Daniel J. Moskovitz
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Women of Kol Tikvah: Women in Judaism

Growing up I used to play an imagination game called, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner". To play this game you made of a list of people living or dead that you would like to have over for a dinner party at your house, you then extrapolated from the guest list what the dinner conversation might be. My guest list was often made up of sports heroes and movie stars, how great I imagined it would be to have Hank Aaron, Willie Mays, Babe Ruth and Joe Dimagio over for dinner. I would raised the subject of the greatest baseball game they ever played and sit back and listen to their stories. Imagine a dinner table filled with the world's greatest explores, Louis and Clark, Columbus, Magellin, and Neil Armstrong, sharing tales about their great adventures. Sometimes I imagined a mixed company of scientists, scholars, inventors, and captains of industry as we tried to tackle the worlds ills, fixing problems and creating a better society.

What makes this game fun is when you imagine the cross talk that would take place, not only the relating of stories, but what might Hertzl say to Netanyahu, imagine Jesus sitting down with Jerry Fallwell, though I don't imagine Jerry would sit very long. . If you can stomach it imagine Hitler and Ellie Weisel coming face to face. The guests need not be famous or even specific individuals, how about a dinner party made up of 10 generations of women from the same family, could you imagine sitting across the table from your great-great-great-great-gr eat grandmother as she told the story of life under the Cossaks in Eastern Europe, or I guess in my case what the original Kuggle recipe really was?

Now imagine for a moment a dinner party made up of great Jewish women from the past, who would be on your guest list. From the Torah we might take the matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, certainly Eve and Miriam, perhaps Tamar,

Debroah, Bat Sheva, Esther, Naomi and Ruth. If we are well versed in Biblical women, we may include a little known prophetess named Huldah whom we have to thank for the inclusion of the book of Deuteronomy in the biblical canon. We may also include the biblical Helen of Troy, Leah's daughter Dinah, over whose virtue the entire city of Shechem was destroyed, all of its men killed by Dinah's vengeful brothers. The list while not exhaustive, or lengthy compared to the male characters of the Bible is still sizable and significant. Each of these women played crucial roles in the Jewish narrative, each of these women represent a unique and important biblical model of ethics, character, determination and reliance for the modem era.

Searching beyond the Bible we may want a representative from the Rabbinic period. That period after the destruction of the second Temple in 70 CE that came to shape the Judaism we practice and observe today. Here our list of potential guests is much shorter, there is Beruriah, the only woman in the Talmud mentioned to participate in debates of Jewish law, and the foster-mother of Rav Abaye, of which he frequently spoke with great reverence. Beyond these few women our representatives from this formative period of Jewish history are all men, and thus disqualified from our dinner party.

From the end of Rabbinic period in S00ce, through all of the middle ages up until the start of the modem period only a handful of Jewish woman are widely known or written about in Jewish History. We would do well to include all of them on our guest list, certainly we would make room for, Gluckel of Hameln a 17th century German woman whose detailed diary comprises much of what we know about the life of a Jewish woman in that era. We would include the Spanish poets Kasmuna bint Ismalia,

and Huldah bat Judah Halevi, whose command of verse helped shape the Golden Age of Spain. And we would include a Jewish scribe named Miriam bat Benayah from medieval Yemen who wrote the following inscription on the sefer Torah she penned in her own hand, "Please do not fault me if you find a mistake, as I am a nursing woman."

In the modem period our list is limited only by the number place settings of china we have, though for such an impressive list of guests we might use paper plates just to accommodate more people. How could we pick between the witnesses to holocaust Anne Frank and Hannah Szenesh, and the women who brought a Jewish state, Zionists like Henritta Szold and Golda Meir. Writers and Scholars such as Hannah Ardent, Lea Goldberg, Nahama Liebowitz, and Justic Ruth Bader Ginsberg would make the list, as would activits' Rebecca Gratz and Gloria Steinem, pyschologist Melanie Klien, astronaut Judith Resnick, entertainers Barabara Streisand and Bette Midler, the first female Rabbi Sally Preisand. And these are only the names of people we know, to get a complete representation of the woman who have shapped Jewish life we would want to include an immigrant Jewish woman from Eastern Europe who led her family through the doors of Ellis Island to a new life in America. We would of course need the voices of modem Jewish women, those who marched for civil rights and equality, those who protested the war in Vietnam, or worked assembly lines during WWII. We would need the Jewish single woman of the 90's, as well as the single mother, the newly wed, the college student. We would need the grandmother who struggles pass on tradition to her children, and we would need the teenage Jewish girls who has never known a world without women Rabbis, gender sensitive prayer, and Feminist Jewish theology. We would invite all these women to our dinner table, maybe

we would make it a shabbat dinner, as together all assembled mystically waved their hands three times over the sabbath candles, covered their eyes and sang the blessing in unison. And when the sweet wine is passed from woman to woman, and the challah, baked by a generation of hands is torn and tasted, when the soup is finally on the table, and all assembled sit down to eat, what would Sarah say to Golda, what would Eve whose eating of the apple led us out of Eden, say to Miriam who danced with timbrels leading us across the Red Sea, back into the land. What would Bueriah, whose Talmud study was never fully accepted by some many, say to Sally Priesand whose Rabbinate is still today a subject of heated debate and controversy? I would hope they would hold each others gaze in their eyes and exclaim in full voice *Dorsheini! Dorsheini!* Interpret me, interpret my life, my story. Find yourself in me, find yourself in the gaps and lapses of my story, that were never recorded by the men who wrote our collective history and only viewed the world through their gender specific lens.

The Jewish-born master of Eastern Philosophy, Ram Dass described how he explored Judaism after years of being away from it. Dass explains, in the Torah God explains the reason for a mezuzah by saying to the Jewish people, "You will come to know Me as a result of remembering Me." The first thing I did when I read this was to buy a mezuzah, and place it on the doorpost of my house, and I kissed it every time I left the house or came into the house. Doing so reminded me of the scroll that was inside, on which was written the shema, the words of which reminded me to think of God.... As time went by I was so busy going somewhere that I forgot about the mezuzah. The minute I realized that, I took a string and hung it over the door, so that it hit my forehead when I walked out, which reminded me the mezuzah was there, which

led me to tum and kiss it, which reminded me of the scroll inside, which caused me to think about the shema written on that scrolls, which reminded me to think about God."

Ram Dass created a reminder that would trigger him to kiss a box, which, in tum, is a reminder of the text inside, which itself is a reminder to have one's hand, one's third eye, and the very doorposts of one's house become signs - reminders of commandments. Rabbi Debra Orenstein points out the pathway to Jewish meaning and observance is memory, and memory needs to be jogged.

Tonight is about memory; memory of Jewish women, the challenges they faced in our Jewish story and the faith they shaped by meeting those challenges. In Jewish tradition, and biblical theology memory leads to observance, we are commanded to remember the sabbath day, in order to keep it holy. To remember that we too were once slaves in the land of Egypt, hence we must not afflict the stranger in our midst. God commands us to remember Miriam's affliction, the evil of Amalek, the trials of our desert wanderings. Biblical theology makes it quite clear, remembering God, Covenant and commandment leads to observance, and hence to harmony and reward. Forgetting them leads to sin, chaos and oblivion (Deut 11:13-28, Num. 15:39-40).

Yet memory when it comes to Jewish women in the Judaism is a problem, so many women in the Bible and throughout Jewish history have been forgotten. Sure we can point to numerous women who *are* remembered, whose deeds are recorded to varying degrees. But most would conclude that women who represent at least half of biblical society, who were created as Eve was, to be man's partner's in the world are, under represented, their stories either not recorded, or not told fully. Even women about whom we know a great deal in the Torah, Rebecca, Sarah, Rachel, Leah, and

Miriam, they seem to be easily forgotten. Rebecca's death is never reported, Miriam's story is full of references to Moses and Aaron, and never fully her own.

Women become secondary character's in the bible, when the text uses the metaphor of God remembered them for Sarah, Rachel and later Hannah it is for fertility, not covenant as it is so frequently employed for men. Even the Hebrew root word for memory, zayin, chaf, raish is also the root for male. In contrast when Israel forgets God, Israel is commonly represented as an adulterous wife or Harlot. (Ezekiel 16:15, Hosea 3:1). As Debra Orenstein writes in her second volume to her Llfecyles anthology on Jewish Feminist Thought, "In a culture that values memory as a path to living rightly, connecting with God and finding salvation, it is painful to embody the dominant symbol of forgetting and at the same time, to be so frequently forgotten. (Orenstein p. 24)" She continues, "It is not malicious, but it is also not accidental, that women have been 'written out of history, as philosopher Jean Francois Lyotard has noted, along the with history and theology of remembering, there is also a politics of forgetting." (Orenstein p. 24). "Memory, not unlike the rabbinic process of Midrash is a medium through which we dialogue with the past. The conversation never ends and is never - or perhaps continually - canonized. Generations of experience and interpretation form the holy tradition. Thus, it is never too late for women, or anyone, to join in the conversation." (Orenstein p. 25)

Let us now, briefly join in the conversation of the women gathered around our table. On the subject of memory and being forgotten none speak louder than Tamar, Judah's daughter in law. Tamar is a tragic figure she is repeatedly left behind and forgotten. Her First two husbands, both sons of Judah, die because of their sins. Judah

is then requeired to give Tamar away in marriage to his third son, so that she can produce offspimg in his line, but he never summonsher back for the promissed wedding. In response Tamar plays the harlot and tricks Judah into sleeping with her, when confronted with the child, Judah denies it to be his, but Tamar produces evidence and he responds, *Tzadakah mimenni,* 'She is more righteious than I" This complicated idiomatic phrase can be understood two ways, one as we have rendered it, She is more rightious than me, or according to the midrash, "She is right (tzedakah). It is from me (mimenni)." That is the child is from me, meaning Judah. In the end it is the forgotten Tamar; the negelected brothers' obligation to father her children; Judah's lapsed sense of duty are, in the end, most remembered. It is from the line of Judah and Tamar thatt he messiah will be born (Gen 38:29, Ruth 4:18-22). Tamar reminds all of those at our table, those women who feel their contributions to family and faith have gone unnoticed, have been forgotten, that for her at least she needed to be forgotten before God and our tradition could remember her with such honor and reverence.

Debra Orenstein writes, "Like Tamar and Joseph, Jewish women have suffered not only oppression, but also repression - exclusion fromt he collective conscious memory of our people. But by definition repression leaves a trail, which points to buried problems - and treasures. Thus, in biblical tales of women's victimization, the woman's point of view is often recoverable. Moreover, dignity and insights are (re)gained by telling the familar story from her perspective. Some of the most maligned and mistreated women of the Bible - Tamar among them, are also, when one scratches the surface, some of the bravest, most independent, and most spiritually evolved.

many times, that as determined as you are to become a physician, you are equally determined to have a family of your own one day. What I do not know, of course, is how you will be able to juggle all the determinations.

My generation of women has bequeathed to yours opened doors and great new worlds to conquer. What we have failed to pass on to you, because we have not devised them ourselves, are formulas for organizing the myriad demands those many worlds will make on you. I simply trust that in your wisdom you will find your way.

But I write of children also because, as Jews, when we look to the future, we do so in concrete terms, in images of people and generations to come. Before Abraham had even one child, God spoke of offspring who would be as numerous as "the dust of the earth" and inherit the "length and breadth" of the land of Canaan (Gen. 13:16--17). So I do not feel altogether uncomfortable speaking to you of children not yet born and of nonexistent scenes that nevertheless exist full-blown in my mind.

Dearest Sarah, will you laugh if I tell you that the mind-picture of the future I most cherish is of you studying Torah with those children to be? It sounds so corny, and we both remember the hours we spent together during your day school years poring over Hebrew texts, your homework assignments. I would get impatient (Can you ever forgive the impatience?), and you, frustrated with the amount of study time your demanding classes required. Grandpa had studied with me the same way when I was young. Dare you repeat such family patterns with your own children?

I think you will. I think you must. From those hours and years of study grew your love of Torah and your delight in chanting from the Torah scroll. There grew also, I believe, even with the impatience and frustrations, a bond between us, linked inseparably in some mysterious way to the tradition and the texts we studied together. That, too, is sacred.

These days many women-you and I among them-increasingly question the texts and traditions to which we have devoted so much energy. You know the problems well: The relentless maleness in our religion; the silences that surround the birth, thoughts, and feelings of women in sacred texts; the sense of exclusion we so often experience even today. It is terribly important for you to hold those issues in your mind, so that you can apply your own skills toward working with other caring women and men committed to bringing about change.

But I hope you will never fall into the trap of thinking that because some things are wrong, everything is wrong. I hope the process of questioning and creating change will lead not to rejection, but to a deeper love and more profound understanding of our tradition, to a greater desire than ever to be fully included within it. As for the Scriptures, even if they sometimes pain us, they are the heartblood of all that we hold dear as Jews. They form the core of our history and values, our myths and love stories, our sociology, our legal doctrines, our soul as a people. Know them, Sarah. Teach them to your children-yes, one on one, as Grandpa taught me and I taught you. Without knowledge of our texts, whatever else they know of Judaism will be insufficient. With that knowledge, they will know how to learn everything else

Yorn Kippur' this year, just two weeks before your birthday, I listened with pride, as I always do, while you chanted the Book of Jonah, the annual reading you have taken on since your Bat Mitzvah. But this year, I swallowed tears as I watched you, wrapped in your prayer shawl, standing tall and confident, singing out the familiar Hebrew words in your lovely, strong voice. I thought about the birthday to come and the twelve years that had slipped by, and I decided to write you this letter, the way Jewish parents of the past often wrote to their children. I pray that I will be able to share the years ahead with you (and I count, under my breath, on the longevity that runs in our family). But what I have written today are things I want to say to you no matter how many years I may have.

Dear Sarah, I live in gratitude for the sweet sunshine of your presence in our lives and in hope that all your offspring will be like you, guided by you.

I saw his back only when he turned from me.

It is I from whom Adam was hiding, I,
who knew the meaning
of inside before I was born,
when I still lay curled and waiting
under his anxious heart.

Matriarchs

I bless my daughter "May you be like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel,
and Leah,"
and I wonder:
"What were they like?"
It seems sadly fitting that so
much of who they were is
lost to me
and tradition.
I hardly know my own mother,
though I am tied to her
and wish my daughter could grow up
like her
and wish she, too,
could be proud and known.

Leah Bat Luria is a **pseudonym.**

Weaning: An Archaeology

MIRIAM FLOCK

An ancient city, my body bears the impress
of habitation: The permanently broadened
pelvic girdle, like a worn mortar;
a certain mottling along the forehead,
as when the blood of men and women fleeing
some disaster dries and stains the mud;
the brown of the areola rubbed pink
around the nipple like a trafficked path;
and the stretch marks, corrugations captured
for the life of me like waves in shale.
A woman you remember used to live here.
You have the photographs, like a map
to reconstruct the Temple's fallen walls.
Get out the soft brush, the delicate pick.
Traces of me must still exist.

Miriam Flock's poems have appeared in *Poetry, Georgia Review, Salmagundi,* and other journals.

To apply this in concrete, contemporary terms, Meg, for example, finds that her emotional, intense, artistic side tends to balance her husband Seth's unflappable, pragmatic, and "lawyerly" nature. One way this manifests itself is in their different styles of handling conflict. Meg and Seth admire each other's opposing personality traits, in part because they provide a contrast and lesson for one another.

In addition to complementing and helping one another, partners must share certain basic tenets, ideals, and goals. It is a dynamic tension. Most successful partnerships are those in which people mirror each other in some ways and also let "opposite" qualities shine.

/Eve-A Model for Humankind

Look at humanity as a family: Adam is like the firstborn child, and Eve and all the generations following are like children who are not firstborns. We are born into a world where we *must* be cooperative social beings. Eve's creation as the first partner provides a paradigm of balance for *every* partner in *every* relationship. As stand-ins for God, we should play the role of *ezer kenegdo* in all our partnerships. Likewise, we are also all, as Adam was, in need of an *ezer kenegdo.*

Much has been written about the dilemma of approaching the story of Adam and Eve from a feminist viewpoint, and many solutions have been proposed. Our reading of this creation story suggests that the feminist dilemma may arise partly from limited, culture-bound interpretations. Eve, the original *ezer kenegdo,* was not, as some commentators have imagined, created merely to "help out," for women have been, from the beginning, dynamic partners in successful relationships--unions that are greater than the sum of their parts. Genesis offers a message of personal dignity and power, and a deeper understanding of the balance between mates, through this reading of Eve's role in relationship to Adam.

Re-Reading Genesis and Our Lives'

LEORA It. **ZEITLIN**

'"Go forth flekh lekha/ *from your land, from your community of birth, from your ancestral home... ' (Gen. 12:1). One teacher explains the verse means 'Go* to *yourself.'* Go *!lack lo your essence to find out what you are really made of.*"

-LAWRENCE KUSHNER AND KERRY OLITZKY,
SPARKS BENEATH THE SURFACE

Two years ago, seven months pregnant and feeling the fetus squirm inside me, I re-read the Book of Genesis. That month, my eldest niece, whose family lives around the corner, prepared to enter university. For our family, one child would soon burst from the womb; another would step out of her home and into her adult life. As the world beckoned to each of them, I found myself musing about childhood and families, and wondering what our tradition might say at this dramatic juncture in our lives.

Recently, the notion of family has become a lightning rod for all sorts of public clamor. Some perpetuate the one-dimensional myth of the Happy Household headed by two heterosexual adults with 2.2 kids, the foundation of oft-trumpeted, but never defined "family values." Others point to teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse, child criminals, deadbeat dads, killer parents. We hear facile references to organizations as disparate as religious communities, therapy support groups, political parties, youth organizations-even countries-as "like a big family." Whose family? And what drives people to turn every group into one? Of course, there are some who demonize the family as much as others romanticize it, blaming it for all manner of individual and societal pathology.

Jewish tradition offers a more complex picture. Genesis, the prototypical text on the subject, turns every idealized image of family life on its head. Our ancestors' narratives depict violent familial jealousies, terror, incest, revenge, deception, betrayal, and murder. Cain slays Abel, Sarah cruelly casts out Hagar and

Leora It. Zeitlin is an editorial co-director of Zephyr Press, a writer, and a mother of two Jiving in southern New Mexico.

We are exiled into the future, away from our present lives and the past. We flee into it.... All of life summed up as tension between times of holding on, times of leaving go; between resting secure and breaking loose.... Gather your belongings and leave this land. Sweep the floors before you go.... All our lives in the Diaspora, fleeing *ourselves.* When do we come home into our body and heart?

We know the sound of women wailing and keening. What would happen if all the men of the world were keeners, if *all* could cry and, then, cry together?

How difficult those years were! And how many of us trod slippery ground at that age, often only to find ourselves peering into a dark abyss. I shared these entries with my niece to point out that she is not alone, and that one's transitions and struggles can take many shapes during a lifetime.

Women's Stories

The Book of Genesis comments on transition and struggle throughl another story: That of Lot's wife, who turns around to see the fire and brimstone hailing down on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19: 24-26). Much has been written about whether her action bespeaks inner strength or weakness, or for what she might have been look- ing.2 For me, the salient message is that in looking back she becomes paralyzed, unable to go forward. She becomes a pillar of salt-the very image of tears petrified, ossified. That is her tragedy.

Many people become paralyzed by "looking back"-and for a variety of reasons. For some, childhood proves too bitter, hurt and anger too great. Others find Jewish or global history too fraught with pain to want to engage with it. Still others observe our tradition only in its most superficial forms and, rather than probing deeper, abandon it for something else. Or people can become paralyzed if they have lost all sense of meaning.

As my niece embarks on her own journey, she will find that the challenge throughout one's adult life is to be able to look back *and* to move ahead. One look is rarely enough; and there is no Hfinal" analysis. As I discovered again last summer, we have to keep re-reading-our lives and our texts. By stepping into the fray-questioning and answering, turning and returning, wrestling and resting-we engage with our past and become a part of its formidable transmission.

Each time, new E_aths are illuminated. This time, as my niep etrhome anct as [Droughtanother child into this world, the family, with a mixture of apprehens10n and pride, said to each: "Go forth" (Gen. 12:1). Out of these wrenching schisms and separations, the most enduring covenants can emerge.

Family

ROSE L LEVINSON AND ELLEN LEVEE

"What is given at the beginning challenges man to the self-transformations that will allow him, in spite of everything, to stand in the Presence of God."

-AVIVAH GOTILIEB ZORNBERG,
GENESIS: THE BEGINNINGS OF DESIRE

The table is set with a white cloth. Smells of fried onions, baked */;lallah* (braided egg bread), vegetable stew fill the house. The candles are lit, and *Shabbat* (Sabbath) has begun. At the table sit three adults, two small children, and a baby. The baby is crying, thl' two children are fighting. The husband-father is tired from a long, hard week at work. The wife-mother is tired from struggling to get everything and everyone ready for *Slrabbat.* The third adult, a widow, is angry because she feels like an outsider in her own home. The wife picks up the baby; the father claims the attention of the little boy; the widow calms the girl. Each makes the effort to

Rose L. Levinson writes, manages a public broadcasting station, and continues to be an aunt, friend, and companion.
Dr. Ellen Lasser LeVee lives in Berkeley, California, with her husband and three children. Her hobbies include writing and leaching.

Sometimes I remember to pencil in
a new baby
otherwise I tend to forget
the name
the sex
the fact of existence.

You probably think I'm crazy
but I save
all my tattered
fake leather
Woolworth
address books.
They're in the top center drawer
of my dresser.

An Ethical Will

FRANCINE KLAGSBRUN

*"And Jacob called his children and said, 'Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which will befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, children of **Jacob."'***

-GEN. 49:1-2

The practice of bequeathing moral advice to one's children has its origins in the Bible. Jacob offers his children words of admonition and love shortly before he dies, and other sages follow that practice. But written testimonies designed to convey parents' spiritual and ethical wishes for their

Francine Klagsbrun is the author of more than a dozen books on social, family, and religious issues, among them *Mixed Feelings: Love, Hate, Rivalry, and Reco11ci/iatio11 Among Broth£rs and Sisters* (Bantam, 1992) and *Jewish Days* (Farrar, **Straus and Giroux, 1996).**

children first became popular during the Middle Ages. Some of these took the form of letters given to children during the parents' lifetimes; others were to be opened after a parent's death. Some were written at tl1e end of one's life; others over a period of years or on a special occasion. Many were written during times of crisis and persecution, including the Holocaust. All types are known as ethical wills. Moral, and not financial, documents, they leave a lasting record of a parent's advice, hopes, and ideals.'



To my daughter Sarah Devora, written on her twenty-fourth birthday:

My darling Sarah,

At your Bat Mitzvah' cckl:>ratinn, when you w<>re tw,,lv,, y,, rs old, I toasted you with a story from the Talmud. It was the story of Rabbi Na}.lman who asked Rabbi Isaac to bless him as they were saying goodbye. Rabbi Isaac responded:

[A) man rested in [a] tree's shade, ate of its fruits, and drank its water. When he was about to leave, he turned to the tree and said: "O tree, beautiful tree, with what shall I bless you?

Shall I say that your fruits should be sweet? They are sweet. Shall I wish that your shade be pleasant? It is already pleasant. Shall I ask that a brook flow by you? A brook does flow by you. Therefore I will bless you by saying: May it be God's will that all the shoots taken from you be like you." So it is with you [Rabbi Isaac said to Rabbi Nahman]. What can I wish you? Leaming? You have learning. Wealth? You have wealth. Children? You have children. Therefore I say: May it be God's will that all your offspring be like you." (BT *Ta'a* 5b-6a)

Now, twelve years later, I know more deeply and with even greater joy that wishing you offspring who will be like you is, indeed, the finest dream I can have for you. For, to paraphrase Rabbi Isaac, you have beauty and generosity and sensitivity that come from the depth of your being. These, transmitted to your children, will surely make them a blessing to you, as you have been a blessing to Dad and me.

Why do I think of children at a time when you have not even launched into marriage yet? Because I know, and you have said

avenger, refuge.[3] Sometimes, God's help takes the form of power in action, sometimes the quiet strength of an embrace or the protective presence of a shield. Still other help requires the simple promise of readiness: "God is our refuge and our strength; an *ezer* in trouble, very present" (Psalm 46:2).

Be it from superior or peer, God or human, help is alway;-} responsive to the one being helped. Being helpful means being attentive to another's needs. Help-like the first woman-is quintessentially a partner, born of relationship, but not necessarily subservient.

In her role as *ezer,* Eve assists not only Adam but God as well. Looking at creation, God recognized: "It is not good that the man should be alone." Although God was complete as "one," the human was not. Adam's loneliness was an incompleteness. God did not bridge the distance between human and divine by saying *"hineni"* (here I am), by becoming Adam's partner. Rather, God responded by creating a surrogate, a partner in Eve. God needed a helper to bring the presence of God to Adam.

As children of both Adam and Eve, every human being plays both roles. Now, Adam-like, we look for someone to quell our loneliness, help us with our existential and practical dilemmas, meet our needs. Now, Eve-like, we act as true partners, emissaries of God, sent to heal loneliness and provide hel

fopposite, but Not Opposing

But Eve is more than *ezer;* she is *ezer ke11egdo.* No one else in th-;1 Bible merits this juxtaposition of terms. Together, the two words spell out a complex and profound recipe for partnership. *Keneged* literally means "present," "in front of," "right there." Readers of the translation "opposite" miss the spatial aspect of that word and generally infer opposition or conflict. *Kenegdo* rarely bears that meaning.•

In true partnership, the role of *ezer* needs the complement of *'Jkeneged,* that is, constancy and reliability. One cannot be a reliable helper and decide, on a fancy, to be present one day and absent the next. Relationship implies covenant, readiness to be there for) another, whatever one's momentary desires. To be an *ezer* means one *can* be a helper; to be an *ezer kenegdo* means one *must* be a elper.

Combining *Ezer* and *Kenegdo*

The relationship between Eve and Adam is built on this mixture of *ezer* and *kenegdo,* of support and complemen!,\To be complementary to a person requires that one is fully present for her/ him *and* that the other person is present for oneself. One's identity is determined in part through the give and take of the relationship. True, trusting relationships entail such a degree of mutual helpfulness (ezer) and consistency of presence *(kenegdo)* that ego boundaries are expanded to include the other. We have each learned and grown from acknowledging and experiencing the differences between ourselves and our life partners.

Meg's Vision of Complementarity On occasion, *keneged* can mean "opposite" in a non-spatial sense. Eve's role "opposite" Adam suggests that partners complement each other by contributing opposing qualities-for example, patience countering impulsiveness, wittiness countering seriousness, toughness countering sensitivity(One of many biblical instances of such a complementary arrangement is found in the relationship between Isaac and Rebecca. Rebecca is often active, and Isaac, passive. Rebecca volunteers to leave her family with little or no notice and travel with a servant she doesn't know in order to marry a man she has never met. Isaac is waiting at home, quietly meditating in a field when she arrives (Gen. 24:63). At the end of their lives, Rebecca, having received a divine revelation that the older will serve the younger (Gen. 25:23), conspires with Jacob to realize God's intention that Jacob receive the blessing of the firstborn. The plan works both because of Isaac's quiet acceptance-knowing or unknowing, according to different interpretations-and because of Rebecca's activity.

A mtx of personal characteristics brings complexity and balance to a relationship. Yet, one partner's strength does not imply any inadequacy in the other, or any obligation to render one's partner "complete."

innermost sacred sanctuary (Holy of Holies). 1he *ner tamid* (eternal light) of the *ohel mo'ed* was like the light that burned from one *Shabbat* to the next in Sarah's tent. The sacrifices of livestock, grains, and produce offered to God can be likened to Sarah's blessed dough. Finally, the cloud signifying the *Shekhinah* hovered above both the *ohel mo'ed* and Sarah's tent.

The *Shabbat:* A Contemporary *Ohel Mo'ed*

/In our day, the *Shabbat* table is an analog to the table in the *ohel mo'ed,* where twelve *liallot* (loaves) were placed. The candles are lit, analogous to the seven-branched lampstand in the *ohel mo'ed* that always remained lit. In short, the everyday life of the house in which we dwell is elevated to the very highest level of *kedushah_j* CJ'" (holiness) simply by carrying out preparations for *Shabbat.* It is no surprise to realize that many Jews define making a Jewish home in terms of making *Shabbat.* One way to look at homemaking, in all senses of the word, is as the elevation of the mundane into the sacred, as one cooks, deans, celebrates, repairs, rests, studies, converses, and makes blessings.

Contemporary *Shabbat* preparations parallel the physical approach to the inner Holy of Holies in the *ohel mo'ed.* Even as the holiness gradually increased in intensity as one drew nearer to the Holy of Holies, so Sabbath preparations gradually intensify as the time draws closer to the moment of candle lighting, the opening ritual of *Shabbat.* The Day of Rest informs my entire week. Like a priestess, like a keeper of the Holy Temple, I prepare my home-with errands and intentionality, tasks and Torah-to be a suitable vessel for receiving *Shabbat.*[3]

I enjoy bringing guests into my home on *Shabbat.* In so doing, I connect with the traditions of my grandparents that fell into disuse. In so doing, I follow the tradition of my ancestors, Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18:2f). One of the greatest *mitzvot* (commandments, sacred obligations) is *hakhnasat or im* (welcoming guests). Among the Jews of Ethiopia, there is a saying for bringing guests into the home: uPlease come in! My house is the house of Abraham." Ethiopian Jews consider guests to be sacred messengers from God like the angels who came to visit Abraham and

Sarah (Gen. 18:1-16). According to the *midrash,* Abraham and Sarah were model hosts in their desert *ohel* (Gen. *Rabbalr* 48:9). Abraham would not just wait for people to come to his tent. If he saw strangers in the distance, he would run to greet them and welcome them into his home (Gen. 18:2).

Home Can Be a Holy Place

The unique sacred qualities that the *midrash* attributes to the original Jewish dwelling demonstrate how the tent/home is the archetype of a holy place. The first holy space that accompanied the Jews on their desert wanderings recalls Sarah's tent. Because the *ohel mo'ed* had to travel along with the Jewish people, the manifestations of the sacred had to be portable. Perhaps that is why it is so difficult to define the Jewish home in terms of palpable objects. Rather, what one does in the home is what makes it holy. For those, like myself, who did not grow up in a Jewishly observant home, the way to make one must be discovered anew.

Through the prayer technique of meditation,• I have leamed to slow down and relish homemaking for the connection it creates to place and to all my ancestors-male **and** female-who prized the homes they made. I have learned to focus my attention on the task at hand-cutting vegetables, sweeping the kitchen floor, changing diapers, helping with homework-in order to participate fully, with my entire being. I used to notice my Granma Bela doing this as she deaned her stove. She treated the scouring and polishing as an act of ritual purification. *Kavva11a/1* (spiritual intentionality) is this very quality of giving full attention to the activity of the moment and dedicating it to a force beyond oneself. I find that it is possible to employ this spiritual practice in my domestic tasks.

We must contend with the current devaluing of housework and women who work in the home. We must challenge the historical dissociation and sex-role division between work in the home and work outside it, between women's blessings in the home, and men's prayer in public. Yet creating a home and, specifically, doing housework-making food, preparing for *Shabbat,* cleaning the *house-can* feel like an honored sacred role, an opportunity to bask in the light from Sarah's tent.

Home and Homeland

A Light **Returns to Sarah's Tent:** My Home **Is the Sacred Tabernacle**

PENINA V. **ADELMAN**

"A11d Isaac brought [Rebecca] into his mother Sarah's tent and she became 11is *wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after* l,is *mother's death."*

-GEN. 24:67

Before I knew a word of Hebrew, I learned about the *Shekhinah* (close-dwelling presence of God, associated with the feminine) from an Israeli college professor. I learned that *Shekhinah* was the part of God that is manifest in the world, God's consort.' The *S/1ekhinah* became the symbol of all I was searching for because it represented what had been missing in my own life: A feminine Guide to the sacred; a Wise Woman; a Keeper of the Knowledge of Life and Death; a Homemaker. It seemed somehow more natural for me to focus on *Shekhinah* than on the Changing Woman of Navaho religion, one of my previous models of the divine Feminine, but I could not have articulated the reason.

Twenty years have passed since I prayed to the *Shekhinah* to be my Guide in the wilderness, twenty years during which I married, became a mother, and made my own home; twenty years during which the women's movement has grown and become more diverse and more factionalized, more sophisticated and more corporate, more effective in the secular world and more cognizant of the lack of a spiritual core. I speak Hebrew now, and when I have a difficult question, I am able to look into Jewish sources myself to find an answer. In a sense, I have come home to Judaism. I have found the particular spot in the world where I will pitch my tent. For now.

Penina V. Adelman is a writer and social worker who makes her home in Newton, **Massachusetts.**

Sacred Tents

In the ancient Hebrew society recounted in Genesis, our ancestors were also nomads. They dwelled in tents, homes that could be moved or shifted as the need arose. *"Ohe/,"* the Hebrew word for tent, comes from an Arabic word meaning "to be inhabited" that is similar to the Assyrian, *a/u,* settlement or city, and *ma'a/u, ma'altu,* bed.[2] The Bible tells us *ofohel sarah* (the matriarch Sarah's tent) and the *ohel mo'ed* (Tent of Meeting), where the Holy of Holies was housed during the period of desert wandering before the Children of Israel entered the Promised Land.

? rl lte *midrash* states that while Sarah was alive, a light burned in her tent from one *Shabbat* (Sabbath) to the next; dough for the loaves of bread was blessed; and a cloud (signifying the divine Presence) always hovered over her tent (Gen. *Rabbal,* 60:16 and Rashi on Gen. 24:67). When she died, these things ceased. However, when Isaac's new wife, Rebecca, came into Sarah's tent, the light, the dough, and the cloud all returned. According to *midrash,* Sarah's tent foreshadowed *el mo'ed* (ienf<lf Meeting) with its accompanying fire, sacrifices. and clou o t e *Shekhinah.* Sarah and Rebecca were precursors of the priesthood; they w re the hoiv women of their sacred tents.-

7 1- 1he *ohel mo'ed* was the designated place where'human beings went to receive oracles from God)ts structure conveyed the message of a gradually intensifying meeting with the sacred. A worshipper first entered the outer court of the *o/1e/ mo'ed.* Then the devotee reached the altar; finally, only the High Priest himself was able to enter the Holy of Holies where the Torah was kept inside the Ark. Even the materials used to make the *ohel mo'ed* correlated with the relative degree of holiness of each item. The Ark was made of pure gold and the altar in the outer court, of bronze.

..r-

Only the woman destined to be Sarah's successor, Rebecca, could come into Sarah's tent and make the light, the dough, and the cloud reappear. So too in the *ohel mo'ed,* only the high priest, the properly designated descendent of Aaron, could enter the

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is then requeired to give Tamar away in marriage to his third son, so that she can produce offspirng in his line, but he never summonsher back for the promissed wedding. In response Tamar plays the harlot and tricks Judah into sleeping with her, when confronted with the child, Judah denies it to be his, but Tamar produces evidence and he responds, *Tzadaknh mimenni,* 'She is more righteious than I" This complicated idiomatic phrase can be understood two ways, one as we have rendered it, She is more rightious than me, or according to the midrash, "She is right (tzedakah). It is from me (mimenni)." That is the chlld is from me, meaning Judah. In the end it is the forgotten Tamar; the negelected brothers' obligation to father her children; Judah's lapsed sense of duty are, in the end, most remembered. It is from the line of Judah and Tamar thatt he messiah will be born (Gen 38:29, Ruth4:18-22). Tamar reminds all of those at our table, those women who feel their contributions to family and faith have gone unnoticed, have been forgotten, that for her at least she needed to be forgotten before God and our tradition could remember her with such honor and reverence.

Debra Orenstein writes, "Like Tamar and Joseph, Jewish women have suffered not only oppression, but also repression· exclusion fromt he collective conscious memory of our people. But by definition repression leaves a trail, which points to buried problems· and treasures. Thus, in biblical tales of women's victimization, the woman's point of view is often recoverable. Moreover, dignity and insights are (re)gained by telling the familar story from her perspective. Some of the most maligned and mistreated women of the Bible·Tamar among them, are also, when one scratches the surface, some of the bravest, most independent, and most spiritually evolved.

Miriam, they seem to be easily forgotten. Rebecca's death is never reported, Miriam's story is full of references to Moses and Aaron, and never fully her own.

Women become secondary character's in the bible, when the text uses the metaphor of God remembered them for Sarah, Rachel and later Hannah it is for fertility, not covenant as it is so frequently employed for men. Even the Hebrew root word for memory, zayin, chaf, raish is also the root for male. In contrast when Israel forgets God, Israel is commonly represented as an adulterous wife or Harlot. (Ezekiel 16:15, Hosea 3:1). As Debra Orenstein writes in her second volume to her Lifecyles anthology on Jewish Feminist Thought, "In a culture that values memoty as a path to living rightly, connecting with God and finding salvation, it is painful to embody the dominant symbol of forgetting and at the same time, to be so frequently forgotten. (Orenstein p. 24)" She continues, "It is not malicious, but it is also not accidental, that women have been 'written out of history, as philosopher Jean Francois Lyotard has noted, along the with histoty and theology of remembering, there is also a politics of forgetting." (Orenstein p. 24). "Memory, not unlike the rabbinic process of Midrash is a medium through which we dialogue with the past. The conversation never ends and is never - or perhaps continually - canonized. Generations of experience and interpretation form the holy tradition. Thus, it is never too late for women, or anyone, to join in the conversation." (Orenstein p.25)

Let us now, briefly join in the conversation of the women gathered around our table. On the subject of memory and being forgotten none speak louder than Tamar, Judah's daughter in law. Tamar is a tragic figure she is repeatedly left behind and forgotten. Her First two husbands, both sons of Judah, die because of their sins. Judah

led me to turn and kiss it, which reminded me of the scroll inside, which caused me to think about the shema written on that scrolls, which reminded me to think about God."

Ram Dass created a reminder that would trigger him to kiss a box, which, in tum, is a reminder of the text inside, which itself is a reminder to have one's hand, one's third eye, and the very doorposts of one's house become signs - reminders of commandments. Rabbi Debra Orenstein points out the pathway to Jewish meaning and observance is memory, and memory needs to be jogged.

Tonight is about memory; memory of Jewish women, the challenges they faced in our Jewish story and the faith they shaped by meeting those challenges. In Jewish tradition, and biblical theology memory leads to observance, we are commanded to remember the sabbath day, in order to keep it holy. To remember that we too were once slaves in the land of Egypt, hence we must not afflict the stranger in our midst. God commands us to remember Miriam's affliction, the evil of Amalek, the trials of our desert wanderings. Biblical theology makes it quite clear, remembering God, Covenant and commandment leads to observance, and hence to harmony and reward. Forgetting them leads to sin, chaos and oblivion (Deut 11:13-28, Num. 15:39-40).

Yet memory when it comes to Jewish women in the Judaism is a problem, so many women in the Bible and throughout Jewish history have been forgotten. Sure we can point to numerous women who *are* remembered, whose deeds are recorded to varying degrees. But most would conclude that women who represent at least half of biblical society, who were created as Eve was, to be man's partner's in the world are, under represented, their stories either not recorded, or not told fully. Even women about whom we know a great deal in the Torah, Rebecca, Sarah, Rachel, Leah, and

we would make it a shabbat dinner, as together all assembled mystically waved their hands three times over the sabbath candles, covered their eyes and sang the blessing in unison. And when the sweet wine is passed from woman to woman, and the challah, baked by a generation of hands is tom and tasted, when the soup is finally on the table, and all assembled sit down to eat, what would Sarah say to Golda, what would Eve whose eating of the apple led us out of Eden, say to Miriam who danced with timbrels leading us across the Red Sea, back into the land. What would Bueriah, whose Talmud study was never fully accepted by some many, say to Sally Priesand whose Rabbinate is still today a subject of heated debate and controversy? I would hope they would hold each others gaze in their eyes and exclaim in full voice *Dorsheini! Dorsheini!* Interpret me, interpret my life, my story. Find yourself in me, find yourself in the gaps and lapses of my story, that were never recorded by the men who wrote our collective history and only viewed the world through their gender specific lens.

The Jewish-born master of Eastern Philosophy, Ram Dass described how he explored Judaism after years of being away from it. Dass explains, in the Torah God explains the reason for a mezuzah by saying to the Jewish people, "You will come to know Me as a result of remembering Me." The first thing I did when I read this was to buy a mezuzah, and place it on the doorpost of my house, and I kissed it every time I left the house or came into the house. Doing so reminded me of the scroll that was inside, on which was written the shema, the words of which reminded me to think of God.... As time went by I was so busy going somewhere that I forgot about the mezuzah. The minute I realized that, I took a string and hung it over the door, so that it hit my forehead when I walked out, which reminded me the mezuzah was there, which

and Huldah bat Judah Halevi, whose command of verse helped shape the Golden Age of Spain. And we would include a Jewish scribe named Miriam bat Benayah from medieval Yemen who wrote the following inscription on the sefer Torah she penned in her own hand, "Please do not fault me if you find a mistake, as I am a nursing woman."

In the modem period our list is limited only by the number place settings of china we have, though for such an impressive list of guests we might use paper plates just to accommodate more people. How could we pick between the witnesses to holocaust Anne Frank and Hannah Szenesh, and the women who brought a Jewish state, Zionists like Henritta Szold and Golda Meir. Writers and Scholars such as Hannah Ardent, Lea Goldberg, Nahama Liebowitz, and Justic Ruth Bader Ginsberg would make the list, as would activits' Rebecca Gratz and Gloria Steinem, pyschologist Melanie Klien, astronaut Judith Resnick, entertainers Barabara Streisand and Bette Midler, the first female Rabbi Sally Preisand. And these are only the names of people we know, to get a complete representation of the woman who have shapped Jewish life we would want to include an immigrant Jewish woman from Eastern Europe who led her family through the doors of Ellis Island to a new life in America. We would of course need the voices of modern Jewish women, those who marched for civil rights and equality, those who protested the war in Vietnam, or worked assembly lines during WWII. We would need the Jewish single woman of the 90's, as well as the single mother, the newly wed, the college student. We would need the grandmother who struggles pass on tradition to her children, and we would need the teenage Jewish girls who has never known a world without women Rabbis, gender sensitive prayer, and Feminist Jewish theology. We would invite all these women to our dinner table, maybe

Debroah, Bat Sheva, Esther, Naomi and Ruth. ll we are well versed in Biblical women, we may include a little known prophetess named Huldah whom we have to thank for the inclusion of the book of Deuteronomy in the biblical canon. We may also include the biblical Helen of Troy, Leah's daughter Dinah, over whose virtue the entire city of Shechem was destroyed, all of its men killed by Dinah's vengeful brothers. The list while not exhaustive, or lengthy compared to the male characters of the Bible is still sizable and significant. Each of these women played crucial roles in the Jewish narrative, each of these women represent a unique and important biblical model of ethics, character, determination and reliance for the modem era.

Searching beyond the Bible we may want a representative from the Rabbinic period. That period after the destruction of the second Temple in 70 CE that came to shape the Judaism we practice and observe today. Here our list of potential guests is much shorter, there is Beruriah, the only woman in the Talmud mentioned to participate in debates of Jewish law, and the foster-mother of Rav Abaye, of which he frequently spoke with great reverence. Beyond these few women our representatives from this formative period of Jewish history are all men, and thus disqualified from our dinner party.

From the end of Rabbinic period in 500ce, through all of the middle ages up until the start of the modem period only a handful of Jewish woman are widely known or written about in Jewish History. We would do well to include all of them on our guest list, certainly we would make room for, Gluckel of Hameln a 17th century German woman whose detailed diary comprises much of what we know about the life of a Jewish woman in that era. We would include the Spanish poets Kasmuna hint Ismalia,

Daniel J. Moskovitz
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Women of Kol Tikvah: Women in Judaism

Growing up I used to play an imagination game called, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner". To play this game you made of a list of people living or dead that you would like to have over for a dinner party at your house, you then extrapolated from the guest list what the dinner conversation might be. My guest list was often made up of sports heroes and movie stars, how great I imagined it would be to have Hank Aaron, Willie Mays, Babe Ruth and Joe Dimagio over for dinner. I would raised the subject of the greatest baseball game they ever played and sit back and listen to their stories. Imagine a dinner table filled with the world's greatest explores, Louis and Oark, Columbus, Magellin, and Neil Armstrong, sharing tales about their great adventures. Sometimes I imagined a mixed company of scientists, scholars, inventors, and captains of industry as we tried to tackle the worlds ills, fixing problems and creating a better society.

What makes this game fun is when you imagine the cross talk that would take place, not only the relating of stories, but what might Hertzl say to Netanyahu, imagine Jesus sitting down with Jerry Fallwell, though I don't imagine Jerry would sit very long. If you can stomach it imagine Hitler and Ellie Weisel coming face to face. The guests need not be famous or even specific individuals, how about a dinner party made up of 10 generations of women from the same family, could you imagine sitting across the table from your great-great-great-great-great grandmother as she told the story of life under the Cossaks in Eastern Europe, or I guess in my case what the original Kuggle recipe really was?

Now imagine for a moment a dinner party made up of great Jewish women from the past, who would be on your guest list. From the Torah we might take the matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, certainly Eve and Miriam, perhaps Tamar,

Rosh Hodesh Service

Blessing for the New Moon:
Blessed are You Eternal our

God, Ruler of the Universe, at whose word the heavens were made.

To the moon we say: Renew yourself; to us You are a crown of glory, sustaining us from the day of birth. Like the moon may we be renewed in time to come, to honor You, our Maker, and our Creator.
Blessed is the Eternal, who renews months.

Reader:
When we gather together to worship as women I thank God that I was born a woman.

As we bless each other and the women in our lives, the tears flow and through them we are connected by grief, love, joy and insight

Women connect to each other, to mothers, grandmothers, foremothers, to daughters and to granddaughters.
Your grandmother becomes mine and my daughter becomes yours. This connection is powerful -- a strong current of feeling conducted by the medium of our tears.

To some, tears may be a symbol of a woman's weakness. Here they are the symbol of a woman's strength; her ability to express feeling, empathy, connection.

Shechinah (God's presence) I pray that Your spirit may pervade those whose tears will not flow; that they may experience the release of feeling that connects us to each other, to the tradition of our ancestors to our progeny and to all humanity.

For the blessing of tears, I thank: God I was born a woman.

Reader:
Like the moon,

we shed our Jaye .
Leave them at the door.
We who caretake ·re.
We who are healers.
We who are doors.
We who mother the world.
It's time for us.
This time is for us.
We step inside the sacred circle.
We make
space for ourselv s
tobe.
The moon now gl stoward
darkness,
toward rest.
She retreats
in order to emerge
whole.
She quits
in order to
fill night
with light.
So too shall we
make a space for ourselves.
A space of renewal.
So we who nourish life
can emerge as the moon
bearing
our light
our touch
to better repair our world."

Miriam's Song

CHORUS
And the women dancing with their timbrels
followed Miriam as they sang her song.
Sing a song to the one whom we exalted
Miriam and the women danced and danced the whole night long.

And Miriam was a weaver of unique variety
The tapestry she wove was one which sang our history,
With every strand and ever thread she crafted her delight,
A woman touched with spirit she dances toward the light

CHORUS

When Miriam stood upon the shores and gazed across the sea.
The wonder of the miracle she soon came to believe
Whoever thought the sea would part with an outstretched hand.
And we would pass to freedom and march to the promised land.

CHORUS

And Miriam the Prophet took her timbrel in her hand
And all the women followed her just as she had planned,
And Miriam raised her voice in song, and she sang with praise and might,
We've just lived through a miracle, we're going to dance all night!

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We make
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to be.
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whole.
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Rashi's Daughters

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In the modem period our list is limited only by the number place settings of china we have, though for such an impressive list of guests we might use paper plates just to accommodate more people. How could we pick between the witnesses to holocaust Anne Frank and Hannah Szenesh, and the women who brought a Jewish state, Zionists like Henritta Szold and Golda Myer. Writers and Scholars such as Hannah Ardent, Lea Goldberg, and Nahama Liebowitz, would make the list, as would activits' Rebecca Gratz and Gloria Steinem, pyschologist Melanie Klien, astronaut Judith Resnick, entertainer Barabara Streisand, the first female Rabbi Sally Preisand. And these are only the names of people we know, we would have to include an immigrant Jewish woman from Eastern Europe who led her family through the doors of Ellis Island to a new life in America. We would of course need the voices of modem Jewish women, those who marched for civil rights and equality, those who protested the war in Vietnam, or worked assembly lines during WWII. We would need the Jewish single woman of the 90's, as well as the single mother, the newly wed, the college student. We would need the grandmother who struggle ass ontradition to her children, and we would need the teenage Jewish girls who has never known a world without women Rabbis, gender sensitive prayer, and Feminist Jewish theology. We would invite all these women to our dinner table, maybe we would make it a shabbat dinner, as together all assembled mystically waved their hands three times over

the sabbath candles, covered their eyes and sang the blessing in unison. And when the sweet wine is passed from woman to woman, and the challah, baked by a generation of hands is tom and tasted, when the soup is finally on the table, and all assembled sit down to eat, what would Sarah say to Golda, what would Eve whose eating of the apple led us out of Eden, say to Miriam who danced with timbrels leading us across the Red Sea, back into the land. What would Bueriah, whose Talmud study was never fully accepted by some many, say to Sally Priesand whose Rabbinate is still today a subject of heated debate and controversy? I would hope they would hold each others gaze in their eyes and exclaim in full voice *Dorsheini! Dorsheini!* Interpret me, interpret my life, my story. Find yourself in me, find yourself in the gaps and lapses of my story, that were never recorded by the men who wrote our collective history and only viewed the world through their gender specific lens.

The Jewish-born master of Eastern Philosophy, Ram Dass described how he explored Judaism after years of being away from it. Dass explains, in the Torah God the reason for a mezuzah by saying to the Jewish people, "You will come to know Me as a result of remembering Me." The first thing I did when I read this was to buy a mezuzah, and place it on the doorpost of my house, and I kissed it every time I left the house or came into the house. Doing so reminded me of the scroll that was inside, on which was written the shema, the words of which reminded me to think of God.... As time went by I was so busy going somewhere that I forgot about the mezuzah. The minute I realized that, I took a string and hung it over the door, so that it hit my forehead when I walked out, which reminded me the mezuzah was there, which led me to tum and kiss it, which reminded me of the scroll inside, which caused me to

think about the shema written on that **scrollt** which reminded me to think about God."

Ram Dass created a reminder that would trigger him to kiss a box, which, in turn, is a reminder of the text inside, which itself is a reminder to have one's hand, one's third eye, and the very doorposts of one's house become signs - reminders of commandments. Rabbi Debra Orenstein points out the pathway to Jewish meaning and observance is memory, and memory needs to be jogged.

Tonight is about memory; memory of Jewish women, the challenges they faced in our Jewish story and the faith they shaped by meeting those challenges. In Jewish tradition, and biblical theology memory leads to observance, we are commanded to remember the sabbath day, in order to keep it holy. To remember that we too were once slaves in the land of Egypt, hence we must not afflict the stranger in our midst. God commands us to remember Miriam's affliction, the evil of Amalek, the trials of our desert wanderings. Biblical theology makes it quite clear, remembering God, Covenant and commandment leads to observance, and hence to harmony and reward. Forgetting them leads to sin, chaos and oblivion (Deut 11:13-28, Num. 15:39-40).

Yet memory when it comes to Jewish women in the Judaism is a problem, so many women in the Bible and throughout Jewish history have been forgotten. Sure we can point to numerous women who *are* remembered, whose deeds are recorded to varying degrees. But most would conclude that women who represent at least half of biblical society, who were created as Eve was, to be man's partner's in the world are, under represented, their stories either not recorded, or not told fully. Even women about whom we know a great deal in the Torah, Rebecca, Sarah, Rachel, Leah, and Miriam, they seem to be easily forgotten. Rebecca's death is never reported, Miriam's

story is full of references to Moses and Aaron, and never fully her own.

Women become secondary character's in the bible, when the text uses the metaphor of God remembered them for Sarah, Rachel and later Hannah it is for fertility, not covenant as it is so frequently employed for men. the Hebrew root word for memory, zayin, chaf, raish is also the root for male. In contrast when Israel forgets God, Israel is commonly represented as an adulterous wife or Harlot. (Ezekiel 16:15, Hosea 3:1). As Debra Orenstein writes in her second volume to her Lifecyles anthology on Jewish Feminist Thought, "In a culture that values memory as a path to living rightly, connecting with God and finding salvation, it is painful to embody the dominant symbol of forgetting and at the same time, to be so frequently forgotten. (Orenstein p. 24)" She continues, "It is not malicious, but it is also not accidental, that women have been 'written out of history, as philosopher Jean Francois Lyotard has noted, along the with history and theology of remembering, there is also a politics of forgetting." (Orenstein p. 24). "Memory, not unlike the rabbinic process of Midrash is a medium through which we dialogue with the past. The conversation never ends and is never - or perhaps continually - canonized. Generations of experience and interpretation form the holy tradition. Thus, it is never too late for women, or anyone, to join in the conversation." (Orenstein p. 25)

lets join in the conversation . . .