



## New Jewish Feminism: Probing the Past, Forging the Future

From Jewish Lights

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**New Jewish Feminism: Probing the Past, Forging the Future** From Jewish Lights

### Jewish Feminism: What Have We Accomplished? What Is Still to Be Done?

"When you are in the middle of the revolution you can't really plan the next steps ahead. But now we can. The book is intended to open up a dialogue between the early Jewish feminist pioneers and the young women shaping Judaism today.... Read it, use it, debate it, ponder it."

?from the Introduction

This empowering anthology looks at the growth and accomplishments of Jewish feminism and what that means for Jewish women today and tomorrow. It features the voices of women from every area of Jewish life?the Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, Orthodox and Jewish Renewal movements; rabbis, congregational leaders, artists, writers, community service professionals, academics, and chaplains, from the United States, Canada, and Israel?addressing the important issues that concern Jewish women:

- Women and Theology
- Women, Ritual and Torah
- Women and the Synagogue
- Women in Israel
- Gender, Sexuality and Age
- Women and the Denominations
- Leadership and Social Justice

Contributors: Beth Cooper Benjamin, EdD • Rabbi Donna Berman, PhD • Ellen Bernstein • Marla Brettschneider, PhD • Shifra Bronznick • Anita Diamant • Rabbi Jacqueline Koch Ellenson • Ruth Andrew Ellenson • Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell, PhD • Rabbi Tirzah Firestone • Idana Goldberg, PhD • Rabbi Elyse Goldstein • Jodie Gordon • Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb • Rabbi Jill Hammer, PhD • Sara

Hurwitz, Madricha Ruchanit (Religious Mentor) • Rabbi Jill Jacobs • Rabbi Valerie Joseph • Rabbi Karyn D. Kedar • Rabbi Naamah Kelman • Rabbi Gail Labovitz, PhD • Lori Hope Lefkovitz, PhD • Anne Lapidus Lerner, PhD • Rahel Lerner • Rabbi Jane Rachel Litman • Rabbi Dalia Marx, PhD • Rabbi Joseph B. Meszler • Rabbi Haviva Ner-David, PhD • Cantor Barbara Ostfeld • Rabbi Barbara Penzner • Judith Plaskow, PhD • Rabbi Irit Printz • Rabbi Einat Ramon, PhD • Rabbi Geela Rayzel Raphael • Rosie Rosenzweig • Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg • Rabbi Rachel Sabath Beit-Halachmi • Rabbi Rona Shapiro • Margalit Shilo, PhD • Rabbi Alana Suskin • Wendy Zierler, PhD

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Extraordinary ... encompasses the broad international spectrum of Jewish feminist advocates and analysts across denominational spectrums, from those who carefully consider halakhic boundaries to those who would remake Judaism from the ground up. Equally impressive, fresh new voices are here added to those of feminist pioneers. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in the renaissance in contemporary Jewish life."

**?Sylvia Barack Fishman, PhD**, professor of contemporary Jewish life, Brandeis University; author, *The Way Into the Varieties of Jewishness*

"For Jews, for feminists, for anyone who believes that we can transform our religions so that they meet the highest ethical standards, this book is required reading."

**?Vanessa L. Ochs, PhD**, associate professor of religious studies, University of Virginia; author, *Inventing Jewish Ritual*

"What a rich chorus of voices! We all know how much thought and creativity has come forth in the Jewish feminist movement over the past several decades. But to see it all together is truly breathtaking. A most impressive achievement!"

**?Dr. Arthur Green**, rector of the Rabbinical School and Irving Brudnick Professor of Philosophy and Religion, Hebrew College; author, *Ehyeh: A Kabbalah for Tomorrow*

"An amazing piece of work! The combination of range and depth, variety and sophistication is nothing short of remarkable. No stone is left unturned, no point on the spectrum unrepresented, no question unasked, no analysis ignored. This book will have 'legs' and will launch the next phase of work everywhere."

**?Blu Greenberg**, co-founder and first president of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance; author, *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition*

"In this rich volume, representatives of all denominations share their thoughts and experiences, offering us a summary and assessment of what has already been accomplished in the wake of women's increased participation in the public arena of Judaism, alongside a glimpse of the work and the promise that still lie ahead."

**?Dr. Tamar Ross**, professor of Jewish philosophy, Bar-Ilan University; author, *Expanding the Palace of Torah: Orthodoxy and Feminism*

"A profusion of wise and creative voices.... The flowering of women joining fully in shaping Judaism's future continues."

**?Rabbi Arthur Waskow, PhD**, director, the Shalom Center; coauthor with Rabbi Phyllis Berman, *A Time for Every Purpose under Heaven*; author of *Godwrestling?Round 2 and Down-to-Earth Judaism*

"A virtual salon of three generations of Jewish feminists, gathering to explore how far they have come, where they have yet to go, and the challenges and gifts they have given to us all."

**?Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin**, general consultant, COEJL, the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life; director, the Baltimore Jewish Environmental Network; author, *A Tapestry of Jewish Time and Tears of Sorrow, Seeds of Hope: A Jewish Spiritual Companion for Infertility and Pregnancy Loss*

"A worthy addition and an important contribution for setting the agenda for the future."

?**Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso**, senior rabbi, Congregation Beth El Zedeck, Indianapolis; author, *But God Remembered: Stories of Women from Creation to the Promised Land* and *Noah's Wife: The Story of Naamah*

"A spirited and broad-ranging collection of articles Jewish feminists across the spectrum will want to read."

?**Rachel Adler, PhD**, associate professor of modern Jewish thought and Judaism and gender at the School of Religion, University of Southern California, and Hebrew Union College Rabbinical School; author, *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics*

"A smart and comprehensive portrait of the promises and challenges of feminism across a broad spectrum of Jewish life today."

?**Dr. Rebecca Alpert**, associate professor of religion and women's studies, Temple University; author, *Like Bread on a Seder Plate*

#### From the Inside Flap

##### If You Think Jewish Feminism

Is Your Mother's Issue, Think Again Growing up in the 1960s, the notion of a woman rabbi, a woman Israeli Supreme Court judge, an Orthodox female Talmud scholar, or an Orthodox synagogue where women read the Torah from their side of the mechitzah were impossible, even ridiculous scenarios. Yet in the modern day, all of this is reaching the stage of "normative." What's left for Jewish feminism to accomplish?

Join Jewish women from all areas of Jewish life as they examine what makes a "Jewish woman" today, how feminism has affected her identity and whether the next generation of Jewish women is braced to tackle the challenging work still ahead.

#### About the Author

**Rabbi Elyse Goldstein**, one of the leading rabbis of a new generation, is director of Kolel: The Adult Center for Liberal Jewish Learning, a full-time progressive adult Jewish learning center. Goldstein lectures frequently throughout North America. She is also editor of *The Women's Torah Commentary: New Insights from Women Rabbis on the 54 Weekly Torah Portions*; and *The Women's Haftarah Commentary: New Insights from Women Rabbis on the 54 Weekly Haftarah Portions, the 5 Megillot and Special Shabbatot*; and author of the award-winning *New Jewish Feminism: Probing the Past, Forging the Future and ReVisions: Seeing Torah through a Feminist Lens* (all Jewish Lights).

**Rabbi Elyse Goldstein** is available to speak on the following topics:

- Women and Judaism
- Reform Judaism
- Jewish Parenting
- General Judaica

**Anita Diamant** is author of *The Red Tent; The New Jewish Wedding; Bible Baby Names: Spiritual Choices from Judeo-Christian Sources*; and *The New Jewish Baby Book* (Jewish Lights), among other books. She is a founder of Mayyim Hayyim, Living Waters Community Mikveh and the Paula J. Brody Family Education Center in Newton, Massachusetts.

Rabbi Donna Berman, PhD, is the executive director of the Charter Oak Cultural Center in Hartford, Connecticut. She holds a PhD in religion and social ethics from Drew University and is rabbi emerita of Port Jewish Center in Port Washington, New York. Rabbi Berman was the editor of a special edition of the *Journal of Reform Judaism*, celebrating twenty-five years of women in the rabbinate and is the author of numerous articles. She recently co-edited *The Coming of Lilith: Essays on Feminism, Judaism, and Sexual Ethics, 1973–2003* with Judith Plaskow.

**Ellen Bernstein** is the founder of *Shomrei Adamah*?Keepers of the Earth, the first institution dedicated to cultivating the ecological thinking and practices integral to Jewish life. She is author of *Ecology and the Jewish Spirit: Where Nature and the Sacred Meet* and currently works as director of community building at the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia.

**Ellen Bernstein** is available to speak on the following topics:

- Reading the Bible Ecologically
- Prayer from an Ecological Perspective
- Why Judaism Needs Ecology and Why the Environmental Movement Needs a Spiritual Approach
- Creation Theology
- Why (and How) to Start a Synagogue Garden or Farm!

**Marla Brettschneider, PhD**, is associate professor of political science and women's studies at the University of New Hampshire, where she also coordinates the queer studies program. She served as the executive director of Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ) from 2002 to 2004. Her books include *The Family Flamboyant: Race Politics, Queer Families, Jewish Lives; Democratic Theorizing from the Margins*; and *Cornerstones of Peace: Jewish Identity Politics and Democratic Theory*.

**Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell** is the director of the Pennsylvania Council of the Union for Reform Judaism.

Rabbi Jill Hammer, PhD, is the director of spiritual education at the Academy for Jewish Religion. She is also the director of Tel Shemesh, a website and community celebrating and creating Jewish earth-based traditions, and the cofounder of Kohenet: The Hebrew Priestess Training Program. She is the author of numerous essays, articles, and poems, and also of two books: *Sisters at Sinai: New Tales of Biblical Women* (Jewish Publication Society, 2001) and *The Jewish Book of Days: A Companion for All Seasons* (Jewish Publication Society, 2006).

**Rabbi Jill Jacobs** is executive director of T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights. . Widely acknowledged as one of the leading voices in Jewish social justice, Rabbi Jacobs is also the author of *There Shall Be No Needy: Pursuing Social Justice through Jewish Law and Tradition* and *Where Justice Dwells: A Hands-On Guide to Doing Social Justice in Your Jewish Community* (both Jewish Lights). She has been voted to the *Forward* newspaper's list of fifty influential Jews, to *Newsweek*'s list of the fifty most influential rabbis in America and to the *Jewish Week*'s list of "thirty-six under thirty-six."

**Rabbi Jill Jacobs is available to speak on the following topics:**

- Social Justice in Judaism: Historical, Textual and Political Roots, and Their Meaning for Jews Today
- Synagogue Social Justice That Works
- In the Image: A Jewish Take on Human Rights
- Torah in the Workplace: Ethical Business Practices for the Synagogue, School, Home and Business
- A Jewish Approach to Combating Human Trafficking

[Click here](#) to contact the author.

**Rabbi Naamah Kelman** is dean of Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem. Born and raised in New York City, she has lived in Israel for over three decades. She is active in feminist causes and a staunch advocate of a Progressive, pluralistic, democratic Israel.

**Rabbi Jane Rachel Litman** serves Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco, a congregation of people of diverse sexualities and family structures. She has taught on the faculty of California State University Northridge, the University of Judaism, and Loyola Marymount. She is active in many social action organizations, and is widely published in the fields of Jewish women's history and contemporary theology. She lives in Northern California with her partner, Stewart Schwartz, and their two children, Sophie and Asher.

**Rabbi Dalia Marx, PhD**, is a professor of liturgy and midrash at the Jerusalem campus of Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion and teaches in various academic institutions in Israel, and Europe. Rabbi Marx earned her doctorate at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and her rabbinic ordination at HUC–JIR in Jerusalem and Cincinnati. She is involved in various research groups and is active in promoting progressive Judaism in Israel. Rabbi Marx contributed to *May God Remember: Memory and Memorializing in Judaism?Yizkor, Who by Fire, Who by Water?Un'taneh Tokef, All These Vows?Kol Nidre, and We Have Sinned: Sin and Confession in Judaism?Ashamnu and Al Chet* (all Jewish Lights). She writes for academic journals and the Israeli press, and is engaged in creating new liturgies and midrashim.

**Rabbi Joseph B. Meszler** is a noted spiritual leader and educator, recognized for his ability to connect the importance of Jewish tradition with everyday life. He is coauthor of *The JGuy's Guide: The GPS for Jewish*

Teen Guys and author of *A Man's Responsibility: A Jewish Guide to Being a Son, a Partner in Marriage, a Father and a Community Leader*; *Witnesses to the One: The Spiritual History of the Sh'ma and Facing Illness*, *Finding God: How Judaism Can Help You and Caregivers Cope When Body or Spirit Fails* (all Jewish Lights). He is the rabbi at Temple Sinai in Sharon, Massachusetts, and an instructor at the Kehillah Schechter Academy.

**Rabbi Joseph B. Meszler is available to speak on the following topics:**

- The Spiritual History of the *Sh'ma*: What "God Is One" Might Mean
- Not Your Father's Brotherhood: What Being a Jewish Man Meant Then and Now
- How Judaism Can Help You Cope with Illness

[Click here](#) to contact the author.

**Judith Plaskow, PhD**, is a Jewish feminist theologian and professor of religious studies at Manhattan College. In addition to co-founding the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, she has written and edited several significant books in the field, including one of the first feminist dissertations in religious studies, *Sex, Sin, and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich*. Plaskow also wrote the first full-length Jewish feminist theology, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*. Her most recent work is a collection of essays, *The Coming of Lilith: Essays on Feminism, Judaism, and Sexual Ethics*, 1972–2003. Plaskow is past president of the American Academy of Religion.

**Rosie Rosenzweig** is a Boston poet, writer, and teacher. Her work has appeared in *Sara's Daughters Sing, Lifecycles, Volume 2, Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology*, and *Reading Between the Lines: New Stories from the Bible*. The book editor of *Neshama Magazine*, she is writing a book about her encounters with spiritual leaders in southeast Asia.

**Danya Ruttenberg** is author of the forthcoming *Surprised by God: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Religion* and editor of the anthology *Yentl's Revenge: The Next Wave of Jewish Feminism*. She is a contributing editor to *Lilith* magazine and *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal*. Ruttenberg will receive rabbinic ordination from the American Jewish University.

**Rachel Sabath Beit-Halachmi, PhD**, is a rabbi and scholar who was ordained at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion and earned a PhD in Jewish philosophy at The Jewish Theological Seminary. She is the Shalom Hartman Institute's director of lay leadership education and co-director of its North American Scholars Circle. She is also a member of the faculty of HUC–JIR, Jerusalem, and teaches in communities throughout North

America. She is co-author of two books, *Striving Toward Virtue and Preparing Your Heart for the High Holidays*, and author of many articles and rituals. She lives outside Jerusalem with her husband, Rabbi Ofer Sabath Beit-Halachmi, and their children, Tehillah and Yedidya.

**Dr. Wendy Zierler** is professor of modern Jewish literature and feminist studies at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, New York. She is translator and coeditor with Rabbi Carole Balin of *To Tread on New Ground: The Selected Writings of Hava Shapiro* (forthcoming) and a *Behikansi atah* (Shapiro's collected writings, in the original/Hebrew). She is also author of *And Rachel Stole the Idols* and the feminist Haggadah commentary featured in *My People's Passover Haggadah: Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries* (Jewish Lights), a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award. She contributed to *May God Remember: Memory and Memorializing in Judaism?Yizkor, Who by Fire, Who by Water?Un'taneh Tokef, All These Vows?Kol Nidre, and We Have Sinned: Sin and Confession in Judaism?Ashamnu and Al Chet* (all Jewish Lights).

**Karyn D. Kedar** teaches matters of the spirit to groups throughout the U.S. She is senior rabbi at Congregation B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim in the Chicago area, and the inspiring author of *The Bridge to Forgiveness: Stories and Prayers for Finding God and Restoring Wholeness; Our Dance with God: Finding Prayer, Perspective and Meaning in the Stories of Our Lives; and God Whispers: Stories of the Soul, Lessons of the Heart* (all Jewish Lights).

Rabbi Jacqueline Koch Ellenson is the director of the Women's Rabbinic Network. She also serves as chair of the Hadassah Foundation. Rabbi Ellenson graduated from Barnard College and was ordained at the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in 1983. She has worked in a variety of Jewish educational settings, and served as a chaplain at the Harvard-Westlake School in Los Angeles from 1991 to 2002. Now living in New York, she has led a "Rosh Chodesh: It's a Girl Thing" group for four years, participated in a rabbinic cohort of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, and is a spiritual director. She is married to Rabbi David Ellenson, and they have five children.

## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

#### **Robert Qualls:**

Precisely why? Because this New Jewish Feminism: Probing the Past, Forging the Future is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will shock you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who also write the book in such awesome way makes the content on the inside easier to understand, entertaining approach but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This excellent book will give you a lot of advantages than the other book include such as help improving your

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