as he received the promise of their deliverance together with the announcement of the slavery of his seed, in a land not theirs, so it was made known to him that God would judge the four kingdoms and destroy them.<sup>15</sup>

#### THE BIRTH OF ISHMAEL

The covenant of the pieces, whereby the fortunes of his descendants were revealed to Abraham, was made at a time when he was still childless.<sup>16</sup> As long as Abraham and Sarah dwelt outside of the Holy Land, they looked upon their childlessness as a punishment for not abiding within it. But when a ten years' sojourn in Palestine found her barren as before, Sarah perceived that the fault lay with her.<sup>17</sup> Without a trace of jealousy she was ready to give her slave Hagar to Abraham as wife,<sup>18</sup> first making her a freed woman.<sup>19</sup> For Hagar was Sarah's property, not her husband's. She had received her from Pharaoh, the father of Hagar. Taught and bred by Sarah, she walked in the same path of righteousness as her mistress,<sup>20</sup> and thus was a suitable companion for Abraham, and, instructed by the holy spirit, he acceded to Sarah's proposal.

No sooner had Hagar's union with Abraham been consummated, and she felt that she was with child, than she began to treat her former mistress contemptuously, though Sarah was particularly tender toward her in the state in which she was. When noble matrons came to see Sarah, she was in the habit of urging them to pay a visit to "poor Hagar," too. The dames would comply with her suggestion, but Hagar would use the opportunity to disparage Sarah. "My lady Sarah," she would say, "is not inwardly what she appears to be outwardly. She makes the impression of a righteous, pious woman, but she is not, for if she were, how could her childlessness be explained after so many years of marriage, while I became pregnant at once?"

Sarah scorned to bicker with her slave, yet the rage she felt found vent in these words to Abraham: "It is thou who art doing me wrong. Thou hearest the words of Hagar, and thou sayest naught to oppose them, and I hoped that thou wouldst take my part. For thy sake did I leave my native land and the house of my father, and I followed thee into a strange land with trust in God. In Egypt I pretended to be thy sister, that no harm might befall thee. When I saw that I should bear no children, I took the Egyptian woman, my slave Hagar, and gave her unto thee for wife, contenting myself with the thought that I would rear the children she would bear. Now she treats me disdainfully in thy presence. O that God might look upon the injustice which hath been done unto me, to judge between thee and me, and have mercy upon us, restore peace to our home, and grant us offspring, that we have no need of children from Hagar, the Egyptian bondwoman of the generation of the heathen that cast thee in the fiery furnace!"

Abraham, modest and unassuming as he was, was ready to do justice to Sarah, and he conferred full power upon her to dispose of Hagar according to her pleasure. He added but one caution, "Having once made her a mistress, we cannot again reduce her to the state of a bondwoman." Unmindful of this warning, Sarah exacted the services of a slave from Hagar. Not alone this, she tormented her, and finally she cast an evil eye upon her, so that the unborn child dropped from her, and she ran away. On her flight she was met by several angels, and they bade her return, at the same time making known to her that she would bear a son who should be called Ishmael—one of the six men who have been given a name by God before their birth, the others being Isaac, Moses, Solomon, Josiah, and the Messiah.

Thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael the command was issued to Abraham that he put the sign of the covenant upon his body and upon the bodies of the male members of his household. Abraham was reluctant at first to do the bidding of God, for he feared that the circumcision of his flesh would raise a barrier between himself and the rest of mankind. But God said unto him, "Let it suffice thee that I am thy God and thy Lord, as it sufficeth the world that I am *its* God and *its* Lord."

Abraham then consulted with his three true friends, Aner, Eschol, and Mamre, regarding the command of the circumcision. The first one spoke, and said, "Thou art nigh unto a hundred years old, and thou considerest inflicting such pain upon thyself?" The advice of the second was also against it. "What," said Eschol, "thou chooseth to mark thyself so that thy enemies may recognize thee without fail?"

LESSON 5

SARAH LAUGHS

OBJECTIVES:

1. The student will be able to identify their own feelings in reaction to certain situations.
2. The student will be able to compare a rabbinic and modern interpretation of Sarah's laughter.
3. The student will be able to explain that there may be a variety of feelings behind someone's reaction.
4. The student will be able to create a poem to express their own feelings.

MATERIALS:

1. A Bible for each student
2. Paper and pencils
3. Pictures that elicit different feelings
4. Photocopies of the poem "Sarah"
5. Photocopies of the rabbinic midrash
6. Photocopies of the role play situations

SET INDUCTION:

1. Bring in different pictures and ask the students to look at them and articulate the feelings that these pictures elicit.

Examples of pictures you may want to use:

- a.) a mother and baby
- b.) a family celebration
- c.) a traffic jam
- d.) an ice cream cone
- e.) a war scene
- f.) a scene of people at the beach
- g.) students taking a test

TRANSITION:

1. Discuss how each of us reacts differently to a situation in terms of our feelings.
2. Explain that the next activity is designed to focus on our feelings and how we might express those feelings in terms of our behavior.

ACTIVITY:

1. Hand out the sheet with the role play situations.
2. Have the students take a minute and write down how they might feel in each situation and how they might react.
3. Ask for volunteers to act out the situations. Tell the rest of the students to be thinking of how they would act out the situation.
4. After acting out the situations discuss the following questions:
  - a.) What are the people feeling?
  - b.) How do they express those feelings?
  - c.) Are their feelings and reactions similar or different than yours? Compare.
  - d.) How would you play the role?
5. Reenact the role play based on other student's suggestions as to how they would feel and react.

TRANSITION:

1. Explain how, in the Bible, a person's feelings or reaction to a situation is often not described. For example, when Abraham is told that he must sacrifice his only son, the Bible doesn't state if he said something or even if he felt something. However, sometimes when we interpret the biblical texts we feel that it is important to add a layer of emotions and reactions. This is what we will focus on when we examine the story of Sarah and the three visitors.

ACTIVITY:

1. Read Genesis 18: 9-15 and discuss.
  - a.) How did Sarah express her feelings?



ACTIVITY, CONTINUED:

- b.) What do you think she may have been feeling?
  - c.) What might Abraham have been feeling?
2. Read the midrash and discuss why Sarah laughed according to rabbinic interpretation.
3. Hand out the poem entitled "Sarah" by Ruth Finer Mintz as an example of a modern interpretation of Sarah's reaction.
- a.) According to the poet, why did Sarah laugh?
  - b.) Compare Sarah's reaction in the poem with her reaction in the midrash. How are her reactions similar and different in the two texts?
  - c.) List other feelings that Sarah had as described by the poet.
  - d.) Why might poetry be a good medium for describing people's feelings?

CLOSURE:

Ask the students if looking at both the rabbinic and modern texts helped to broaden their view of Sarah's reaction. Draw conclusions that people react in certain ways as a result of many possible feelings.

REINFORCEMENT/EVALUATION:

Have the students write a poem about Sarah and her feelings using the cinquain form. See the attached from The Jewish Teachers Handbook, volume #1.

ROLE PLAY SITUATIONS

1. You have planned a trip with a few friends to go away on vacation. You have worked very hard in the last year to save enough money to go. You haven't been on a vacation in five years and are really looking forward to the trip. A month before the trip your friends call to say they can't go.
  
2. Going to work has become an unpleasant experience for you. Work has become very routine and boring and you haven't been putting very much effort into it. Your boss calls you into his/her office to tell you that your work must improve or else you will be fired.

SARAH

by Ruth Finer Mintz

in The Darkening Green  
Allan Swallow, Denver, 1965

and

Jerusalem Poems Love Songs  
Massada, Jerusalem, 1976

I was already old  
Nor hoped to have a man child of my own.  
Strangers brought me tidings  
And I laughed. From joy. For fear.

The bondswoman I freely gave,  
Whose son I wrapped  
Within my husband's shirt  
And fed out of an ivory spoon,  
Schemed to my hurt.

I knew my guilt,  
I sent them both away  
Into the wilderness  
But not from pride.  
I would not see my child destroyed  
I could not teach them side by side!

So old Abraham prepares the wood,  
Rolls up the cord, sharpens the knife.  
Five thousand years, the ram  
Within the thicket bleats.  
Still the child is sacrificed.

proper for them to pay their respects to the lady of the house and send her the cup of wine over which the blessing had been said.<sup>13</sup> Michael, the greatest of the angels, thereupon announced the birth of Isaac. He drew a line upon the wall, saying, "When the sun crosses this point, Sarah will be with child, and when he crosses the next point, she will give birth to a child." This communication, which was intended for Sarah and not for Abraham, to whom the promise had been revealed long before,<sup>14</sup> the angels made at the entrance to her tent, but Ishmael stood between the angel and Sarah, for it would not have been seemly to deliver the message in secret, with none other by. Yet, so radiant was the beauty of Sarah that a beam of it struck the angel, and made him look up. In the act of turning toward her, he heard her laugh within herself.<sup>15</sup> "Is it possible that these bowels can yet bring forth a child, these shrivelled breasts give suck? And though I should be able to bear, yet is not my lord Abraham old?"<sup>16</sup>

And the Lord said unto Abraham: "Am I too old to do wonders? And wherefore doth Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?"<sup>17</sup> The reproach made by God was directed against Abraham as well as against Sarah, for he, too, had showed himself of little faith when he was told that a son would be born unto him. But God mentioned only Sarah's incredulity, leaving Abraham to become conscious of his defect himself.<sup>18</sup>

Regardful of the peace of their family life, God had not repeated Sarah's words accurately to Abraham. Abraham might have taken amiss what his wife had said about his advanced years, and so precious is the peace between hus-

band and wife that even the Holy One, blessed be He, preferred it at the expense of truth.<sup>19</sup>

After Abraham had entertained his guests, he went with them to bring them on their way, for, important as the duty of hospitality is, the duty of speeding the parting guest is even more important.<sup>20</sup> Their way lay in the direction of Sodom, whither two of the angels were going, the one to destroy it, and the second to save Lot, while the third, his errand to Abraham fulfilled, returned to heaven.<sup>21</sup>

#### THE CITIES OF SIN

The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah and the three other cities of the plain were sinful and godless. In their country there was an extensive vale, where they foregathered annually with their wives and their children and all belonging to them, to celebrate a feast lasting several days and consisting of the most revolting orgies. If a stranger merchant passed through their territory, he was besieged by them all, big and little alike, and robbed of whatever he possessed. Each one appropriated a bagatelle, until the traveller was stripped bare. If the victim ventured to remonstrate with one or another, he would show him that he had taken a mere trifle, not worth talking about. And the end was that they hounded him from the city.

Once upon a time it happened that a man journeying from Elam arrived in Sodom toward evening. No one could be found to grant him shelter for the night. Finally a sly fox named Hedor invited him cordially to follow him to his house. The Sodomite had been attracted by a rarely magnificent carpet, strapped to the stranger's ass by means of a

Shekinah. Turning to God, he said, "O Lord, may it please Thee not to leave Thy servant while he provides for the entertainment of his guests."<sup>13</sup> Then he addressed himself to the stranger walking in the middle between the other two, whom by this token he considered the most distinguished,—it was the archangel Michael—and he bade him and his companions turn aside into his tent. The manner of his guests, who treated one another politely, made a good impression upon Abraham. He was assured that they were men of worth whom he was entertaining.<sup>14</sup> But as they appeared outwardly like Arabs, and the people worshipped the dust of their feet, he bade them first wash their feet, that they might not defile his tent.<sup>15</sup>

He did not depend upon his own judgment in reading the character of his guests. By his tent a tree was planted, which spread its branches out over all who believed in God, and afforded them shade. But if idolaters went under the tree, the branches turned upward, and cast no shade upon the ground. Whenever Abraham saw this sign, he would at once set about the task of converting the worshippers of the false gods. And as the tree made a distinction between the pious and the impious, so also between the clean and the unclean. Its shade was denied them as long as they refrained from taking the prescribed ritual bath in the spring that flowed out from its roots, the waters of which rose at once for those whose uncleanness was of a venial character and could be removed forthwith, while others had to wait seven days for the water to come up. Accordingly, Abraham bade the three men lean against the trunk of the tree. Thus he would soon learn their worth or their unworthiness.<sup>17</sup>

Being of the truly pious, "who promise little, but perform much,"<sup>18</sup> Abraham said only: "I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your heart, seeing that ye chanced to pass my tent at dinner time. Then, after ye have given thanks to God, ye may pass on."<sup>19</sup> But when the meal was served to the guests, it was a royal banquet, exceeding Solomon's at the time of his most splendid magnificence. Abraham himself ran unto the herd, to fetch cattle for meat. He slaughtered three calves, that he might be able to set a "tongue with mustard" before each of his guests.<sup>20</sup> In order to accustom Ishmael to God-pleasing deeds, he had him dress the calves,<sup>21</sup> and he bade Sarah bake the bread. But as he knew that women are apt to treat guests niggardly, he was explicit in his request to her. He said, "Make ready quickly three measures of meal, yea, fine meal." As it happened, the bread was not brought to the table, because it had accidentally become unclean, and our father Abraham was accustomed to eat his daily bread only in a clean state.<sup>22</sup> Abraham himself served his guests, and it appeared to him that the three men ate. But this was an illusion. In reality the angels did not eat,<sup>23</sup> only Abraham, his three friends, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, and his son Ishmael partook of the banquet, and the portions set before the angels were devoured by a heavenly fire.<sup>24</sup>

Although the angels remained angels even in their human disguise, nevertheless the personality of Abraham was so exalted that in his presence the archangels felt insignificant.<sup>25</sup>

After the meal the angels asked after Sarah, though they knew that she was in retirement in her tent, but it was

All of these suggestions are adaptable for Jewish settings and subject matter. Use the phrase "If I were . . ." for poems about symbols or people. Begin odd lines with "Jews used to . . ." and even lines with "But now . . ." Or suggest that each "I wish . . ." line contains a wish for the Jewish people. When youngsters include some Hebrew words in their poems, the enjoyable experience of writing poems is further enriched.

### Cinquain

The cinquain, a form of poetry that originated in France, has five lines:

Line 1 - 1 name word, or noun. This word represents the title of the poem and is usually a person, a place or a key word in a lesson.

Line 2 - 2 description words, or adjectives. These describe the noun in line 1.

Line 3 - 3 action words, usually verbs or participles (words ending in *ing* or *ed*). These words tell what the noun is, or does or is like.

Line 4 - a 4 word comment, usually a phrase that tells how the writer feels or thinks about the noun.

Line 5 - One word that refers back to the nouns in line 1. This may be a synonym. One example of a cinquain follows:

Akiba,  
Determined late-bloomer,  
Studying, sharing, suffering,  
A model for all,  
Hero.

### Haiku

A haiku is a non-rhyming poem consisting of three lines. The first line has five syllables, the second has seven syllables and the last line has five. The form, which originated in Japan, often describes nature or the seasons. Here is an example of a haiku:

Bursting into bloom  
The tree outside my window  
Welcomed Tu B'shvat.

### Diamante<sup>2</sup>

The diamante (pronounced dee-ah-MAHN-tay) is a slightly more complicated type of

poem. It is a seven line poem written in the shape of a diamond.

Line 1 - one word subject: noun, opposite of word in last line

Line 2 - two words: adjectives describing the subject in the first line

Line 3 - three words: participles (words ending in *ing* or *ed* about the subject in the first line)

Line 4 - four words: nouns about the subject in the first and last lines

Line 5 - three words: participles about the subject in the last line

Line 6 - two words: adjectives describing the subject in the last line

Line 7 - one word subject: noun, opposite of the work in the first line

### Acrostics

Various types of acrostics have been written by Hebrew poets since biblical times. Together, the first letters of the lines could spell out either the alphabet or unusual combinations of letters. Sometimes instead they spelled the name of the poet or the name of God. Today we write acrostics for fun, using our own names or a Hebrew word or the name of a holiday or symbol.

To begin an acrostic, write the title or subject vertically from top to bottom. Students start each line with a word that begins with the same letter as the acrostic. This is a good technique for summarizing key concepts or giving students a chance to express their feelings on a particular subject.<sup>3</sup>

Of course students may also write poems that rhyme and have meter. Older students may enjoy writing more complex forms of poetry, such as sonnets. One form of rhymed poetry which always makes a hit is the ever popular limerick. A limerick has five lines. Lines one, two and five rhyme and lines three and four, the short lines, also rhyme. The final line often ends with a humorous twist.

### LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS

Letters are another enjoyable form of creative writing and can be related easily to specific

<sup>2</sup>Arnold B. Cheyney, *The Writing Corner* (Santa Monica: Good-year Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), p. 97.

<sup>3</sup>*Worksheets for Ten Creative Writing Exercises* (Catonsville: Teacher Learning Center, n.d.).

LESSON 6

THE FAMILY OF REBEKAH AND ISAAC

OBJECTIVES:

1. The student will be able to compare the importance of family order in their own families with that of the biblical family.
2. The student will be able to analyze Rebekah's role in obtaining the blessing for Jacob in light of the biblical and rabbinic texts.
3. The student will be able to discuss the complexity of family relations in both biblical and modern days.

MATERIALS:

1. Bibles
2. Paper and pencils
3. Photocopies of the rabbinic texts

SET INDUCTION:

1. Have each student choose a partner and interview each other using the following questions:
  - a.) How many brother and/or sisters do you have?
  - b.) What is your place in your family according to your age?
  - c.) Do you think there is any difference in how you're treated in your family as a result of your position in the family? How?

TRANSITION:

1. Have the students summarize what they discussed in their groups. Ask them whether family order played a role at all in their families. Explain to them that we are going to examine a biblical family where family order played a crucial role.

ACTIVITY:

1. Ask the student if they remember the story of Jacob and Esau. Have them recount it briefly by focusing on the facts such as:
  - a.) Who was the youngest son?
  - b.) Who was the oldest son?
  - c.) Who did Rebekah favor?
  - d.) Who did Isaac favor?

If they don't remember the story, read Genesis 25: 19-34.

2. Talk about the birthright as being the eldest son's right of inheritance. Mention Deuteronomy 21: 15-17. Remind them of Esau's selling of his birthright to Jacob.
3. Discuss Rebekah's role in obtaining the blessing for Jacob. Ask the students why they think Rebekah helped Jacob trick Isaac into giving him the blessing.
4. Hand out photocopies of the rabbinic text and after reading the marked sections ask the following:
  - a.) According to the rabbis, why did Rebekah trick Isaac?
5. Divide the class into two groups to debate the question:  
Was Rebekah justified in her actions of helping Jacob obtain the blessing?

Give the two groups time to prepare their side of the issue. In order to prepare their case they can use information from the biblical text (Genesis 25: 19-34, 27), the midrashic text and their own interpretations as long as they can give evidence from the text. Perhaps the teacher can judge the debate to decide which argument is the most convincing.

CLOSURE:

1. Discuss the following questions:
  - a.) Do you have a better understanding of Rebekah after this lesson? Why or why not?
  - b.) Do you feel more compassionate towards Rebekah? Why or why not?
  - c.) How does the complexity of Rebekah and Isaac's family compare with the complexity of your own family?



**REINFORCEMENT/EVALUATION:**

1. Hand out paper and ask the students to write a dialogue between Jacob and Esau. Pretend that the brothers are looking back at the blessing incident years later and are discussing Rebekah and the role their mother played in their family.

## THE BIRTH OF ESAU AND JACOB

Isaac was the counterpart of his father in body and soul. He resembled him in every particular—"in beauty, wisdom, strength, wealth, and noble deeds."<sup>1</sup> It was, therefore, as great an honor for Isaac to be called the son of his father as for Abraham to be called the father of his son, and though Abraham was the progenitor of thirty nations, he is always designated as the father of Isaac.<sup>2</sup>

Despite his many excellent qualities, Isaac married late in life. God permitted him to meet the wife suitable to him only after he had successfully disproved the mocking charges of Ishmael, who was in the habit of taunting him with having been circumcised at the early age of eight days, while Ishmael had submitted himself voluntarily to the operation when he was thirteen years old. For this reason God demanded Isaac as a sacrifice when he had attained to full manhood, at the age of thirty-seven, and Isaac was ready to give up his life. Ishmael's jibes were thus robbed of their sting, and Isaac was permitted to marry. But another delay occurred before his marriage could take place. Directly after the sacrifice on Mount Moriah, his mother died, and he mourned her for three years.<sup>3</sup> Finally he married Rebekah, who was then a maiden of fourteen.<sup>4</sup>

Rebekah was "a rose between thorns." Her father was

the Aramean Bethuel, and her brother was Laban, but she did not walk in their ways.' Her piety was equal to Isaac's. Nevertheless their marriage was not entirely happy, for they lived together no less than twenty years without begetting children.' Rebekah besought her husband to entreat God for the gift of children, as his father Abraham had done. At first Isaac would not do her bidding. God had promised Abraham a numerous progeny, and he thought their childlessness was probably Rebekah's fault, and it was her duty to supplicate God, and not his. But Rebekah would not desist, and husband and wife repaired to Mount Moriah together to pray to God there. And Isaac said: "O Lord God of heaven and earth, whose goodness and mercies fill the earth, Thou who didst take my father from his father's house and from his birthplace, and didst bring him unto this land, and didst say unto him, To thee and thy seed will I give the land, and didst promise him and declare unto him, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand of the sea, now may Thy words be verified which Thou didst speak unto my father. For Thou art the Lord our God, our eyes are toward Thee, to give us seed of men as Thou didst promise us, for Thou art the Lord our God, and our eyes are upon Thee." Isaac prayed furthermore that all children destined for him might be born unto him from this pious wife of his, and Rebekah made the same petition regarding her husband Isaac and the children destined for her. Their united prayer was heard.' Yet it was chiefly for the sake of Isaac that God gave them children. It is true, Rebekah's piety equalled her husband's, but the prayer of a pious man who is the son of a pious man is far more effec-

ious than the prayer of one who, though pious himself, is descended from a godless father.

The prayer wrought a great miracle, for Isaac's physique was such that he could not have been expected to beget children, and equally it was not in the course of nature that Rebekah should bear children."

When Rebekah had been pregnant seven months," she began to wish that the curse of childlessness had not been removed from her." She suffered torturous pain, because her twin sons began their lifelong quarrels in her womb. They strove to kill each other. If Rebekah walked in the vicinity of a temple erected to idols, Esau moved in her body, and if she passed a synagogue or a Bet ha-Midrash, Jacob essayed to break forth from her womb." } The quarrels of the children turned upon such differences as these. Esau would insist that there was no life except the earthly life of material pleasures, and Jacob would reply: "My brother, there are two worlds before us, this world and the world to come. In this world, men eat and drink, and traffic and marry, and bring up sons and daughters, but all this does not take place in the world to come. If it please thee, do thou take this world, and I will take the other." "Esau had Samael as his ally, who desired to slay Jacob in his mother's womb. But the archangel Michael hastened to Jacob's aid. He tried to burn Samael, and the Lord saw it was necessary to constitute a heavenly court for the purpose of arbitrating the case of Michael and Samael." Even the quarrel between the two brothers regarding the birthright had its beginning before they emerged from the womb of their mother. Each desired to be the first to come into the world. It was only

when Esau threatened to carry his point at the expense of his mother's life that Jacob gave way."

Rebekah asked other women whether they, too, had suffered such pain during their pregnancy, and when they told her they had not heard of a case like hers, except the pregnancy of Nimrod's mother, she betook herself to Mount Moriah, whereton Shem and Eber had their Bet ha-Midrash. She requested them as well as Abraham to inquire of God what the cause of her dire suffering was." And Shem replied: "My daughter, I confide a secret to thee. See to it that none finds it out. Two nations are in thy womb, and how should thy body contain them, seeing that the whole world will not be large enough for them to exist in it together peaceably? Two nations they are, each owning a world of its own, the one the Torah, the other sin. From the one will spring Solomon, the builder of the Temple, from the other Vespasian, the destroyer thereof. These two are what are needed to raise the number of nations to seventy. They will never be in the same estate. Esau will vaunt lords, while Jacob will bring forth prophets, and if Esau has princes, Jacob will have kings." They, Israel and Rome, are the two nations destined to be hated by all the world." One will exceed the other in strength. First Esau will subjugate the whole world, but in the end Jacob will rule over all." The older of the two will serve the younger, provided this one is pure of heart, otherwise the younger will be enslaved by the older."

The circumstances connected with the birth of her twin sons were as remarkable as those during the period of Rebekah's pregnancy. Esau was the first to see the light, and

with him all impurity came from the womb; "Jacob was born clean and sweet of body. Esau was brought forth with hair, beard, and teeth, both front and back," and he was blood-red, a sign of his future sanguinary nature." On account of his ruddy appearance he remained uncircumcised. Isaac, his father, feared that it was due to poor circulation of the blood, and he hesitated to perform the circumcision. He decided to wait until Esau should attain his thirteenth year, the age at which Ishmael had received the sign of the covenant. But when Esau grew up, he refused to give heed to his father's wish, and so he was left uncircumcised." The opposite of his brother in this as in all respects, Jacob was born with the sign of the covenant upon his body, a rare distinction." But Esau also bore a mark upon him at birth, the figure of a serpent, the symbol of all that is wicked and hated of God."

The names conferred upon the brothers are pregnant with meaning. The older was called Esau, because he was 'Asui, fully developed when he was born, and the name of the younger was given to him by God, to point to some important events in the future of Israel by the numerical value of each letter. The first letter in Ya'akov, Yod, with the value of ten, stands for the decalogue; the second, 'Ayin, equal to seventy, for the seventy elders, the leaders of Israel; the third, Kof, a hundred, for the Temple, a hundred ells in height; and the last, Bet, for the two tables of stone."

#### THE FAVORITE OF ABRAHAM

While Esau and Jacob were little, their characters could not be judged properly. They were like the myrtle and the thorn-bush, which look alike in the early stages of their

growth. After they have attained full size, the myrtle is known by its fragrance, and the thorn-bush by its thorns.

In their childhood, both brothers went to school, but when they reached their thirteenth year, and were of age, their ways parted. Jacob continued his studies in the Bet ha-Midrash of Shem and Eber, and Esau abandoned himself to idolatry and an immoral life. Both were hunters of men, Esau tried to capture them in order to turn them away from God, and Jacob, to turn them toward God. In spite of his impious deeds, Esau possessed the art of winning his father's love. His hypocritical conduct made Isaac believe that his first-born son was extremely pious. "Father," he would ask Isaac, "what is the tithing on straw and salt?" The question made him appear God-fearing in the eyes of his father, because these two products are the very ones that are exempt from tithing. Isaac failed to notice, too, that his older son gave him forbidden food to eat. What he took for the flesh of young goats was dog's meat."

Rebekah was more clear-sighted. She knew her sons as they really were, and therefore her love for Jacob was exceeding great. The offender she heard his voice, the deeper grew her affection for him. Abraham agreed with her. He also loved his grandson Jacob, for he knew that in him his name and his seed would be called. And he said unto Rebekah, "My daughter, watch over my son Jacob, for he shall be in my stead on the earth and for a blessing in the midst of the children of men, and for the glory of the whole seed of Shem." Having admonished Rebekah thus to keep guard over Jacob, who was destined to be the bearer of the blessing given to Abraham by God, he called for his grand-

son, and in the presence of Rebekah he blessed him, and said: "Jacob, my beloved son, whom my soul loveth, may God bless thee from above the firmament, and may He give thee all the blessing wherewith He blessed Adam, and Enoch, and Noah, and Shem, and all the things of which He told me, and all the things which He promised to give me may He cause to cleave to thee and to thy seed forever, according to the days of the heavens above the earth. And the spirit of Mastema shall not rule over thee or over thy seed, to turn thee from the Lord, who is thy God from henceforth and forever. And may the Lord God be a father to thee, and mayest thou be His first-born son, and may He be a father to thy people always. Go in peace, my son."

And Abraham had good reason to be particularly fond of Jacob, for it was due to the merits of his grandson that he had been rescued from the fiery furnace."

Isaac and Rebekah, knowing of Abraham's love for their young son, sent their father a meal by Jacob on the last Feast of Pentecost which Abraham was permitted to celebrate on earth, that he might eat and bless the Creator of all things before he died. Abraham knew that his end was approaching, and he thanked the Lord for all the good He had granted him during the days of his life, and blessed Jacob and bade him walk in the ways of the Lord, and especially he was not to marry a daughter of the Canaanites. Then Abraham prepared for death. He placed two of Jacob's fingers upon his eyes, and thus holding them closed he fell into his eternal sleep, while Jacob lay beside him on the bed. The lad did not know of his grandfather's death, until he called him, on awakening next morning, "Father, father," and received no answer."

and beware of bringing him the flesh of an animal that had died of itself, or had been torn by a beast, and he was to guard also against putting an animal before Isaac that had been stolen from its rightful owner. "Then," continued Isaac, "will I bless him who is worthy of being blessed."

This charge was laid upon Esau on the eve of the Passover, and Isaac said to him: "To-night the whole world will sing the Hallel unto God. It is the night when the store-houses of dew are unlocked. Therefore prepare dainties for me, that my soul may bless thee before I die." But the holy spirit interposed, "Eat not the bread of him that hath an evil eye." Isaac's longing for tidbits was due to his blindness. As the sightless cannot behold the food they eat, they do not enjoy it with full relish, and their appetite must be tempted with particularly palatable morsels.

Esau sallied forth to procure what his father desired, little recking the whence or how, whether by robbery or theft. To hinder the quick execution of his father's order, God sent Satan on the chase with Esau. He was to delay him as long as possible. Esau would catch a deer and leave him lying bound, while he pursued other game. Immediately Satan would come and liberate the deer, and when Esau returned to the spot, his victim was not to be found. This was repeated several times. Again and again the quarry was run down, and bound, and liberated, so that Jacob was able meanwhile to carry out the plan of Rebekah whereby he would be blessed instead of Esau.

Though Rebekah had not heard the words that had passed between Isaac and Esau, they nevertheless were revealed to her through the holy spirit, and she resolved to restrain

her husband from taking a false step. She was not actuated by love for Jacob, but by the wish of keeping Isaac from committing a detestable act. Rebekah said to Jacob: "This night the storehouses of dew are unlocked; it is the night during which the celestial beings chant the Hallel unto God, the night set apart for the deliverance of thy children from Egypt, on which they, too, will sing the Hallel. Go now and prepare savory meat for thy father, that he may bless thee before his death." Do as I bid thee, obey me as thou art wont, for thou art my son whose children, every one, will be good and God-fearing—not one shall be graceless."

In spite of his great respect for his mother, Jacob refused at first to heed her command. He feared he might commit a sin, especially as he might thus bring his father's curse down upon him. As it was, Isaac might still have a blessing for him, after giving Esau his. But Rebekah allayed his anxieties, with the words: "When Adam was cursed, the malediction fell upon his mother, the earth, and so shall I, thy mother, bear the imprecation, if thy father curses thee. Moreover, if the worst comes to the worst, I am prepared to step before thy father and tell him, 'Esau is a villain, and Jacob is a righteous man.'"

Thus constrained by his mother, Jacob, in tears and with body bowed, went off to execute the plan made by Rebekah. As he was to provide a Passover meal, she bade him get two kids, one for the Passover sacrifice and one for the festival sacrifice. To soothe Jacob's conscience, she added that her marriage contract entitled her to two kids daily. "And," she continued, "these two kids will bring good unto

LESSON 7

BIBLICAL WOMEN AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

OBJECTIVES:

1. The student will be able to explain the significance of Miriam's ritual at the Red Sea.
2. The student will be able to compare Miriam's relationship with God to other women's relationships with God.
3. The student will be able to begin to examine and discuss her/his relationship with God.
4. The student will be able to creatively express different people's relationship with God.

MATERIALS:

1. Bibles
2. Paper and pencils
3. Photocopies of the Woman's Midrash on Exodus 1: 17-19
4. Photocopies of the rabbinic text
5. Photocopies of the prayer from Gates of Prayer
6. Filmstrip on the Exodus from Egypt

SET INDUCTION:

1. Discuss the following questions:
  - a.) What does it mean to have a relationship with God?
  - b.) How many of you feel that you have a relationship with God? Can you describe it?
  - c.) If you were to picture a "spiritual" person in your mind, what would that person look like?

TRANSITION:

1. Discuss the fact that for the most part, in the past people pictured men as being spiritual or as having a relationship with God. Men have always played the primary role in ritual and, in our siddur, we read mostly about the "God of our fathers." During this class, we are going to see some examples of women who had a relationship with God.

ACTIVITY:

1. Use a filmstrip to remind the students of the story of the Exodus from Egypt. Have them pay attention to Miriam's role in the story.
2. Read Exodus 15: 20-21 and ask the students how Miriam is identified in the text.
3. Discuss the role of prophet as a messenger of God.
  - a.) Why do you think Miriam is called a prophetess?  
Explain to the students that, according to rabbinic tradition, Miriam is called prophetess because she foretold the birth of Moses.
4. Discuss the components of the ritual that Miriam performs by asking the following questions:
  - a.) What do you think Miriam is feeling?
  - b.) How does she express those feelings?
  - c.) Who accompanies her?
  - d.) What does she sing about?
  - e.) Do you think this is a prayer? Why or Why not?
  - f.) What do these two verses tell us about Miriam's connection to God?
  - g.) If you had just crossed the Red Sea in safety, what would you say or do?

TRANSITION:

1. Discuss the significance of these two verses as being evidence that biblical women did have a strong relationship with God. Explain to the students that we are going to look at other women in the Bible where there are hints of their relationship with God. In a creative way, we are going to add our interpretations to the text and bring those connections with God to the foreground.



**NOTE:**

Depending on the amount of time, these three centers can be used so that students rotate and go to each one or that students spend their time at one center.

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

At each center the students will:

- a.) Read the biblical text.
- b.) Read the midrashic and/or modern text.
- c.) Answer any questions to help them understand the texts.
- d.) As a group, do the creative activity.

**CLOSURE:**

Discuss the following questions:

- a.) What roles do the women in the Bible play in terms of religious experiences?
- b.) What are some of the implications for the Jewish community today?
- c.) Have these activities helped you examine your relationship with God? Describe how.

LEARNING CENTER #1

1. Read Exodus 1: 15-21 and discuss the following questions:
  - a.) Is there any evidence in the biblical text as to why the midwives did not carry out Pharoah's command? What is it?
  - b.) What do you think it means when the text says "the midwives feared God?" Was this the reason for them not obeying Pharoah? Why?
2. Read the midrash of the rabbis and discuss what reason the rabbis gave for the midwives not obeying Pharoah.
  - a.) Is their reason similar or different than the biblical text? How?
3. Read the modern midrash about the midwives.
  - a.) What is the reason given in this text for the midwives not obeying Pharoah?
  - b.) How does this compare with the other two texts?
4. Act out the story of the midwives and focus on the conversation between the two midwives. Have them discuss whether they will obey Pharoah or not, and the reasons behind their actions. Also, have them discuss what they will say to Pharoah when he asks them what they did.

LEARNING CENTER #2

We find many cases in the Bible of women longing for a child and, in some cases, they address themselves to God.

1. Read I Samuel 1: 1-11 and discuss the following questions:
  - a.) Why was Hannah unhappy?
  - b.) What was the content of Hannah's prayer to God?
  
2. Read Genesis 15: 21
  - a.) If you substitute the words "And Rebekah entreated the lord because she was barren", what do you think Rebekah's prayer to God would have been?
  
3. Write a prayer to God from a woman in today's world who wants to have children. How might it be different than Hannah and Rebekah's prayer? Perhaps include in your prayer:
  - a.) the woman's situation
  - b.) her praise and/or petition to God
  - c.) why she wants children
  - d.) what she might do if her prayer is fulfilled

LEARNING CENTER #3

1. Read the prayer from the siddur and discuss how our ancestors - both fathers and mothers - play a role in our prayers to God.
  - a.) Why do we bring in our biblical ancestors as part of our prayers?
  - b.) What do each of the men and women in this prayer teach us?
  - c.) How does this prayer describe our ancestors' relationships with God?
  - d.) Do you think a prayer like this would have been part of a siddur a hundred years ago? Why or why not?
  
2. Create a collage using various materials and magazine pictures to reflect our ancestors' relationship with God. Include those women that we have studied up until this lesson.

But the midwives feared God, and did not as the King of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive. And the King of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, 'Why have you done this thing, and have saved the men-children alive?' And the midwives said unto Pharaoh: 'Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women, for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwife come unto them.'

Exodus 1:17-19

||

Shiphrah and Puah, two of the Egyptian midwives who served Hebrew women in the capital, sat together over tea after their momentous first meeting with Pharaoh. "Shiphrah, we can't do that," said the smaller of the two women. "For years we have dedicated our lives to providing comfort and safety to women in childbirth. I don't care who these women are or what they believe, they are just like our friends in their concern for their families, in their joy at giving new life, and in their gratitude for whatever help we give them."

"You're right," agreed Shiphrah. "There's no way we are going to harm these precious baby boys, but how are we going to get away with it?"

Puah reached for a biscuit. Chewing on something sweet seemed to help her to think better. All of a sudden, her face brightened. "Our men," she began, "think that the Hebrews are like animals. They have not seen them in their tender moments as we have. They don't realize that they are just like us, since they only know them as their slaves. Maybe we can take advantage of their ignorance."

Shiphrah smiled. even though she was munching on a d "Animals surely do smart, Shiphrah. W are such animals th us to reach them be and suckling. Men they possibly dispu

She gathered the them in her bag. T had invited them to the boy they had he last week. "Come o The two women hurric fidence of those whi sequence, even head:

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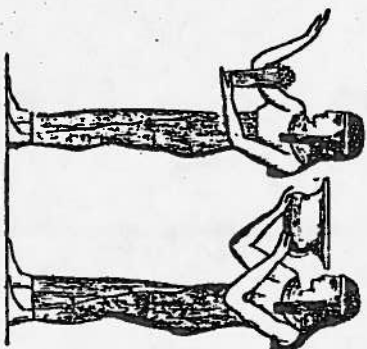
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Shiphrah smiled. She loved Puah's cleverness with people, even though she disapproved of her eating habits. Shiphrah was munching on a date from the tree in back of the house. "Animals surely do not use midwives," she said slowly.

Puah chuckled and squeezed Shiphrah's hand. "You are so smart, Shiphrah. We'll tell Pharaoh that the Hebrew women are such animals that they don't even labor long enough for us to reach them before the babe is already out, clean, tied and suckling. Men are so ignorant of these matters, how can they possibly dispute us?"

She gathered the rest of the biscuits and fruit and put them in her bag. The nice family near the market square had invited them to the eighth day circumcision ritual for the boy they had helped deliver after a complicated labor last week. "Come on, Shiphrah, we'll be late for the Brit." The two women hurried off arm in arm, smiling with the confidence of those who know that in matters of greatest consequence, even heads of state are sometimes ill-informed.



the more the Egyptians afflicted them, the more they multiplied, and the more they spread abroad." And they continued to increase in spite of Pharaoh's command, that those who did not complete the required tale of bricks were to be immured in the buildings between the layers of bricks, and great was the number of the Israelites that lost their lives in this way. Many of their children were, besides, slaughtered as sacrifices to the idols of the Egyptians. For this reason God visited retribution upon the idols at the time of the going forth of the Israelites from Egypt. They had caused the death of the Hebrew children, and in turn they were shattered, and they crumbled into dust."

#### THE PROUS MIDWIVES

When now, in spite of all their tribulations, the children of Israel continued to multiply and spread abroad, so that the land was full of them as with thick underbrush—for the women brought forth many children at a birth<sup>22</sup>—the Egyptians appeared before Pharaoh again, and urged him to devise some other way of ridding the land of the Hebrews, seeing that they were increasing mightily, though they were made to toil and labor hard. Pharaoh could invent no new design; he asked his counsellors to give him their opinion of the thing. Then spake one of them, Job of the land of Uz, which is in Aram-naharaim, as follows: "The plan which the king invented, of putting a great burden of work upon the Israelites, was good in its time, and it should be executed henceforth, too, but to secure us against the fear that, if a war should come to pass, they may overwhelm us by reason of their numbers, and chase us forth out of the land,

let the king issue a decree, that every male child of the Israelites shall be killed at his birth. Then we need not be afraid of them if we should be overtaken by war. Now let the king summon the Hebrew midwives, that they come hither, and let him command them in accordance with this plan."

Job's advice found favor in the eyes of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. They preferred to have the midwives murder the innocents, for they feared the punishment of God if they laid hands upon them themselves. Pharaoh cited the two midwives of the Hebrews before him, and commanded them to slay all men children, but to save the daughters of the Hebrew women alive," for the Egyptians were as much interested in preserving the female children as in bringing about the death of the male children. They were very sensual, and were desirous of having as many women as possible at their service."

However, the plan, even if it had been carried into execution, was not wise, for though a man may marry many wives, each woman can marry but one husband. Thus a diminished number of men and a corresponding increase in the number of women did not constitute so serious a menace to the continuance of the nation of the Israelites as the reverse case would have been.

The two Hebrew midwives were Jochebed, the mother of Moses, and Miriam, his sister. When they appeared before Pharaoh, Miriam exclaimed: "Woe be to this man when God visits retribution upon him for his evil deeds." The king would have killed her for these audacious words, had not Jochebed allayed his wrath by saying: "Why dost thou

pay heed to her words? She is but a child, and knows not what she speaks." Yet, although Miriam was but five years old at the time, she nevertheless accompanied her mother, and helped her with her offices to the Hebrew women, giving food to the new-born babes while Jochebed washed and bathed them.

Pharaoh's order ran as follows: "At the birth of the child, if it be a man child, kill it; but if it be a female child, then you need not kill it, but you may save it alive." The midwives returned: "How are we to know whether the child is male or female?" for the king had bidden them kill it while it was being born. Pharaoh replied: "If the child issues forth from the womb with its face foremost, it is a man child, for it looks to the earth, whence man was taken; but if its feet appear first, it is a female, for it looks up toward the rib of the mother, and from a rib woman was made." "

The king used all sorts of devices to render the midwives amenable to his wishes. He approached them with amorous proposals, which they both repelled, and then he threatened them with death by fire." But they said within themselves: "Our father Abraham opened an inn, that he might feed the wayfarers, though they were heathen, and we should neglect the children, nay, kill them? No, we shall have a care to keep them alive." Thus they failed to execute what Pharaoh had commanded. Instead of murdering the babes, they supplied all their needs. If a mother that had given birth to a child lacked food and drink, the midwives went to well-to-do women, and took up a collection, that the infant might not suffer want. They did still more for the

little ones. They made supplication to God, praying: "Thou knowest that we are not fulfilling the words of Pharaoh, but it is our aim to fulfil Thy words. O that it be Thy will, our Lord, to let the child come into the world safe and sound, lest we fall under the suspicion that we tried to slay it, and maimed it in the attempt." The Lord hearkened to their prayer, and no child born under the ministrations of Shiphrah and Puah, or Jochebed and Miriam, as the midwives are also called, came into the world lame or blind or afflicted with any other blemish."

Seeing that his command was ineffectual, he summoned the midwives a second time, and called them to account for their disobedience. They replied: "This nation is compared unto one animal and another, and, in sooth, the Hebrews are like the animals. As little as the animals do they need the offices of midwives." "These two God-fearing women were rewarded in many ways for their good deeds. Not only that Pharaoh did them no harm, but they were made the ancestors of priests and Levites, and kings and princes. Jochebed became the mother of the priest Aaron and of the Levite Moses, and from Miriam's union with Caleb sprang the royal house of David. The hand of God was visible in her married life. She contracted a grievous sickness, and though it was thought by all that saw her that death would certainly overtake her, she recovered, and God restored her youth, and bestowed unusual beauty upon her, so that renewed happiness awaited her husband, who had been deprived of the pleasures of conjugal life during her long illness. His unexpected joys were the reward of his piety and trust in God." And another recompense was ac-



מלכותהך ראו בניך, בוקע ים לפני משה: זיה אליו עני  
ואמר: יי: מלך לעלם ועדו

When Your children understand the greatness of Your power, they exclaim in awe: "This is my God!" "The Eternal will reign for ever and ever!"

And the covenant with creation shall be fulfilled:

## THE COVENANT OF SHABBAT

ושמרו

ותמרו בני ישראל אל אלהיהם, לעשות את השבת לדרגתם  
כרית עלולם. בניו ובני בני ישראל אתה יהיה לעלם, כי ששת  
ימי עשה יי: את השמים ואת הארץ, וביום השביעי שבת  
ונופש.

The people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath in every generation as a covenant for all time. It is a sign for ever between Me and the people of Israel, for in six days the Eternal God made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested from His labors.

For two readers or more

## THAT OTHERS MAY FIND BLESSING

Our Fathers prayed, each through his own experience of God, each through his own private vision that his people came to share. And each of our Mothers had her own vision.

Abraham, who knew the fervor of morning prayer, pleaded the cause of cities. Sarah, who knew the pain of waiting, hoped for new life.

Isaac, meditating in the afternoon, lifted his eyes to find love. Rebekah left home and kin to answer God's call, to share the hope of those who came before her.

And Jacob, when the sun had set, offered up his night prayer as a ladder reaching into heaven. Rachel and Leah,

sisters, became rivals, then friends. They are the Mothers of this people Israel.

To all their prayers came the response: Your children shall be a blessing. Their striving has come down to us as a command: Act, that others may find blessing through your lives!

God is the Source of blessing. His presence was the Shield of our Fathers, the Help of our Mothers. His promise is our hope.

All rise

## תפלה

אבות

ברוך אתה, יי: אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, אלהי אברהם, אלהי יצחק, ואלהי יעקב: האל הנגדל, הנגדור והנורא, אל עליון.  
ונמל חסדים טובים, וקונן הכל, וזוכר חסדי אבות, ומביא  
נא לה לבני בנינו, למען שמו, באתה.  
מלך עוזר ומושיע ומנו. ברוך אתה, יי: מנו אברהם.

For two readers or more, or responsively

## THE POWER WHOSE GIFT IS LIFE

נברחה

אתה נבור לעולם, ארני, מתייה מתיים אתה, רב להושיע.

We pray that we might know before whom we stand, the Power whose gift is life, who quickens those who have forgotten how to live.

משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם.

We pray for winds to disperse the choking air of sadness, for cleansing rains to make parched hopes flower, and to give all of us the strength to rise up toward the sun.

מכללל חיים פתחך, מתייה מתיים פרתמים רבים.

We pray for love to encompass us for no other reason save that we are human, for love through which we may all blossom into persons who have gained power over our own lives.

LESSON 8

DEBORAH - A MODEL FOR TODAY?

OBJECTIVES:

1. The student will be able to state how Deborah is described in the biblical text.
2. The student will be able to analyze the rabbis' view of Deborah by examining the midrashim.
3. The student will be able to develop hypotheses to explain society's view of women in positions of power.
4. The student will be able to collect data to prove the hypothesis.
5. The student will be able to list some solutions to the problem in terms of the individual and the society.

MATERIALS:

1. Photocopies of rabbinic text
2. Bibles

SET INDUCTION:

1. Discuss the following questions:
  1. How many of you know women who are in high positions in our society? What do they do?
  2. Have you ever discussed with them the problems they encounter in that position, if there are any? What did they say?

TRANSITION:

1. Tell the students that we are going to examine one biblical woman who was in a powerful position and how the rabbis viewed her. Have them keep in mind how the story of Deborah compares to today's world.

ACTIVITY:

1. Read Judges IV: 4-10 and discuss:

- a.) How is Deobrah described in the text?
- b.) What is her function in the community?

Explain to the students that most of the judges were not judges in the legal sense, but heroes upon whom "rested the spirit of God" and who led tribes in military campaigns to free Israel from foreign oppression. Only in the case of Deborah is there any hint of judicial function.

- c.) What problems do you think the rabbis had with the text?
2. Read the midrash from Legends of the Jews.
    - a.) According to the rabbis, who did God appoint?
    - b.) How does this compare with the biblical text?
    - c.) Already what does this tell you about what the rabbis thought of Deborah's leadership role?
    - d.) The rabbis believed that Deborah was chosen by God because she made the wicks on the candles very thick. What is your reaction to this?
    - e.) What do you think "frailities of her sex" refers to?
    - f.) Why did the rabbis think of her as being "self-conscious?"
    - g.) "In her song she spoke more of herself that was seemly". This refers to the Song of Deborah (ch. 5) which is the oldest Hebrew poem that we have today. Glance through the poem and cite the verses where Deborah talks about herself. What is your reaction to the rabbis' accusation?

CONCLUSION:

Read this quote from the Talmud:

"Pride is unbecoming to women; the prophetesses Deborah and Huldah were proud women, and both bore ugly names."

How does this quote summarize the rabbis' view of Deborah?

TRANSITION:

Explain to the students that we are going to examine the

TRANSITION, CONTINUED:

question as to whether people today hold similar views as the rabbis about women in leadership positions. We are going to develop our own hypothesis, and collect data to prove or disprove the hypothesis.

ACTIVITY:

1. Develop a hypothesis. For example: Today people do not look favorably upon women who rise to positions of power.
2. Clarify the hypothesis:
  - a.) List various positions of power.
  - b.) How do people discriminate against women in leadership positions?
3. Explore the hypothesis:
  - a.) Why are women today discriminated against if they have a leadership position?
  - b.) What changes in the society have made it easier for women to assume leadership positions?
  - c.) What are some of the implications of the changing role of women in our society?
4. Gather evidence for the hypothesis by bringing in a panel of women in leadership positions. - i.e. rabbi, doctor, businesswoman, etc. Have the students prepare questions to ask them about:
  - a.) what they do.
  - b.) how they see themselves in those positions.
  - c.) how others - both men and women - see them?
  - d.) if they encounter any problems.
5. Draw conclusions.
  - a.) Based on the research, does the hypothesis have truth to it or not? How?
  - b.) Have there been changes from the rabbis' era or not? What are they?
  - c.) Can we make improvements in our society with regards to the roles of women? How? As individuals? As the Jewish community?

am in the flower of my years, since I left the home of my parents where homage is rendered unto idols, I have been constantly menaced by the dissolute young men around." So I have come hither that thou, who art the redeemer, mayest spread out thy skirt over me." Boaz gave her the assurance that if his older brother Tob failed her, he would assume the duties of a redeemer. The next day he came before the tribunal of the Sanhedrin to have the matter adjudged. Tob soon made his appearance, for an angel led him to the place where he was wanted, that Boaz and Ruth might not have long to wait. Tob, who was not learned in the Torah, did not know that the prohibition against the Moabites had reference only to males. Therefore, he declined to marry Ruth. So she was taken to wife by the octogenarian Boaz. Ruth herself was forty years old at the time of her second marriage, and it was against all expectations that her union with Boaz should be blessed with offspring, a son, Obed the pious. Ruth lived to see the glory of Solomon, but Boaz died on the day after the wedding."

#### DEBORAH

Not long after Ruth, another ideal woman arose in Israel, the prophetess Deborah.

When Ehud died, there was none to take his place as judge, and the people fell off from God and His law. God, therefore, sent an angel to them with the following message: "Out of all the nations on earth, I chose a people for Myself, and I thought, so long as the world stands, My glory will rest upon them. I sent Moses unto them, My servant, to teach them goodness and righteousness. But they

strayed from My ways. And now I will arouse their enemies against them, to rule over them, and they will cry out: 'Because we forsook the ways of our fathers, hath this come over us.' Then I will send a woman unto them, and she will shine for them as a light for forty years." "

The enemy whom God raised up against Israel was Jabbin, the king of Hazor, who oppressed him sorely. But worse than the king himself was his general Sisera, one of the greatest heroes known to history. When he was thirty years old, he had conquered the whole world. At the sound of his voice the strongest of walls fell in a heap, and the wild animals in the woods were chained to the spot by fear. The proportions of his body were vast beyond description. If he took a bath in the river, and dived beneath the surface, enough fish were caught in his beard to feed a multitude, and it required no less than nine hundred horses to draw the chariot in which he rode."

To rid Israel of this tyrant, God appointed Deborah and her husband Barak. Barak was an ignominious, like most of his contemporaries. It was a time singularly deficient in scholars. In order to do something meritorious in connection with the Divine service, he carried candles, at his wife's instance, to the sanctuary, wherefrom he was called Lapidoth, "Flames." Deborah was in the habit of making the wicks on the candles very thick, so that they might burn a long time. Therefore God distinguished her. He said: "Thou takest pains to shed light in My house, and I will let thy light, thy fame, shine abroad in the whole land." Thus it happened that Deborah became a prophetess and a judge. She dispensed judgment in the open air, for it was

not becoming that men should visit a woman in her house."

Prophetess though she was, she was yet subject to the frailties of her sex. Her self-consciousness was inordinate. She sent for Barak "to come to her instead of going to him," and in her song she spoke more of herself than was seemly. The result was that the prophetic spirit departed from her for a time while she was composing her song."

The salvation of Israel was effected only after the people, assembled on the Mount of Judah, had confessed their sins publicly before God and besought His help. A seven days' fast was proclaimed for men and women, for young and old. Then God resolved to help the Israelites, not for their sakes, but for the sake of keeping the oath he had sworn to their forefathers, never to abandon their seed. Therefore He sent Deborah unto them."

The task allotted to Deborah and Barak, to lead the attack upon Sisera, was by no means slight. It is comparable with nothing less than Joshua's undertaking to conquer Canaan. Joshua had triumphed over only thirty-one of the sixty-two kings of Palestine, leaving at large as many as he had subdued. Under the leadership of Sisera these thirty-one unconquered kings opposed Israel." No less than forty thousand armies, each counting a hundred thousand warriors, were arrayed against Deborah and Barak." God aided Israel with water and fire. The river Kishon and all the fiery hosts of heaven "except the star Meros" fought against Sisera. The Kishon had long before been pledged to play its part in Sisera's overthrow. When the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea, God commanded the Angel of the Sea to cast their corpses on the land, that the

Israelites might convince themselves of the destruction of their foes, and those of little faith might not say afterward that the Egyptians like the Israelites had reached dry land. The Angel of the Sea complained of the impropriety of withdrawing a gift. God mollified him with the promise of future compensation. The Kishon was offered as security that he would receive half as many bodies again as he was now giving up. When Sisera's troops sought relief from the scorching fire of the heavenly bodies in the coolness of the waters of the Kishon, God commanded the river to redeem its pledge. And so the heathen were swept down into the Sea by the waves of the river Kishon, whereat the fishes in the Sea exclaimed: "And the truth of the Lord endureth forever." "

Sisera's lot was no better than the lot of his men. He fled from the battle on horseback "after witnessing the annihilation of his vast army. When Jael saw him approach, she went to meet him arrayed in rich garments and jewels. She was unusually beautiful, and her voice was the most seductive ever a woman possessed." "These are the words she addressed to him: "Enter and refresh thyself with food, and sleep until evening, and then I will send my attendants with thee to accompany thee, for I know thou wilt not forget me, and thy recompense will not fail." When Sisera, on stepping into her tent, saw the bed strewn with roses which Jael had prepared for him, he resolved to take her home to his mother as his wife, as soon as his safety should be assured.

He asked her for milk to drink, saying: "My soul burns with the flame which I saw in the stars contending for Is-

LESSON 9

BOOK OF ESTHER

OBJECTIVES:

1. The student will be able to identify a situation where they stood up for something they believe in.
2. The student will be able to discuss particular problem situations and decide how they would act.
3. The student will be able to compare the actions of the characters in terms of how they dealt with a problem.
4. The student will be able to create a midrash reflecting the decision-making process of Esther or Vashti.

MATERIALS:

1. Paper and pencils

SET INDUCTION:

1. Have the students think of a time when they stood up for something they believe in. Have them remember the situation, how they felt, how they decided what to do and what they finally did.
2. After they have thought about it have them get a partner and share their situations.

ACTIVITY:

1. Make two circles in the room - an inner circle with three or four chairs and an outer circle with chairs for the rest of the students.
2. Choose some students to sit in the inner circle and the rest of the students will sit in the circle around them.
3. The students in the middle circle will be given one of the situations (attached to the lesson) and will begin to discuss it. The students on the outer circle will not be allowed to participate in the discussion unless a student from the inner circle vacates her/his chair.

ACTIVITY, CONTINUED:

Then the student who joins into the circle will add her/his perspective to the discussion.

4. The discussion can go on as long as people are interested to continue talking. When the discussion ends, a new situation can be given.
5. Following the activity discuss the following questions:
  - a.) Those of you who were in a discussion, how did you feel when others agreed with you? When others disagreed with you? When someone different came into the discussion?
  - b.) Those of you who were observing the discussion, what did you notice about the different ways people came to a decision?
  - c.) What criteria did you use to motivate you to speak up in a situation?
  - d.) Which biblical characters that we have studied acted on their principles? What was their situation? How do you think they arrived at their decision?

CLOSURE:

1. Remind the students of the story of the Book of Esther. Ask the following questions:
  - a.) Which characters in the story spoke up for what they believed in? How did they do it?
  - b.) How do you think the rabbis viewed Vashti? How do you think the rabbis viewed Esther?
  - c.) What characteristics would you ascribe to Vashti? Esther?
  - d.) What criteria do you think they used to help them come to a decision about how to act?

REINFORCEMENT/EVALUATION:

1. Have the students write a midrash that explains the process either Vashti or Esther went through in order to make a decision about how to act.



SITUATIONS

1. You have just started a new job. You are really excited about this job since its something you've always wanted to be doing. At the end of the first month you receive your first pay check and realize that you were given less than the boss promised. No contract had been drawn up yet so you don't have written proof.

How would you handle the situation?

Would you speak up and risk getting fired? Or would you remain silent to keep your job?

What other alternative would you consider?

2. You are doing some shopping in a major department store. As you pass by the jewelry section, you notice someone loitering by the counter and then put a piece of jewelry into their pocket.

What would you do in this situation?

Would you approach the shoplifter or would you call the store manager?

Would it be different if you knew the person?

3. You are in your third year in medical school at a well-known American college. You meet your study partner at a local tavern. Your friend looks very tense and you ask what is wrong. Over lunch, you are told that a certain tenured professor demanded sexual favors from your friend in order to pass the course.

How would you advise your friend?

Would you feel that it is your responsibility to report this to the administration? Or would you encourage your friend to do this?

4. You live in an apartment building in a part of town where there are a lot of elderly people. One street over from where you live, the city is planning to dig up the street because of drainage problems. Nobody would be able to drive on the street and the older people would have to be evacuated for about a month. In addition, there is the possibility that a gasline might explode. Some people in the community want to try to stop them from digging.

SITUATIONS, CONTINUED

What do you do?

Do you incite some action or do you remain on the sidelines?

Do you ignore what is happening or do you go along with everyone else?

5. You live in a very small town that is quite a distance away from any major city. Your child goes to the only public high school. Your child often comes home and tells you what has been happening at school and for a while has told you about some strange things that her/his history teacher has said. One day she/he tells you that this teacher has been teaching that the American Indians don't deserve the land that the government originally granted them and are stealing government funds.

What do you do?

Do you complain to the principal, talk to the teacher or decide that the teacher has the right to his/her opinion?

What do you say to your child?

Would you act any differently if the teacher was making prejudicial remarks about Jews?

LESSON 10

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM BIBLICAL WOMEN?

OBJECTIVES:

1. The student will be able to describe the biblical women who they have been studying.
2. The student will be able to conclude that the diversity in human models exists in the Bible and in our society today.
3. The student will be able to make a connection, through words and art, between him/herself and the biblical text.
4. The student will feel a sense of pride and accomplishment from the concluding activity.

MATERIALS:

1. Record player
2. Peggy Seeger album
3. Paper and pencils
4. Large piece of paper to make a scroll
5. Decorative materials for the scroll - magazines, markers, etc.

SET INDUCTION:

1. Play the song by Peggy Seeger entitled "I'm Gonna Be an Engineer" (Words are attached.)
2. Ask the students what view of women this song presents to us.
3. Tell the class that through examining biblical women we have gained a very different view of women. It is the goal of this lesson to see what we have learned from the women of the Bible.

ACTIVITY:

1. Hand out a small piece of paper to each student and ask them to write down the biblical woman who they would most want to be like. On the other side of the piece of paper, have them write down the reasons for the choice in light of our own social context.
2. Divide the students into small discussion groups, and have each person identify their choice and give their reasons. Have each group choose a secretary to write down all the different reasons for people's choices.
3. Bring the class together again. Draw a chart on the board and list the different answers.

For example:

Esther	Deborah	Rebekah	Miriam
Acts on her principles	A leader	Takes care of family	Is spiritual

4. Draw conclusions about the biblical women.
  - a.) Describe the roles of biblical women based on the chart.
  - b.) Give an example that would help us generalize about women in the Bible. For example - diverse.
  - c.) Create a metaphor to describe biblical women. Biblical women are like \_\_\_\_\_
  - d.) How might this view of biblical women help us appreciate women and men in our lives?

TRANSITION:

1. Explain to the students that there is a final question that we must answer:
  - a.) Why do we continue to study about women in the Bible?

ACTIVITY:

1. Have each student write a letter to the woman that they chose in the first activity. In that letter express the following:
  - a.) Why you feel a connection to that woman.
  - b.) What you have learned from studying her life.
  - c.) What you might tell her about your own life.
2. Make a scroll out of a long piece of paper and glue the letters into the scroll.
3. Decorate the scroll with pictures, poetry, midrashim and any other materials.
4. Discuss the meaning of the scroll as a concrete example of bridging the gap between us and individuals in the twentieth century and the biblical text. By bringing the women into the foreground we read the Bible from a new perspective and this forces us to think differently about the text. It also gives us the chance to relate to the characters as real human beings who have the same feelings, roles, and experiences as we do. Therefore, in answer to the question why we continue to study about women in the Bible, we learn that this experience makes the Bible a living document.

CLOSURE:

1. As a concluding activity, have a public reading of the scroll, perhaps in front of an audience with some songs and a celebration afterwards.

I'M GONNA BE AN ENGINEER

by PEGGY SEEGER

When I was a little girl I wished I was a boy  
I tagged along behind the gang and wore me corduroys  
Everybody said I only did it to annoy  
But I was gonna be an engineer  
Mommy told me can't you be a lady  
Your duty to us to make me the mother of a pearl  
Wait until you're older dear and maybe  
You'll be glad that you're a girl

Dainty as a dresden statue  
Gentle as a jersey cow  
Smooth as silk creamy milk  
Learn to coo, learn to moo  
That's what you do to be a lady now

When I went to school I learned to write and how to read  
some history, geography and home economy  
And typing is a skill that every girl is sure to need  
to while away the extra time until the time to breed  
And then they had they had the nerve to say what would you  
like to be  
I says I'm gonna be an engineer  
No you only need to learn to be a lady  
The duty isn't yours to try and run the world  
An engineer could never have a baby  
Remember dear that you're a girl

So I become a typist and I study on the sly  
Working out the day and nite so I could qualify  
And every time the boss come in, he'd pinch me on the thigh  
Says I've never had an engineer  
You owe it to the job to be a lady  
the wages that you get are crummy maybe  
But it's all you get 'cause you're a girl

she's smart ... for a woman  
I wonder how she got that way  
You get no choice, you get no voice  
Just stay mum, pretend you're dumb  
that's how you come to be a lady today

The Jimmy come along and we set up a conjugation  
We were busy every night with love and recreation  
I spent the day at work so he could get his education  
and now he's an engineer  
He says I know you'll always be a lady  
It's the duty of my darling to love me all her life

"I'M GOING TO BE AN ENGINEER"  
by Peggy Seeger, continued

Could an engineer look after and obey me  
Remember dear that you're my wife

Well as soon as Jimmy got a job I began again  
That happy at my turret lay the year or so and then  
The morning that the twins were born Jimmy says to them  
Kids, your mother was an engineer  
You owe it to the kids to be a lady  
Dainty as a dishrag, faithful as a chow  
Stay at home, you got to mind the baby  
Remember you're a mother now

Well everytime I turn around there's something else to do  
It's cook a meal, mend a sock or sweep a floor or two  
I listen unto Jimmy Young it makes me want to spew  
I was gonna be a engineer  
Now I really wish that I could be a lady  
I could do the lovely things that a lady's supposed to do  
I wouldn't even mind if only they would pay me  
And I could be a person too

What price for a woman  
You can buy her for a ring of gold  
To love and obey without any pay  
You get a cook and a nurse for better or worse  
No you don't need a purse when a lady is so

But now that times are harder and me Jimmy's got the sack  
I went down to Vicars they were glad to have me back  
But I'm a third class citizen my wages tell me that  
and I'm a first class engineer

The boss, he says, we pay you as a lady  
You only got the job 'cause I can't afford a man  
With you I keep the profits high as maybe  
you're just a cheaper pair of hands

You got one fault you're a woman  
You're not worth equal pay  
A bitch, you're a tart, you're nothing but heart  
Shallow and vain, you got me brain  
You even go down the drain like a lady today

Well I listened to me mother and I joined a typing pool  
I listened to me lover and I put him through his school  
But if I listen to the boss I'm just a bloody fool  
And an underpaid engineer

"I'M GOING TO BE AN ENGINEER"  
by Peggy Seeger, continued

I've been a sucker ever since I was a baby  
As a daughter, as a wife, as a mother, as a dear  
But I'll fight them as a woman not a lady,  
I'll fight them as an engineer



BOOKS

Christ, Carol P. and Judith Plaskow (eds.) Womanspirit Rising. San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1979.

This book provides an overview of contemporary feminist thinking on religion. It focuses on developing a woman's theology mostly from a Christian perspective. In the context of reinterpreting the biblical traditions from a woman's perspective, Phyllis Trible has written an excellent chapter on "Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread." This chapter is a model for biblical interpretation as it looks at the text from both a grammatical and theological point of view.

Ginzberg, Louis. Legends of the Jews. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1907-1939.

In this seven-volume work, Ginzberg has collected all the midrashim from creation to the Book of Esther. Since the biblical text does not always give us all the details of the lives of the matriarchs, this collection is an important source of additional information. Through these midrashim we see how the rabbis viewed Eve, Lilith, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and many of the other women of the Bible. For the most part, the stories are easy to read and can even be understood by children.

Heschel, Susannah (ed.) On Being a Jewish Feminist. New York: Schocken Books, 1983.

This is a superb collection of essays on the questions of being a Jew and a feminist. These essays demonstrate the ways in which feminist contributions to ritual, liturgy and theology can revitalize Jewish life for everyone. However, there is only one article on women in the Bible written by Aviva Cantor on "The Lilith Question." She traces this midrash to its historical context and demonstrates how Lilith can be a positive role model for Jewish women today.

Koltun, Elizabeth (ed.) The Jewish Woman. New York: Schocken Books, 1976.

This is another excellent anthology of essays on what it means to be a Jewish woman. This book does include a whole section on women in Jewish literature. Phyllis Trible, in her article on "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," demonstrates the difference between exposing the text and imposing on the text. Mary Gendler discusses how Vashti can become a positive role model for children. The last two articles in this section provide us with an insightful analysis of how the rabbis viewed the women through their use of Aggadah.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford (ed.) Religion and Sexism. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974.

This collection of essays has both Christian and Jewish authors in it. The article that is most relevant to the topic of women in the Bible is entitled "Images of Women in the Old Testament" and is written by a Christian theologian. The author of this article contends that no single statement concerning the image of woman in the Old Testament can be formulated. She, therefore, describes the different images of women through use of the Old Testament laws, Proverbs, historical writings and the Creation story.

Books (continued)

Russell, Letty M. (ed.). Feminist Interpretation of the Bible. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985.

This book is the result of a collaborative effort on the part of a group of outstanding theologians, historians, and biblical scholars. Most of the authors in this book write from a Christian perspective, but the issues and questions are transferable to Judaism. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, in her article entitled "Feminist Uses of Biblical Materials," gives us an overview on the different feminist approaches to the Bible. This article, like many in the collection, deals with the whole issue of the authority of the Bible. In another article, J. Cheryl Exum, examines the role of "Mother in Israel" by looking at the matriarchs, the mothers of the Exodus, the mother of Samson and Deborah.

Schneider, Susan Weidman. Jewish and Female. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984.

This book is a comprehensive book that addresses all aspects of the life of a Jewish woman. It really does not deal with the topic of women and the Bible. However, there is one short chapter on "How to Eradicate Sexism in Children's Jewish Education" which does discuss the need for expanding on the roles of women in the Bible. At the end of the chapter it gives a list of resources where one can go for additional information on the issue of sexism in Jewish education.

Steinsaltz, Adin. Biblical Images. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984

In this book, Steinsaltz does a series of twenty-five character studies of the men and women of the Bible. He depicts these men and women as real people - people with strengths and weaknesses who speak to us in every age. His treatment of the women of the Bible is mostly from a traditional point of view which weaves together the observations of the sages and Steinsaltz's own analysis.

Teubal, Savina J. Sarah The Priestess. Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press, 1984

Savina Teubal examines the biblical foremothers in light of the cultural context from which they came - the ancient Mesopotamian art work, tablets, codification and legends. Although her reconstruction of biblical history is open to debate, this work is very important as it presents to us the biblical stories in an entirely new perspective. According to Ms. Teubal, the matriarchs played a much more significant role in our history than historians might lead us to believe.

Zones, Jane Sprague (ed.). Taking the Fruit. San Diego: Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education, 1981.

This small pamphlet contains fifteen modern women's tales of the Bible. The goal of the authors was to show how women can maintain a relationship with a text that has limited women's roles. Not only does this work contain different women's midrashim, but it also teaches one how to engage in an ongoing midrashic process.

COURSES OF STUDY

Cohn, Marcia Spiegel. Women In The Bible. New York: Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

An excellent study guide on the women in the Bible for older students (approx. 10th grade) and for adults. This course is partly a course in text study as its goal is to have students recreate the rabbinic process of grappling with the original text. The students are encouraged to explore their own ideas, find proof in the text itself, raise questions, read the midrashim, and then look at different poems about each character.

Grishaver, Joel Lurie. Bible People, A Workbook. Denver, Colorado: Alternatives in Religious Education, Inc., 1980.

Grishaver's workbook is meant to be a supplemental workbook that provides a set of experiences for students and teachers. These activities will help the students meet the main characters of the book of Genesis, learn the basic details of the major stories, and relate these stories to their own life experiences. Bible People tries to provide role models for Jewish women by presenting the women of the Bible as whole people. The pages on "Understanding Sarah" and on Rebekah are particularly good.

Newman, Louis. Genesis: The Student's Guide. New York: The Melton Research Center of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1969.

Part II of The Student's Guide begins with the stories of Abraham and ends with Joseph. Both the Hebrew text and the English translation are included, along with questions and activities based on the stories. Although most of the material deals solely with the patriarchs, some reference is made to the women of the Bible. In addition, there is important material about the customs of the ancient Near East.

Sasso, Sandy Eisenberg and Sue Levi Elwell. Jewish Women. Denver, Colorado: Alternatives in Religious Education, Inc., 1983.

This is an excellent study guide on Jewish women for students in 7th grade and up. It challenges students to think about stereotypes of women. It discusses how women have related to life cycle events and encourages students to think about what would be meaningful in their own lives. At different points the authors bring in Biblical material and the relevant midrashim. For example, in the section entitled "Making Connections: As Friend" there is a discussion of Ruth and Naomi.

Simon, Solomon and Morrison David Bial. The Rabbis' Bible. New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1978

This set of materials on the Bible seems to be aimed for students from 3rd - 6th grades. It is apparent, even from just looking at the titles of the chapters, that the first volume deals mostly with the patriarchs. There is some material on Sarah and Rachel, but the focus seems to be on Rebekah who is seen as the model of a Jewish wife.

Snitzer, Lee and Marci Dickman. A Genesis of Ethics and Values.

Master's Thesis (MAT 75).

This curriculum is aimed at 7th grade in a one day-a-week Liberal Religious School. Its goal is to elicit the child's judgement and give her/him a sense of structure and respect for both past and present social norms. There is an implementation guide that demonstrates certain skills that the teacher might need in order to teach this material. This curriculum has a unit on "Equality of Sexes," deals with sex role stereotyping and presents the story of Lilith.

Study Guide on the Jewish Woman. New York: Ezrat Nashim, 1974.

This study guide attempts to deal with issues of halacha, divorce, ritual, life cycle and sexuality. It is basically an outline and although it raises some questions on each of the topics, it is not very thorough. There is one page on women in Jewish literature which has six questions on models of women in the Bible.

51

PERIODICALS

Boys, Mary C. and Thomas G. Groome. "Principles and Pedagogy in Biblical Study," Religious Education, Vol. 77, No. 5, Sept.-Oct. 1982

This important article deals with three major questions: 1) What is the Bible which we carry? 2) Who are we who carry the Bible and 3) How, then, shall we teach? It discusses the issue of reading the Bible with a feminist consciousness within the context of what we bring to the Bible. This article is written from a Christian perspective.

Rosen, Gladys. "Teaching About the Role of Women." The Pedagogic Reporter, Vol. 32, No. 1, Fall 1980.

This article specifically discusses one of the goals of Jewish education which is to help in the formation of attitudes and self-images. According to Ms. Rosen, we must provide the students with positive role models from both sexes.

Schwartz, Mary. "The Invisible Women of Passover." Moment, Vol. 6. No. 3 & 4, 1981.

Mary Schwartz asks what happened to the women in the Passover story? She sees how they have been left out of our Haggadah and attempts to retell the story from a woman's point of view. Her story includes the story of the midwives who stand up for their beliefs, a story of a positive mother-daughter relationship, and a story of an enemy princess who helps the Israelites.

Shoub, Myra. "Jewish Women's History: Development of a Critical Methodology," Conservative Judaism, Winter 1982.

Myra Shoub's development of a critical methodology for studying Jewish history is also applicable for biblical history. She describes four approaches to teaching women's history in general and then uses these approaches for Jewish women's history. One of the questions that she asks is whether one can teach a separate course entirely on women since women were part of the society in which they lived. The answer that she gives is that women's past cannot be studied in a vacuum.

Keeping Posted, Vol. 25, No. 5, Feb. 1980. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1980.

This issue on the new Jewish woman is very helpful for the classroom teacher. In addition to an article on "Jewish Women Face the Eighties" and an article entitled "Written Out of History," there are pictures of bronze sculptures of women in the Bible that can be used for discussion purposes. Included in this issue is a modern version of the story of Lilith. This material seems to be aimed at students in 5th-7th grades.