

Jewish Women and the Internet :

Responsible Use of the Internet for Research on

Jewish women- From Blogging To the Growth of Jewish

Womens' Seminaries Across the Globe And Jewish

Womens' Education Since the Chofetz Chaim,

& the Malbim's Moral Mushal on the Eshet Chayil

Kol Kevudah bat Melekh Penimah

Preface:

Since this paper presentation was given on Rosh Hodesh Tammuz- with hearty Hodesh Tov, this preface gives brief consideration to the merit of Jewish women and Rosh Hodesh.

Lurianic Kabbalah claims that the 2 orot, shemesh veyareach, and the 1st 2 humans, Adam and Chava, male and female aspects of the Godhead were equal in the embryonic stage of ma'aseh bereshit. However as a result of the exit from Eden the lavanah became smaller and the Shechinah went into Galut. It is only in geulah tha that the 2 will be restored to their rightful places. A similar destiny is promised women and technology may play a role in that. For example biomedical technology allows women to give birth at older ages and with less labor pain. Technology and science¹ also allows women greater access to Rabbinic learning that in some cases was denied women in the past as illustrated by Moshe Weinberg and Isaac Sassoon.² The revolution in the expansion of Women Midrashot in Israel and across the globe in the past 25 years, the subject of Esti Rosenberg's recent article in the Spring 2012 issue of Tradition (45:1) is enabled by the advances in technology to travel to these centers of learning to participate in a living masorah, oseh likhah rav. The sources for this promise and the halakhic basis for the observance of Rosh Hodesh is a sugya from Megillah 22b. Rashi and Tosafot comment that women

¹ See Adler, Rachel, Engendering Judaism, Boston: MA, 1998; Adler points out that the curse of bearing children in pain given to Chava was not seen as irreversible (see Tanuman to Gen. 5:29) nor as prescriptive (Eruvin 100b). On page 124 Adler writes, "The rabbinic tradition does not use the sotry of Gen. 3 as a source of legal proof-texts, nor is there any prohibition on alleviating its conditions.... When childbirth anesthesia was invented, some Victorian clergymen saw it as a rebellion against the decree "In pain shall you bear children." But Jewish law never forbade the alleviation of childbirth pain. A consistent reading of the passage would not allow singling out "your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you" and endowing it alone with prescriptive force."

² See: Sasson, Isaac, The Status of Women in Jewish Tradition, Cambridge University Press, 2011

are not permitted to do work on RH i.e. Rashi comments women refrain from spinning, weaving, and sewing. This is explained in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer (ch. 45):

"The women heard about all construction of the egel hazahav and refused to submit their jewelry to their husbands for the women said that the egel hazahav was a toavah hi and has no power of geulah. Hakadosh baruch hu rewarded the women in olam hazeh to observe RH and not work and in olam habah the women are destined shen atidot lehithadesh kimokhah."

Mekor Haminhagim notes the women were enthusiastic about the mishkan and reluctant about the egel hazahav. According to Ohr Zaruah RH is an obvious reference to the monthly cycle after which women renew themselves in a mikvah like the moon thru immersion (See Midrash Tadshei). The acronym for Roshei Chadashim is rechem. Biyemei hamashiah just as the moon- (sefirah of malchut) will be elevated in size to the shemesh-[sefirah of keter], so women will ascend in function and status without becoming identical to men but realizing true gender equality that recognizes the difference between men and women who complement each other as Chava complemented Adam, or as Rabban Gamliel's daughter notes in a Midrash, when Eve was presented to Adam Rishon, it was a raising in kedushah as if a silver jug were replaced by a gold jug. The bnai Yissachar notes the gematria of Hodesh= 312 and the yod key vav key times 12 months of the year= 312. Ergo Hashem is present with all the tribes throughout the year (364 days) because of the factor of RH where the women refused to engage in avodah zarah.

It can be argued that even in the Biblical period in Judaism women command utmost respect. Proverbs 31 extols the virtuous woman as wisdom. Abraham listens to Sarah. Deborah leads the Israelite army to holy war as well as functions as a judge. Huldah, the prophetess, is consulted by the king.... Esther valiantly saves the Jewish nation from destruction. Naomi buys and sells land, and according to the Rabbinic traditions informs Ruth of the intricacies of Halakhah Even in cultic matters women do participate when pure. Hannah prays and sacrifices at the sanctuary (I Sam 1:24-26). Every woman after childbirth comes to the Temple to offer a sacrifice. Her exclusion from the sanctuary implies that normally she is allowed to participate in worship there, in the Ezrat Nashim. As Solomon Schechter notes in his essay on women in the synagogues, it is the women who donated their mirrors for the construction of the laver in the beit hamikdash.

In the power point the following subjects were treated: (1) responsible use of the internet for researching Jewish women and some of its dangers, (2) the Blogosphere and Jewish Women, (3) some Jewish women Educational leaders with websites such as: Tziporah Heller, Sara Yoheved Rigler, Rebbetzin Jungreis, Aviva Zornberg, Susan Heschel, Blu Greenberg, (4) The Dinur Jewish Center for History gender studies links, (5) Historical overview of Women in the Tanakh, Dead Sea Scrolls, Ben Sira, Midrashim, Talmudim, and Responsa texts across Jewish periodization, (6) Family Life issues & Middot Tovot such as Modesty, Hair Covering culled from Mordecai Torczyner's WebShas, (7) the uses of Bar Ilan to search 3 womens' mitzvot: Hallah, family purity, and bench licht (hadlikat haneirot), (8) How Hebrewbooks.org can be used to search Rambam's Mishneh Torah for issues related to women in general including laws of sexuality, chalitzah, divorce, etc, (9) Dating/zivugim Websites, (10) Rambi Subject Headings which are incorporated into the bibliography accompanying this paper on Women and

Judaism, (11) How the database of The Cairo Geniza can be used to research issues relating to women including: how the Kahal took care of widows, marriage issues, prenuptial contracts, and even recipes for beverages, (12) Dina Ripsman Eylon's *Women in Judaism Journal* and *Internet Sources for Study of Jewish Women*, (13) Womens' organizations including & websites- JWA, JOFA, Ritual Well, Ma'yan, Israel Women's Network, JWI, Women of the Wall, (14) Jewish Women A comprehensive Encyclopedia that was reviewed in the 2009 volume 15 edition of *Judaica Librarianship*. However due to space limitations in this narrative text we will address numbers 1, 2,3, and (4) Jewish Womens' Education since the Chofetz Chaim, (5) Teaching Torah to Women: Traditional views based on a long millennial reception history of the text, (6) Jewish Contemporary Women since the French Revolution, (7) The Malbim's pirush on Mishlei 31: What the Eishet Chayil Really represents (Handout at Presentation), Conclusion.

I. Responsible Use of the Internet for Researching Jewish Women

A gemarah in Maseket Sukkot holds that biyamei HaMiashiah the Rabbis will be teaching torah from the Greek athletic stadiums. On May 20th, 2012 in NY more than 40,000³ ultra-orthodox Jewish men gathered at Citi Field in Queens, organized ***Ichud Hakahilos LeTohar HaMachane***, for a meeting about the pitfalls of the Internet, and how to use technology in a religiously appropriate way. Most attendees did not call to ban or censor the internet totally as they recognize its place for parnassa, but rather to use it responsibly and warn about its dangers. Women did not attend the gathering at Citi Field because of gender separation rules, but were able to watch the meeting on live broadcasts in several neighborhoods. Actually women worldwide experienced a telephonic event on Monday night as a

³ Every ticket to the stadium was sold out and live satellite hookups reached Silver Spring, Dallas, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Scranton, Waterbury, Miami, Boca Raton, Toronto, Montreal, Mexico City, etc. Hook ups also reached international locations including Eretz Yisrael, various European communities, Brazil, and Australia. Live hookups for women reached Beth Jacob in Boro Park, Masores Bais Yakov in Flatbush, Imperial Hall in Williamsburg, Bais Faige in Lakewood, and the Atrium in Monsey. Bussing to the event was provided from Boro Park, Flatbush, Williamsburg, Monsey, Lakewood, New Square, Kiryas Joel, etc. Arthur Ashe stadium added as Second venue for sold out internet asifa, klal yisrael. At the 11th hour Rabbi Aaron Teitelbaum of Satmar in Kiryas Joel urged his followers however not to attend Kiryas Joel, NY – The Satmar Rebbe, R' Aron Teitelbaum, broke his silence on the upcoming CitiField Asifa today, announcing that there was no reason for any of his chasidim to attend this event or the upcoming Siyum Hashas. Until now the Satmar Rebbe had been careful not to speak out publicly against the Asifa but his words came today after Shachris at the Satmar yeshiva in Kiryas Joel, alluding to the fact that the Satmar Rebbe Reb Yoel was against any gatherings of rabbis belonging to the Agudah. "Whoever remembers my uncle, the Divrei Yoel and participated in his Shalsh Seudos and heard his holy words and came to his house with a kvittel knows that a Satmar Chasid has nothing to gain from attending either the Asifa or the Siyum Hashas." R' Teitelbaum emphasized that he supported the Rabbonim who are endorsing the assemblage and would encourage his followers to abide by the suggestions that will be proposed at the Asifa, but that he felt that this gathering was not in the best interests of his followers. "It is impossible to speak to every person in the same way. There are people who are already filtering their internet and other who need to be told that they should not have a computer in their house at all." R' Teitelbaum also took issue with the fact that the Asifa would be conducted in English saying "our forefathers fought against having speeches in the languages of other nations and I do not want to send my followers to a place where they will be speaking a foreign language. See: <http://midnightrabbi1eligoldsmith.wordpress.com/2012/05/20/the-torah-jews-internet-gathering-asifa/>

project of Bnos Melachim, the organization that is at the forefront of spreading kedushah for Klal Yisrael. In her opening remarks the moderator Mrs. Shaindy Kleinman described the asifah as a mighty preparation for kabbalas HaTorah on Shavuot which will take place about a week later on motzi Shabbos. The rationale for the Women's shiur on technology taking place before the Sunday May 20th event is based on the pusek that just before *Kabbalas HaTorah* at Har Sinai Hashem told *Moshe ko s'amar l'beis Yaakov l'saged l'bnei Yisrael, speak to the women first*, this teleconference was addressed first to the women who in traditional life are the builders and loving nurturers of the home, the guardians of raising children from the beginnings and foundation of their upbringing. Words of guidance and brachah were delivered in the name of the Skulener Rebbe and there was a message from Harav Mattisyahu Salomon and inspiration from Rebbetzin Yitty Neustadt and Rebbetzin Rina Tarshish.

A spokesman for the meeting said it is not about banning the Internet, but about raising awareness of its dangers. Many of the attendees came at the instructions of their rabbis, to hear about "a moral topic considered gravely important to the community."⁴ The Asifa, a Hebrew word for large-scale gathering, is scheduled on the eve of the first day of the Hebrew calendar month Sivan, and is a day when it is considered auspicious to focus on children's education. The goal of the anti-Internet campaign, organizers told the Jewish media, is to save the next generation from the social ills, including pornography and exposure to secular society, that they argue the technology brings. Eytan Kobre, a spokesman for the event, in alluding to Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*, delivered a more intense message to reporters outside the stadium, "The siren Song of the Internet entices us! It brings out the worst in us."⁵ A statement, which is signed by ultra-Orthodox rabbis from across the East Coast, calls technology a "scourge," and says that, "It is well known that in recent times through the Internet many serious family-related problems have been created, and it all happens because of it, and something must be done so they won't be hurt." Since the Internet became a part of everyday life in the 1990s, ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups both in the U.S. and in Israel have in some cases attempted to ban or filter the Internet. The community seeks to protect traditions and rules that they feel are threatened by modernity".⁶ Rabbi Yosef Sonnenschein in *Hamodia*, the Daily Newspaper of Torah Jewry, notes that the

⁴ Grynbaum, Michael, "Ultra-Orthodox Jews Rally to Discuss Risks of Internet", in *New York Times*, Monday May 21st, 2012 A17; The moral concern of the rabbis is primarily the potential problems that can stem from access to pornography and other explicit content on the uncensored, often incendiary Web. The Rabbis in Center Field from a podium exhorted the crowds to avoid the "filth" (smutz and pritzus) on the Internet. English translations of the speeches appeared on a jumbo digital screen beneath an enormous "Let's Go Mets!" sign. The rabbis reminded the community to keep 'temptation' at bay. The rabbis urged men to control their desires to look at pornography.

⁵ Grynbaum, Michael M., "Ultra-Orthodox Jews Rally to Discuss Risks of Internet", in *NY Times*, Monday May 21, 2012, A17; Ironically Mr. Kobre confessed that the event would be broadcast live on the Internet via a stream available to homes and synagogues in Orthodox communities around the NY area. He said the general public would not be able to gain access, but several unauthorized streams appeared soon after the rally began. See Levy, David, B. AJL 46th Convention Montreal Quebec, [section on piggy backing Whi Fi Signals as a form of genevah] http://www.jewishlibraries.org/main/Portals/0/AJL_Assets/documents/Publications/proceedings/proceedings2011/levy2011text.pdf

⁶ Wax, Emily, *Washington Post*, "Ultra-Orthodox Jews to gather at Citi Field for event on evils of Internet", Posted at 02:32 PM ET, 05/18/2012; "A counter protest called "The Internet is NOT the Problem," wants to highlight what its organizers feel are more pressing problems in the community, including "the dismissive attitude towards sexual and physical violence against children, inadequate educational systems," said Ari Mandel, an organizer of the

Asifa occurred around parashat Emor which opens with the halachos pertaining to the purity of the *Kohanim*. *Emor el hakohanim bnei Aharon v'amarta aleihem*- say to the Kohanim the children of Aharon and say to them" Rashi explains the apparent redundancy here (say and you should say) with few words of Chazal. *L'hazhir hagedolim al haketanim*- "to warn the older ones about the younger ones." This means that the adults are enjoined (say to the Kohanim) not only to keep halachos themselves but to teach the children (and you should say to them) the relevant laws. Sonnenschein notes, "the torah is teaching that in order to reach purity in the service of Hashem, one must use his gadlus, his greatness to influence his *katnus*, the less mature aspects of his personality. Filtering the Shmuts on the internet or just the materials constituting bittul zeman allows for up keeping one's purity, kedushah, and not slipping to *katnus*. Lazer Paskes citing Rabbi Moshe Sherer notes that Jews are like teabags for you only see their strength when they are in hot water. Paskes writes that the challenge of technology has gotten ehrlichen yiddin into hot water. Jews must come together to address it. Paskes notes that the gathering was a historic *maamad* of unprecedented achadus of klal Yisrael in advance of the Yom Tov of Kabbalas Hatorah, the apex of Klal Yisrael's unity. He likens the gathering to a massive Shema Yisrael to accept the malchut Shamayim and to beseech Hashem to have rachmanos on the gatherers and the dor yasom for a generation where the "signs of *ikveis d'meshiah*⁷ are enumerated in the last Mishnah of Masechta Sota as painfully evident. Paskes notes that the event gives the opportunity to implore Hashem to save the yidden from the terrible gezera by invoking rachmei

counter-rally. "The Internet is an unstoppable force. Every religious man has an iPhone or Blackberry they use for business anyway. It feels like they are just trying to shut down anything that allows people to question ideas."

The counter protest is being organized by members of Footsteps, an organization that provides educational and vocational supports to people grappling with the consequences of leaving the insular ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities in which they were raised. "

⁷ Interestingly the Lubavitch community, which contains elements of mishihistim, was specifically not invited to attend not only because of the old Mitnagdish dislike of certain Hasidim, but because Lubavitch achieves great results with using technology for kiruv and documenting the kedusha of their 7th Rebbe by issuing old archival films traditionally played motzi Shabbos at Chabad houses across the globe. Lubavitch has used technology as ministerial for getting their messages across. They see technology not as an all or nothing proposition and do not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Towards the 11th hour the Skulner rebbe extended a welcome to Chabad leaders to attend the gathering. The Skulener Rebbe, one of the chief organizers of the Citi Field gathering to curb the influence of the internet, has formally invited the Lubavitch community to participate, and urged all to attend the event. A delegation of Lubavitch Rabbonim and leaders - including: Rabbi Avrohom Osdoba of Crown Heights, Rabbi Leibel Altein of Boro Park and Rabbi Gedalia Oberlander of Monsey - was invited today to the Skulener Rebbe's home for a meeting regarding the Lubavitch community's participation in the gathering. The Admur praised the Lubavitcher Rebbe for the way he taught his Chassidim to always be active for the sake of others. He said that it's only natural for Lubavitch to participate in the gathering, which will take place in a week and a half in Queens. The Rabbonim pointed out that Lubavitch was already working on solving this issue for a number of years, and that previous efforts have already lead to positive results, but improvement is still necessary. The Skulener Rebbe quoted from a Rashi in this week's parsha to emphasize that it is the responsibility of the parents and educators to supervise the young 'sheep.' The Rabbonim then quoted the words of the Rebbe on the subject: that it is not enough to steer them away from evil, but to bring positivity and light to the youngsters as well

The Skulener Rebbe finished by saying that through joint effort we can achieve such positive results. See: <http://www.crownheights.info/index.php?itemid=43737>

shamaya in a way that is l'malah miderekh hateva. The event included the crowd reciting Tefilas ha-Shelah for success in Hinukh (education) and concluded with Ma'ariv.

So what is the frum community concerned about the internet and its irresponsible use? This may be likened to kosher use of the internet and non-kosher use of the internet. Yet according to some sociologists like Samuel Heilman the Haredi think that [the outside] world is so seductive and so dangerous and so base," he told the AP, "that that's the greatest danger." Heilman notes that the goal is to disseminate information and hold a prayer rally for the success of Klal Israel's war on the Technology which is viewed to threaten the sanctity of the homes of Israel." A "kol korei" (call to action) published in Haredi newspapers says "We must assemble together to protect and be protected ... and may it be that we will be successful in encouraging the public not to stumble over this obstacle. Yet the haskamah on the event is signed by heavy weight rabbanim. The kol korei is signed by some of the "heavyweights" of the ultra-Orthodox Yeshiva world, including Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman, Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, and Rabbi Nissim Karelitz, Chairman of the rabbinical court of Bnei Brak. " Speakers included the Mashgiach Rav mattisyahu Solomon ,The Skulener Rebbe, the main speaker will be the Mashgiach Harav Don Segal, who is coming from erez yisrael as a Shliach for rav Shteinman and rav Chaim kanievsky⁸. rabbi Pesach Krohn will speak in english and explain the asifa to the media as well. The djibo dayan" Satmar dayan" from Montreal, Rav dovid Feinstein, Rachmastrivker rebbe from erez yisrael will recite the tefilas hashela, as the asifa is taking place on Erev Rosh chodesh Sivan. Rav Efraim Wachsman will MC. A video message from harav Shmuel Wosner shlita of Bnei Brak will air at the Asifa. There will be a hook up and live program as well at the Arthur Ashe stadium nearby. rav mattisyahu spoke later on at Arthur Ashe stadium. In a special letter dated chof daled Iyar for those attending the Asifa, Rav Chaim Kanievsky writes about the danger of the internet. It has taken many from the best homes and caused them to transgress. It is the Yetzer hora of avoda zara and Giluy arayos of our times. We must come together and formulate concrete ideas and solutions and figure out a way how to combat and get rid of this yetzer hora. He commends the gedolim in America for arranging an Asifa bringing together tens of thousands yereim and shleimim to be mechazek and combat this yetzer. The letter concludes that there is absolutely no heter to use the internet without a filter even for parnasah. Rabbi Ephraim Wachsman, a haredi Orthodox lecturer. "This issue is the test of the generation. Your strength at this gathering will determine what Judaism will look like a few years from now." ⁹ Speakers called the Internet "impure," a threat to modesty and compared it to *chametz*, or leavened bread, on Passover.

⁸ In a special letter dated chof daled Iyar for those attending the Asifa, Rav Chaim kanievsky writes about the danger of the internet. It has taken many from the best homes and caused them to transgress. It is the Yetzer hora of avoda zara and Giluy arayos of our times. We must come together and formulate concrete ideas and solutions and figure out a way how to combat and get rid of this yetzer hora. He commends the gedolim in america for arranging an Asifa bringing together tens of thousands yereim and shleimim to be mechazek and combat this yetzer. The letter concludes that there is absolutely no heter to use the internet without a filter even for parnasah or anything else. One must use guidance as to what kind of filter is proper and kosher for his internet use. Hopefully they will work on a Kosher internet in the near future so and find ways how to avoid this michshol

⁹ Sales, Ben, Haredim fill N.Y. baseball stadium to decry error of Internet's ways, JTA News Archive, May 21, 2012

The event was more than just a pep rally but sought to raise consciousness of the dangers of the internet. Yet one anonymous rabbi told The Times of Israel that the rally was not cost effective. He comments, "If they intend to protest online pornography, I would say they are better off putting their efforts — and the money they are raising from the ticket sales — into providing easy to use and accessible Internet filters. Haredim who work use the Internet, and it could be assumed that many of them take their work home at the end of the day, meaning that many of them have Internet at home. So it's not going anywhere."¹⁰ Another anonymous rabbi commented the event is to raise consciousness about living with the potential evils of the internet.¹¹ This anonymous rabbi also questioned the effectiveness of filters. He told The Times of Israel that even Internet filters, which blacklist offensive sites, are ineffective, and can be disabled. He noted that only a white list, where you are allowed to surf only to specific sites, is the only way you could possibly allow the Internet into the home. There really is no choice today but to take the most extreme position you can against Internet use.¹² The cost effectiveness of the event has led some to note that the millions of dollars being raised for this event could be spent in much more productive ways.

Michael Salamon, a fellow of the American Psychological Association, is the founder and director of ADC Psychological Services in New York however sees the internet not as the evil to be scapegoated into the Satan against which the Haredi are fighting but rather the lack of education amongst the Haredim themselves in secular subjects. He writes, "The real reason for these increasingly authoritarian and repressive restrictions is, I think, due to a lack of a broad, worldly education. The older generations valued education of all sorts. The Rabbis of the Gemara all had jobs in addition to their scholarly disputation work. While Torah related subjects were always more highly valued mathematics, chemistry, philosophy and biology, even vocational and trade pursuits were no less part of the holy components of an education than were Gemara. In the last generation these pursuits have not just been marginalized they are increasingly rejected. Students coming out of many of the high schools that the asifa is targeted toward can barely string together a coherent and grammatically correct sentence. Many of their parents are frustrated by the limited education their children receive but feel trapped because there are fewer options for them to choose from. Only the more modern leaning yeshivas still educate all secular

¹⁰ Shamah, David, Times of Israel, Vital, pointless, sexist, hilarious? New York's ultra-Orthodox battle-the-Internet gathering goes viral, May 19, 2012, 8:06 am; <http://www.timesofisrael.com/42000-jews-84000-opinions-internet-asifa-gets-backers-critics-and-wise-guys-talking/> This comment does not seem to understand that technology is more than machines that can provide pornography which is bad because people can be degraded to the I-It relationship but rather as cited in my essay technology is a mindset and mode of being as revealed from Heidegger's article *Die Frage uber der Technologie*. See: <http://www.jewishlibraries.org/ajlweb/publications/proceedings/proceedings2010/levy2010text.pdf>

¹¹ Ibid., Nobody expects them to shut down the Internet to accommodate us or anyone else. The point is to raise awareness of the issue and search for ways to live with it, as a necessary evil"

¹² Ibid. The anonymous rabbi commented further, "'It's just too easy to surf to inappropriate sites. Not too long ago you had to go through a great deal of work if you wanted to, for example, view pornography and keep your interest private. Today it comes to you. This is a major crisis for religious Jews, and it is just as much a tragedy for everyone else as well," said Reb C. "I don't think it's a coincidence that life has gotten so much shakier, with depression, suicides, drug addiction etc. at an all-time high, during these days of unlimited Internet access." He added: "the Internet is a test, and it's up to us as Jews to pass that test, whether we use it responsibly or not.

subjects. Even in those schools though the emphasis is more and more on getting into the *best Beit Midrash* or seminary program, even before thinking about whether or not college is an option. When you are not educated about a subject you are easily alarmed by it. The internet is not the problem. The lack of education about the world is.”¹³ On the other flip side one rabbi compared the problem of the internet to the temptations of education that the modern enlightenment promised by comparing the threat of the Internet to the dangers that Zionism and the European Enlightenment posed in the past to traditional Jewish life. In particular, they decried the Internet's potential to distract yeshiva students.¹⁴

Actually the censorship of the Internet amongst the Haredi is not new. There is a complicated relationship between haredim and the Internet. In 1990 a Satmar Hasid contained a strange Yiddish warning from its anonymous site developer “If you can read this, you should not be using the Internet.”¹⁵ Like the recent rally which was streamlined online, this website was ironic since at least one Satmar Hasid had learned HTML skills necessary to put up the website. However if we consider historically the rabbinic worries over the printing press of Johannes Gutenberg at that time the new revolutionary technology some rabbis saw it as a destruction to the old memorization necessary to pen original scribal texts while other rabbis in 1475 regarded it as a boon to learning and hence regard printing itself as an *avodat kodesh* and the printing press as an altar. In 1475 published volumes in Hebrew appeared. These incunabula or early printed books included commentaries on the Torah by Rashi and treatises of Jewish law (i.e. the *Arba Turim* by Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher). With the wide dissemination of Jewish books including published collections of *Responsa* literature Jews economically could afford purchases more texts and the widening of access to rabbinic texts began. Today the internet is also spreading access to Rabbinic learning and even she”elot vetshuviot occur online. In 2008 the online edition of the newspaper Yediot Ahronot conducted a survey in conjunction with the Geshet organization in advance of a conference on Judaism, society and the Internet. They discovered that 25% of the Jewish adult Hebrew speakers surveyed consulted the on call “virtual rabbi” and 7 % consulted online forums for answer to religious questions. 33% still went to a real live rabbi and 35% consulted their own rabbinic libraries. The YNET report speculated that online virtual rabbis will become more frequent in the future and “Rabbi Google” a household phenomenon. However Haredi society is slow to change and perhaps rightly so the leaders have recognized a danger against the new digital culture and technology that threatens the old ways of traditional life and culture. However what Haredi leaders warn against and what the masses do is something different. Many Haredim as a counterforce are highly adept at live streaming, smartphones, and technologically sophisticated. Surveys find that Haredi

¹³ Vos iz Neias, NY op ed: The Great Internet Asifa, See: <http://www.vosizneias.com/106007/2012/05/09/new-york-op-ed-the-great-internet-asifa/> published on May 9, 2012 09:24 AM

¹⁴ JTA Jewish News Archive, May 20, 2012 ; <http://www.jta.org/news/article/2012/05/20/3095976/at-40000-person-rally-haredi-orthodox-rabbis-decry-dangers-of-internet> ; Rabbi Yechiel Meir Katz, known as the Dzibo rav, compared the threat of the Internet to the dangers that Zionism and the European Enlightenment posed in the past to traditional Jewish life. “A terrible test has been sent to us that has inflicted so much terrible damage” on haredim, Katz said. The Internet poses a greater threat to haredim than secularism did, he said, because “in previous challenges we knew who the enemy was. Today, however, the challenge is disguised and not discernible to the naked eye.”

¹⁵ Aviv Mendelsohn, Dan, “The Haredi World Wide Web, June 21, 2012, Forward

leaders have cause for alarm. According to a Bar Ilan University study Orthodox and Haredi teenagers consume twice as much online pornography as their secular counterparts. However there are what for lack of a better term be called “kosher sites” such as *Glat-tube* which is an alternative to YouTube which is like Youtube without pictures of women. There is also “*Koogle*” a searchable directory of rabbinically approved businesses and a new cadre of mostly female “*kashruth monitors*” . FaceGlat is a kosher version of Facebook. Also a number of frum websites serve as filtered portals. For example Vos is Nelas? (what is the news?) and the Yeshiva World News provide reports about national , local and foreign events and the local weather. There is also BeHadrei Haredim (Behind Closed doors) providing news forums for opinion over a decade. In Dec. 2011 readers were shocked when Rabbinic drashot were replaced with porn clips by mischievous hackers. Dov Poversky in YNET commented, “the site was too powerful and therefore someone decided to hurt us and drop a stink bomb on the website. At this stage I can’t rule out anyone being behind it from politicians to people hurt by the website. I believe we’ll eventually know who was responsible.” BeHaredi Haredim garnered even more attention when during the protests against immodesty in Bet Shemesh two of its correspondents uncovered the identity of the extremists behind the Nazi pashkevil the Haredi poster which portrayed the Jerusalem police chief as Hitler. What was disregarded as a news aggregator for haredim was looking more like an original content providers- until its CEO and three executives were arrested on charges of extortion in April.

In 2005 as a result of a proliferation of Haredi websites the Lakewood Takanah subtitled, “Safeguarding the future generations” banned even filtered internet access but permitted internet use for *parnassa*. JNET is a bit more makel and favors filtering. It says :

You want your home to be a safe haven where you teach your children the Jewish values they will build their lives around. You would never think of bringing certain magazines or movies into our home and you don’t want that stuffer entering your home through your computer. On the other hand you want your children to be Internet Savy and learn how to access its vast resources. As a solution JNET offers a proxy-free server based filter that lets you “choose a different level and method of filtering for each Internet user in your home”.

In Beitar Illit, a town where 85% of the men study in Yeshivas local rabbis evoked the apocalypse in September 2009 when they declared that connectivity was a cause for “50% of the problems in the city from shalom bayis and chinuch habonim. One rabbi said, “there is a hidden blaze in the city, an atom bomb underneath the city We cannot have situation here in Beitar in which an ehrlich Yid sends his children to Torah based institutions and there’s something worse than television. This is the battle of the generation.” In Beitar rabbinic followers are opted to sign a contract that they use a rabbinically approved internet filter. Thus even in Beitar the message of using technology responsibly a pi torah is the status quo. The joke at Citfield for the Asifa was that there is a smoking section given that all cigarettes and cigars have a “filter.” However the concern of the leaders who have known mostly learning torah their whole lives centers around the issue of bitul torah given the way the Internet can waste lots of time if used causally. These leaders also know that a “filter” is not a ghetto or shtetl wall. A filter is not even a “firewall”!!! As Dovid Teitelbaum Director of Camp *Sde Chemed* International wrote in an open letter to the Ichud: “Filters sound good but they are not a complete solution. A filter is only as effective as much as the person using it wants to be filtered.” What is necessary is the change in the

technological attitude of the post-modern generation that everything can be learned at the click of a mouse, a quick fix, while learning is hard work takes discipline and effort that our ancestors devoted their lives to and around as the highest ideal of a redeemed life. The fast-food generation, nursed on the sound bite, on “reporting” will be unable to distinguish dross from substance even with a filter. *Lfum zarah agrah*.

The ban on the internet has actually been in existence for some communities since 2006 when it was decreed that only individuals who needed the internet for work and received special dispensation from their rabbis can have access to the internet. In September 2005 the first major Asifa regarding the dangers of the Internet took place in Lakewood. The Rabbonim and speakers all pointed out the fact how dangerous it is for the well being of families not only children but adults as well. Takkanos were implemented where people were not allowed to have internet access at home and kids will not be accepted, or expelled from school if parents didn't comply with the ban. A local paper quoted “The community’s policy — formed with the principals of the area’s 43 yeshivas, or Jewish private schools, and unveiled in late September — decrees that any student with home access faces suspension or expulsion on the grounds that even one Internet-corrupted student could sway others”.¹⁶ Before the 2005 Lakewood gathering, Novominsker Rebbe, Rabbi Yaakov Perlow issued warning in 2003 during Yamim Noraim: “The internet with the flick of a button, invades a Jews home, a Jewish soul, and makes moral disaster.... Create fences, strictures, around its use. Do not give it free rein! Remember that you are dealing with a force that contains spiritual and moral poison. Ask yourself further: must it come into your home- openly accessible to yourself and your children (Perlow 2003,). Other prominent rabbis for decades have been warning of technological innovation when not used responsibly for example: (1) Rabbi Wasserman: New technological innovations like a hammer. A hammer can be used to build a house of Yiddishkeit or tear down a house of Judaism. Hammer which is muksah on shabbos, must be used in right way. Thus new technological innovations can be a double edged sword, used for good or evil; (2) Rabbi Avigdor Miller: test of our generation is new technologies living in technological revolution; (3) Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser: Like the *Etz Ha-daas* can be used for good or bad, but a problem unlike Judaism’s response to eating from the etz ha-daas by creating rules of fences of halakhah is that not many moral and ethical rules govern the internet. Questions raised can be a springboard for addressing the needs of our children in their free time for parents to become involved , *Hinukh* in general, at risk behaviors, healthy social outlets, and avoidance of addictive behaviors

So how might we list what the Haredi are all up in arms resisting? The following short hand list might be suggested:

- (1) Technology of the internet can blur so many fundamental boundaries which are the foundation of the closely knit Orthodox world and its practices
- (2) Exposure to secular community and its lack of moral compass, and relativism, and cynicism
- (3) Can threaten the insularity of the communities theological, ideological, cultural, and halakhic fortress

¹⁶ <http://midnightrabbi1eligoldsmith.wordpress.com/2012/05/20/the-torah-jews-internet-gathering-asifa/>

- (4) Private and public mixed inappropriately
- (5) Orthodox world insular and voyeurism of unwanted outsiders
- (6) Neo-Nazi Hate Groups¹⁷; How to make a bomb, Terrorist groups
- (7) Risky behaviors inculcated and accessible
- (8) Cyber bullying, intimidation, aggression, bashing
- (9) Cyber stalking, flaming, trolling, lurking, harassing
- (10) Desensitization to moral and ethical principles
- (11)Waste of time (bitul Zeman) vs. quality family time (free time traditionally for learning torah)
- (12)Curiosity run wild of yetzer harah vs. responsible use
- (13)Source of Mazik (damaging) in computer hacking; invasion of privacy¹⁸ and national security
- (14) Anti-Zionist propaganda¹⁹

¹⁷ See: Tuor-Kurth, Christina (eds), "Antisemitismus im Internet" in "Neuer Antisemitismus alte Vorurteile?, in Judentum und Christentum, Band 5, 2001- Inhalt: Bergmann, Werner, "Aus der Gschichte gelernt? Konflikte ueber Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland" 1-11, Hagemester, Miachel, "Antisemitismus und Verschworungsdenken in RuBLand", 33-53; Kries, Goerge, "Antisemitismus in der Schweiz nach 1945, 53-65; Niederer, Ulrich, "Organisierter Antisemitismus unter Schweizer SchriftstellerInnen? Ein Blick zuruck, 65-79; Picard, Jacques ANtiuniversalismus, Ethnizismus, Geschichtepolitik", 79-105; Wetzel, Juliane, "Antisemitismus im Internet", p. 105-117; Dichanz, Horst, Antisemitismus in den Medien: Beispiele und Analysen", 117-137; Liatowitsch, "Holocaust Leugnung in der Schweiz und Art. 261 STGB, 137-155; Hettlage, Andrea, "Antisemitismus-eine Vorurteilsspirale", 155-165; Chatwin, Margret, "Der pure Hass: Rechsextremismus im Internet" in Tribune 157 (2001), 122-133; Tsfati, Yariv & Weimann, Gabriel, www.rerrorism.com: Terror on the Internet, in Studies in Conflict and Terrorism 25: 317-332, 2002; Wetzel, Julian "Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion im World Wide Web: Die Vernetzung radikaler politischer Gruppen uebe antisemitische Verschwörungstheorien" in Jahrbuch fuer Antisemitismus Forschung 14, , Metropol Verlag, 2005; Wetzel, Juliane, "Die Internationale Rechte und der arabische Antizionismus im World Wide Web", in Jahrbuch fuer Antisemitismus Forschung 14, , Metropol Verlag, 2005; Yohanan, Manor & Mizrahi Ido, ' Hamas Web School for Suicide Bombers", in Middle East Quarterly, vol. 17, issue 2, Spring 2010; Reading, "Clicking on Hitler: The Virtual Holocaust @Home", in Visual Culture and the Holocaust, pages 323-339 New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001; Weitzman, Mark, "The Internet is Our Sword: Aspects of Online Antisemitism", in Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in the age of genocide, pages 911-925; Eissens, Ronald, "Common Ground for Hatemongers: Incitement on the Internet", in Antisemitism: The Generic Hatred, Essays in Memory of Simon Wiesenthal, Vallentine Mitchell, ,

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http://www.jewishlibraries.org/main/Portals/0/AJL_Assets/documents/Publications/proceedings/proceedings2011/levy2011text.pdf

¹⁹ Cohen, Patricia, "Essay Linking Liberla Jews and AntiSemitism Sparks a Furor" , NY times 31 Jan. 2007. A discussion of the reaction to the Rosenfeld article on AJC.org; Corrigan, Edward, "Is anti-Zionism Anti-Semitic? Jewish Critics Speak" Middle East Policy 16:4 Winter 2009, p. 146-159 [a defense of the right of Jews to criticize Israeli policies]; Ini, Gilead, "Dscussing BBC's Anti-Israel Bias", Midstream 54:1, Jan-Geb 2008, p.23 [an analysis of BBC's uneven treatment of the subject of Jewish and Arab refugees]; Klaff, Lesley, "Antisemitism vs. Anti-Zionism" Journal for the study of Anti-Semitism 2.2 Dec. 2010, p. 434 [article providing definitions of Anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism]; Laquer, Walter, The Changing Face of Anti-Semitism. Oxford University Press, 2006 [An historical analysis of past and current trends in anti-Semitism and how they both differ and are similar]; Rogers, Dick "Expanding the lens on coverage of the Middle East: by judging a newspaper's visual coverage over a long period of time, bias becomes less apparent. Nieman Reports 56:3 Fall 2002, p.71 [Editor of San Francisco Chronicle conducted a survey to determine whether a paper's coverage affected reader's opinions on Israel]; Rosenfeld, Alvin H., "Progressive Jewish Thought and the New Anti-Semitism" American Jewish Committee Dec. 2006. Ajc.org [arguments linking leftist criticism of Israel with Anti-Semitism]; McShane, Denis, Globalising hatred : the new anti-

So how do these dangers relate to women and research of women on the internet in particular. It can be argued that pritzus (i.e. pornography) often reduces women to the I-It relationship as the objects of mens' pleasures and in the process denudes women of the humanity reduced to pure animality rather than intellectual and spiritual potential. The rabbis have adopted laws of modesty to prevent such exploitative roles. Laws of modesty (**tseniyut**) affirm that a woman's true dignity is her inner beauty, "The glory of the king's daughter is within, *kol kevudah bat melekh penimah*."²⁰ Absence from public sphere valued- domestic sphere elevates womens' role in the private realm as vital to the perpetuation of tradition, childrearing, even surpassing the importance of mens' role in the synagogue. Traditional rabbis see dressing modestly and covering hair as benefiting the dignity and status of women. Likewise Kol ishah if understood to arouse men, thus prohibiting women from singing in public, to prevent ludeness. Womens' exempt from "time bound mitzvot" i.e. minyan does not mean women are lesser. On the contrary the Rabbis regard womens' spiritual levels as higher than men can achieve. A Mishnah in Sanhedrin notes that the women did not give bad report of the land as the 10 spies did, and so are exempt from the quorum that is a minyan.²¹

So what can parents due to guard their children against potential dangers on the internet? The makmir position: No TV no computer with internet at home so there is quality family time of direct interaction vs. vicarious virtual interaction. Take on humrot banning use of technology. A mekal position for frum community- responsible internet use with supervision of children at home by placing computer in prominent not hidden area of household, limiting hours it can be used, and which websites visited, and employing filters to block out social networking sites and pornography. The decision then must be made for how much to censor on the internet? Just as there are levels of Kashrut so to there are levels of filtering. Some makmir persons may keep halev Yisrael while others do not. The term kosher means "fit,

Semitism, London : Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008; Laquer, Walter, The changing face of antisemitism : from ancient times to the present day, Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2006; Chesler , Phyllis, The new anti-semitism : the current crisis and what we must do about it, an Francisco : Jossey-Bass, c2003; Kahn, Keith, Turbulent times: the British Jewish community today, London ; New York : Continuum, c2010; Fiamma Nirenstein, Terror : the new anti-semitism and the war against the West, Hanover, NH : Smith and Kraus Global, 2005; Perry, Marvin, Antisemitism : myth and hate from antiquity to the present, New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2005; Gitelman, Zvi, Bitter legacy : confronting the Holocaust in the USSR, Bloomington : Indiana University Press, c1997; Foxman, Abraham, Never again? : the threat of the new anti-Semitism, [San Francisco] : Harper San Francisco, c2003; Foxman, Abraham, The deadliest lies : the Israel lobby and the myth of Jewish control, New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; Foxman, Abraham, Jews and money : the story of a stereotype, New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

²⁰ Tehilim 45:14

²¹ סנהדרין גדולה היתה של שבעים ואחד וקטנה של עשרים ושלושה ומנין לגדולה שהיא של שבעים ואחד שנאמר (במדבר י"א) אספה לי שבעים איש מזקני ישראל ומשה על גביהן הרי שבעים ואחד רבי יהודה אומר שבעים ומנין לקטנה שהיא של עשרים ושלושה שנאמר (במדבר ל"ה) ושפטו העדה והצילו העדה עדה שופטת ועדה מצלת הרי כאן עשרים ומנין לעדה שהיא עשרה שנאמר (שם /במדבר/ י"ד) עד מתי לעדה הרעה הזאת יצאו יהושע וכלב ומנין להביא עוד שלשה ממשמע שנאמר (שמות כ"ג) לא תהיה אחרי רבים לרעות שומע אני שאהיה עמהם לטובה אם כן למה נאמר (שם /שמות כ"ג/) אחרי רבים להטות לא כהטייתך לטובה הטייתך לרעה הטייתך לטובה על פי אחד הטייתך לרעה על פי שנים ואין בית דין שקול מוסיפין עליהם עוד אחד הרי כאן עשרים ושלושה וכמה יהא בעיר ותהא ראויה לסנהדרין מאה ועשרים רבי נחמיה אומר מאתים ושלישים כנגד שרי עשרות:

ready, and suitable.” The term is usually used with regards to food that is or is not kosher. Kosher can also be used to describe other realms of human/Jewish experience. Reading material for instance, entertainment, and parties can all be kosher or non-Kosher, appropriate (roy) or inappropriate as a Jewish experience for the frum. Thus the internet experience too can be Kosher or non-Kosher. But, just as with food there are different standards for what is considered kosher or non-kosher, so too with the internet. KosherNET is not meant to describe the Internet as being Kosher, nor that it will necessarily decide for one what is kosher or not kosher on the net. It provides one with the tools to custom design one’s own level of Kosher internet. One decides what one considers to be kosher, and it tailors the filtering system to match one’s standards of “Kosher internet.” As closely as possible. Whether one is most comfortable with a whitelist option, or need the blacklist option it can probably provide one with an ideal kosher internet experience. The levels of filterin²²g are given on *KosherNet’s* site.²³

Black List pre-set filter options include

Filter Level One: Minimal- Blocks sites dedicated to offensive, R or X rated content, and Personal & dating sites. All other sites are accessible

Filter Level Two: Moderate- Blocks CHAT, Personal Blog Sites in addition to everything blocked in level 1

Filter Level Three: Medium- Blocks banners and free hosting sites in addition to everything blocked in level 2

Filter Level Four: Extended- Blocks web mail in addition to everything blocked in level 3

Filter Level Five: Strict- Blocks Entertainment, Humor, Lifestyle, and Shopping sites as well as sites that offer Alcohol, drugs, or gambling in addition to everything blocked in level 4

White List System: Custom- Access only to sites you select and add to a list. All other sites are blocked

Other filtering programs include:

www.ayinroah.com monitors and records web use, includes a warning on its homepage discouraging use of internet even with protection provided by this service: “Would you have a poisonous snake roaming around freely in your house because it is programmed and trained not to byte (sic), would you?”

www.yeshivanet.com enables email access with limited web browsing

www.jnet.com offers limited high speed internet services with filtering features for schools and businesses so as to allow concerned Orthodox believers to use the internet.

Internet Filters are necessary for the Orthodox Jew to shield themselves from unwanted and inappropriate sites. Without a filter someone browsing the web may accidentally stumble onto or in a

²² Attendees of the Asifa were also given information that advertised services like “Kosher GPS App” for iPhone and Android Phones, which helps users locate synagogues and kosher restaurants.

²³ http://www.thekosher.net/filter_levels.asp

moment of weakness intentionally go to objectionable websites which may contain areas off limits to most orthodox Jews including: pornography, gambling, gaming, profanity, lashon hara, counter-religious ideas (epikorosut), or pictures objectionable to modest sensibilities. A filter will make that access more difficult.

There are three methods of filtering: (1) time control, (2) content filtering, (3) content control. Time control sets limits on the time Internet access is available. For example this can prevent overuse of the Internet and ensure that children access it only while their parents are awake to monitor the children's use.

Content filtering blocks websites that are deemed objectionable. Lists of objectionable sites are compiled by a combination of algorithm and human evaluation. Often, filters allow one to add your own list of blocked sites i.e. the swimsuit issue of Sports Illustrated.com They also allow certain categories to be blocked such as social networking. In contrast lists can be composed of acceptable sites that the user can access. The rest of the Internet is blocked from this subset of acceptable sites. Objective criteria can be used to decide if websites are objectionable or not.

Content control actively changes objectionable content on a website. It may block pictures or change profane words to a string of punctuation marks. This does not always work. For example numerous times articles that contain Hebrew text are sometimes blocked by substituting punctuation marks for the Hebrew font when the content may not be objectionable. The computer programmer must seek to eliminate such glitches in filter control of content. Filters have to be smarter than just blocking URLs and must use a combination of methods to ensure that content that is supposed to be blocked actually is.

There are 4 types of filter structures: (1) Browser side filter is either a web browser or a browser add-on that limits access to the web In any of the three methods mentioned above. To be effective users must have limited ability to install and uninstall add-ons and new programs. Otherwise they can easily disable the filtering capabilities or install an unfiltered browser or other program that accesses the web.

A client side filter is installed on a computer (or device) and limits all access of the web from that computer. These slow the computer down but are harder to deactivate than browser-side filters and regulate all programs on the computer.

An ISP-side filter limits the Internet access provided by the customer. If the ISP successfully blocks content, the customer cannot access it through any program, on any device. These filters require a special Internet provider that usually lacks the same scale of operation as the large unfiltered Internet services.

A router-side filter also limits Internet access received by a customer including wireless connections at home . Unlike an ISP side filter the customer installs this. It is generally somewhat complex to install but more powerful than a browser side or client side filter.

Another function many filters provide is ability to monitor online activity with 3 types of activities monitored: website visits, search terms, and social network activity. The results can be saved from an administrator to access (pull) or sent via email to the administrator (push). Buddy monitoring involves a user who selects someone to receive a detailed list of online activity. Social networking monitoring is important for parents who wish to ensure that their children are not sharing information that should be kept private.

Choosing a filter involves balancing simplicity and effectiveness. For the technologically unsavvy most users do not try to fiddle with the options that tweak filter affectability and purpose. A comparison of features of filters can be found at: <http://Internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com> . One filter available for no charge is the K9 Web Protection which provides a client side filter with time control and content control, category blocking, ad blocking, "black list and white list", and website activity monitoring.

All browser based and client side filters allow an administrator to override the blocking by entering a password. A parent may guard a password from children to block sites.

Filtering Mobile devices is more complicated than a computer because you cannot install a filter. Corporations that filter their mobile devices do so at the server level (similar to ISP based filters). Many mobile devices have the option for parental settings (Restrictions on iPods, iPhones, and iPads) that serve as client side filters. On an iphone one can disable or limit music, movies, and apps. For browser side filtering one must disable the built in browser Safari and download a filtered browser like K9, SafeEyes, or McGruff. To do this you must disable the downloading of apps. Otherwise a child can download an unfiltered browser. OpenDNS is one free router side filter that works on your home wifi network.

Net Nanny lists the following top ten Internet safety tips

- (1) Educate yourself and then your child
- (2) Teach children the obvious identity rules
- (3) Install an Internet Filter or family safety software
- (4) Know the dangers associated with sites your children frequent
- (5) Teach children what to do if they encounter pornography on a home or public computer, such as at school or the library
- (6) Manage your children's time on the Internet
- (7) Set specific internet guidelines for your children to live by and enforce consequences to live by and check to see if they are followed
- (8) Keep children in a family open area outside more private children bedrooms
- (9) Create a relationship with your children that is conducive to open communication

(10) Understand Internet privacy policies as they apply to your child

(11) for resources google “family friendly Internet” for other helpful tips

II. The Jewish Blogosphere

What is a blog? Blogs are online journals (often autobiographical) that at once combine the intimacy of personal reflection in the diary format with the instantaneously and globally accessible arena of the www. Women have championed journal writing and perhaps blogging is the next step in that development? Inwardness and introspection in autobiographical journal writing has a long tradition well before the Chap books written by 19th century women like Emily Dickinson, Kate Chopin, Jane Adams, Virginia Wolfe, Emma Goldman, Getrude Stein, and 20th century women like Anais Nin, Simone de Beauvoir, Eudora Welty, May Sarton, Tillie Olsen, Marguerite Duras, Gwendolyn Brooks, Janet Frame, Alice Koller, Carolyn Heilbrun, Anne Sexton, Adrienne Rich, Maxine Hong Kingston, Felicity Nussbaum, Eva Hoffman, etc.²⁴ Indeed Gluckel of Hammeln’s 18th Century autobiography of her savvy business skills integrated into the life of being a mother in a German context is a Jewish classic from a time when Charolotte Charke, Frances Burney, Germaine Stael, Mary Prince, Zilpha Elaw, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Martineau, Frances Kemble, Margaret Fuller all wrote journal autobiographies. The 17th century also knew the genre by women writers such as Margaret Cavendish, Lady Halkett, and Madame de Lafayette. In the middle ages women such as Hildegard von Bingen, Julian of Norwich, and Margery Kempe also wrote journals. Women who traveled in history such as Don Gracia²⁵ wrote travelogues although this genre may find a place in Jewish antiquity as Grossman notes.²⁶ This is not to say men did not write

²⁴ See: Boynton, V., Malin, Jo, (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Women’s Autobiography*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2005, 2 vols; Yalom, Marilyn (ed) *Revealing Lives: Autobiography, Biography, and Gender*, Albany: State University of NY, 1990; Benstock, Shari (ed.) *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women’s Autobiographical Writings*, Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988; Brodzki, Bella (ed) *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women’s Autobiography*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell Univ. Press, 1988; Buss, Helen, *Mapping Ourselves: Canadian Women’s Autobiography in English*, Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Univ. Press, 1993; Culley, Margo (ed.) *American Women’s Autobiography, Feasts of Memory*, Madison, Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1991; Ganiel, Regina, *Subjectivities*, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991; Gilmore, Leigh, *Autobiographies: A Feminist Theory of Women’s Self-Representation*, Ithaca, Cornell Univ. Press, 1994; Jelinek, Estell, (ed.) *Women’s Autobiography*, Bloomington, Indiana Univ. Press, 1980; Lionnet, Françoise, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*, Ithaca NY, 1989; Mason, Mary, *Autobiographical Writings by Women*, NY: G.K. Hall 1979; McKay, Nellie, *The Narrative Self in Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, Wisconsin, 1998; Miller, Nancy *But Enough about Me: Why We Read Other’s Lives*, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 2002; Neuman, Shirley, *Autobiography and Questions of Gender*, London: Frank Cass, 1991; Nussbaum, Felicity, *The Autobiographical Essays Theoretical and Critical*, Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980; Smith, Sidonie, *A Poetics of Women’s Autobiography: Marginality and The Fictions of Self-Representation*, Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1987; Stanton, Domna (ed.) *The Female Autograph: Theory and practice of Autobiography from the Tenth to the 20th centuries*, Chicago Univ. Press, 1987.

²⁵ Roth, Cecil, *Doña Gracia of the House of Nasi*, Skokie, Ill. : Varda Books, 2001

²⁶ Grossmark, Tziona. *Travel narratives in Rabbinic literature: voyages to imaginary realms*, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010. 253p. (ISBN 13-978-0-7734-3793-7); Grossmark’s excellent well organized collection and thoughtful analysis of 21 Jewish travelogues, travel tales, and travel folk tales uses interdisciplinary tools to compare them with the inter-cultural literature of journeys. He casts a wide net, yet gives appropriate attention to details and expertly draws on a varied terminology and knowledge not only of Hebrew and Aramaic but Latin and

autobiographical journals in Jewish history for numerous examples exist.²⁷ Jewish autobiography includes both genders being represented in self-reflection on the journey of life.²⁸ Sometimes in Judaism these autobiographies have entered into the esoteric area of the mystical and para-normal.²⁹

Greek. Trade routes of the ancient world, including roads around the Mediterranean basin, were busy with traffic during the Roman and Byzantine periods. Grossmark's book uniquely demonstrates the influence of Rabbinic texts on the Christian travelogue genre including the use of older "travelers' stories", from as early as the first century, thereby showing that Jewish travelogues precede the Christian travelogues from the fourth century and later. Grossmark looks afresh at travelers' tales found in *Maseket Baba Batra* regarding Rab Hanna within the context of travels of the *nehutei*, i.e. rabbis who journeyed between Eretz Yisrael and Babylonia, using the methodologies of folklore, Rabbinics, and parallels in other traditions.

²⁷ Although content wise different in a number of ways, this excellent translation of the autobiography of Rabbi Jacob Emden (1697-1776), *Megilat Sefer* is within the tradition of Rabbinic autobiographies which include notable works like: (1) Eldad ha-Dani (Babylonia, 9th C.), (2) David ha-Reuveni, (3) Abraham Yagel's *Gei hizayon* (16th C.), (4) Rabbi Yehudah Areyeh (1571-1643) of Modena's *Hayyei Yehudah*, (5) Rabbi Yosef Karo's *Maggid Meisharim* (Safed 16th C.), (6) Shlomo Molkho's *Hayyat Kaneh*, Hazon Shelomo Molkho, (7) Renegade Solomon Maimon (1754-1800) and (8) Rabbi Eliyahu David Rabinowitz [known as ADERET] three part work: *Seder Elayahu*, *Nefesh David*, *Achar Eliyahu*. Autobiographical episodes can also be found in works such as Ramban's *Vikuah*, the letters of the Ramhal, & Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav's last poem on spring that is in allegory for resurrection. Biographies of Rabbis can be found in works such as: (1) J. Heilprin's *Shemot Ba'alei Mehabberim*, (2) H.J. D Azulai's *Shem ha-Gedolim*, (3) H.J. Michael's *Orh ha-Hayyim*, (4) A. Hyman's *Toledot Tanna'im ve-Amora'im*, (5) M. Margalio, *Enziklopedyah le-Hakhmei ha-Talmud ve-ha Ge'onim*, (6) S.J. Fueen's *Keneset Yisrael*, (7) A. Stern's *Melizei Esh*, (8) A. Walden's *Sefer Shem ha-Gedolim he-Hadash*, (9) B. Eisenstadt's *Dorot ha-Aharonim*, (10) I. Lewin's *Elleh Ezkerah*, (11) S. Federbusch's *Hokhmat Yisrael be-Ma'arev Eiropah*, (12) M. D. Sherman's *Orthodox Judaism in America*. Continuing the tradition of autobiography writing also 19th C. scholarly examples include: (1) Rabbi Judah David Eisenstein (1854-1956) *Otsar zikhronotai*, (2) Leo Jung's *Path of a Pioneer*, (3) Gershom Scholem (*From Berlin to Jerusalem*), (3) Cyrus Adler, (4) Nahum Goldman, (5) Jacob Katz (1904-1998, *With My own Eyes: The autobiography of a Historian*), (6) Isac Hirsch Weiss, (7) J.L. Gordon, (8) H.N. Bialik, (9) Chaim Weizmann, (10) to Rabbi Yitzchak Zilber's *Chtoby ty otaloya evreem*, etc. . and many Rabbinic biographies have appeared by Jacob Neusner on various legendary Tannaim and Amoraim, Dresner's *The Zaddik on Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye*, M. Steinberg's (*As a Driven Leaf*) on the life of Aher, & Louis Finkelstein's *Akiba*. Jewish women's autobiographies are also being gathered from the historical past in addition to Glueckel of Hameln (1646-1724) by P.S. Nadell, P. Hyman, and D.D. Moore. Yiddish writers have also championed autobiography (see National Yiddish Book Center list (Bi, Biography, Autobiography, Memoirs, over 855 titles)

²⁸ Krupnick, Mark, *Jewish writing and the deep places of the imagination*, Madison, Wis. : University of Wisconsin Press, c2005; Shandler, Jeffrey (ed) *Awakening lives : autobiographies of Jewish youth in Poland before the Holocaust*, New Haven : Yale University Press, c2002; Cohen, Jocelyn, *My future is in America : autobiographies of Eastern European Jewish immigrants*, New York : New York University Press, c2006; Howotiz, Rosemary, *Elie Wiesel and the art of storytelling*, efferson, N.C. : McFarland & Co., c2006; Scharfstein, Zevi, *ha-Heder be-haye 'amenu*, [New York] : Shilo, c1943 [based on 44 Jewish autobiographies]; Kagen, Richard, *Inquisitorial inquiries : brief lives of secret Jews and other heretics*, Baltimore, Md. : Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011; Schacter, Elizabeth, *The Jews of Italy, 1848-1915 : between tradition and transformation*, London ; Portland, OR : Vallentine Mitchell, 2011 [based on autobiographies]; Finkelstein, Louis (ed) *Thirteen Americans : their spiritual autobiographies*, New York : Institute of Religious and Social Studies ; distributed by Harper & Brothers, c1953; Rubin, Steven, *Writing our lives : autobiographies of American Jews, 1890-1990*, Philadelphia : Jewish Publication Society, 1991.

²⁹ *Jewish mystical autobiographies : Book of visions and Book of secrets*, translated and introduced by Morris M. Faierstein ; preface by Moshe Idel, New York : Paulist Press, c1999; This volume collects the autobiographies of two Jewish mystics, *Book of Visions* by Rabbi Hayyim Vital (1542-1620) and *Book of Secrets* by Rabbi Yitzak Safrin of Komarno (1806-74). Born in Safed and having studied esoteric subjects with Rabbi Moses Cordovero (1522-70),

The question arises if one chooses to blog what benefits might become possible by blogging? Andrea Lieber provides some reasons:³⁰

- (1) outlet for frustrations , serves as therapy- therapeutic mechanism for coping with stress
- (2) virtual space for women to communicate & development of their own voice
- (3) crave and expanded community and horizon of life where their voice can be heard share and compare experiences
- (4) facilitates public expression while masked by a perceived fiction like veil of anonymity that creates illusion of privacy
- (5) challenge conventional ideas about domesticity in the Orthodox world
- (6) chronicle the daily joys and frustrations of life
- (7) may sometimes circumvent restrictions placed on them by their social circles and gain a strong public voice
- (8) spread knowledge by hyperlinking to other sites of interest
- (9) democratizing force
- (10) forum that leads to self-actualization to combat isolation
- (11) Reach out in search of community and support
- (12) embrace blogs for business, education, and outreach purposes

Aidel Maidel confesses that the reason she started to blog is because “I started to blog 2 yrs. ago. I intended it as my place to vent about all the things I couldn’t talk about with the people in my real life. It grew from there to become a record of my trials and tribulations, my mazel tovs and my sorrows.”³¹ Nice Jewish Girl also confesses her impulse to blog to: (1) Discusses issues of repression when one is shomer negiah and unmarried. Andrei Lieber notes that NJG offended some frum readers and was accused of bringing the private into public sphere, shocks sensibility of some ultra-frum by openly discussing issues of sexuality. NJG confesses that her blogging combats the melancholy that comes from their sense of isolation and constitutes a reaching out in search of community and support. Another motivation to blog is Jewish outreach of kiruv. Kressel Hausman, a married hasidic woman saw her blogging as doing outreach. Her blog was initially titled Kressel’s Corner www.beingjewish.com/kresel and featured articles on various subjects of interest to frum Jewish women. She also posted to Beyondbt.com a discussion site for newly observant. From the outreach site there was a link to www.livejournal.com

Rabbi Vital came to see himself as the foremost disciple of Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-72) and a successor of Rabbi Joseph Karo (1488-1575). In Book of Visions, Rabbi Vital analyzes the sources of his soul ancestry by tracing the genealogy of his own soul spark and its reincarnations via transmigration and unification. Like Rabbi Vital, Rabbi Komarno believes himself to be his generation’s messiah of Joseph, places importance on dream interpretation, and gives an account of a prediction of his destined greatness before birth. Faierstein’s books include Abraham Joshua Heschel, Prophetic Inspiration After the Prophets: Maimonides and Other Medieval Authorities. This translation is recommended for public libraries [book review by dbl in Library Journal, 2000]

³⁰ Lieber, Andrea “A Virtual Veibershul: Blogging and the Blurring of Public and Private Among Orthodox Jewish Women, in College English, vol. 72, # 6, July 20120 National Council of Teachers of English, 2010.

³¹ Lieber, Andrea “A Virtual Veibershul: Blogging and the Blurring of Public and Private Among Orthodox Jewish Women, in College English, vol. 72, # 6, July 20120 National Council of Teachers of English, 2010; regarding a divorce AidelMaidel withdrew early blog posts to protect the privacy of her family and censored her need for an outlet out of concern for the psychological wellbeing of her children caught between a divorce.

called *Aishes Chayil: Mi Yimtza?* For those “striving to find the aishes chayil within themselves” The blogging of Kressel Hausman was very traditional in affirming a separation of sexes as her husband maintained analogue sites for men i.e. *yingelach vs. veibelach*. Both of the Hausman Hasidic couple affirmed traditional boundaries that structure her home and ideological community life “Virtual Womens’ section.” Another category of orthodox bloggers is what Lieber calls the Orthoprax who keep all halakhic rules but are not afraid to question. Onion Soup Mix’s blog is an example of Orthopraxy. OSM unlike Hausman’s Virtual Veibershul questions the reasons for the mehitzah taken to a humrah. Orthoprax ironically critiqued the separate seating when her son received a Chumash at his Chumash play with dry ironic humor to question such separate seating at her son’s coming of age Chumash party where the boy sang and received his own sefer. In contradistinction Kressel employs rhetoric on the importance of the separation of the sexes. While Kressel is Chasidic she might have cited the work affirming its importance back to antiquity as giving kedushah to a synagogue as in the Beit HaMikdash.³² Onion Soup Mix blog did not tear down the mechitza³³ but rather employs humor in questioning its purpose. Again Onion Soup Mix employs comic bite when considering on Dec. 18th 2007 if Orthodox women should be permitted to shovel out a driveway as an act fitting in modesty:

A question has come up on a women’s forum regarding whether or not shoveling of the driveway is a tznius behavior for a woman?

Psak Din: [Breaking NEWS: Urgent Psak Din] In response to this I *Hagaonit, Harabbanit* Onion Soup Mix have researched this issue extensively consulting the sifrei halacha that address this timeless question and reviewed the numerous hsailos and teshuvos that pertain to this sensitive matter. After an exhaustive study, I must conclude that shoveling the driveway is a coarse unrefined behavior that does not befit a Bas Yisrael. Not only that, but due to the darkness of this Golus and the depth of depravity of the society around us, I must inform you that women are also not permitted to move furniture, mow the lawn, or take out the trash. Additional questionable behaviors include washing the floor, vacuuming, and possibly according to some poskim folding laundry. A G-d fearing woman, a true Bas Meleech will also recognize that the most tznius behavior includes sitting on the couch and eating chocolate bon-bons or pints of ice cream.

Blogs are made possible by Web 2 technology. Like other interactive web genres such as listservs, chatrooms, and wikis, the blog is a key feature of We 2.0 the internet’s second generation, in that it enables web surfers to create, rather than simply consume, the content available on the WWW

RSS (Real simple syndication) and permalink technologies allows web users to be notified whenever there is an update of any kind to a particular webpage, simulating a “live web” or incremental web”,

³² The Mechitza : maintaining the sanctity of the synagogue, New York : Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, c1988

³³ Litvin, Baruch, The sanctity of the synagogue : the case for mechitzah, separation between men and women in the synagogue, based on Jewish law, history and philosophy, from sources old and new
Imprint New York : Spero Foundation, 719 [1959]
ניו יורק : מוסד קרו ספער, תשי"ט 719]

making possible the layered, communal nature of the blog

Lieber's study samples and compares 9 Jewish Womens' Blogsites. Those include:

(1) The Fancy Schmancy Complaining Maven- "help bring Moshiach in special way", chronicling daily joys and frustrations of mundane aspects of her life

(2) Mommyblog

(3) PeturbedMom

(4) Orthomom

(5) Chayyei Sara

(6) AidelMaidel

(7) Nice Jewish Girl

(8) Virtual Veibershul

(9) Onion Soup Mix

Other Orthodox Forums include³⁴:

(1) Mikolot Mayim Rabim (from the voices of many waters- begun by MO female lawyer in 2005 devoted to TH

(2) Frummarrieds- begun 2007 by right wing Orthodox woman in Israel, to discuss intimate aspects of OJW physical lives

(3) Imamother- exclusively OJ forum created as Maand me in 2004 by Lubavitchin Montreal

(4) BTDI founded in 2007 by a Lubavitch American living in Israel to discuss intellectual issues from Orthodox point of view

(5) Jewish Women's Forum (JWF) in march 2005 as the Jewish Women's Network by Lubavitch in USA

(6) ChabadTalk founded in 2001 as mixed sex Lubavitch discussion

(7) Eshet Chayil – founded 2002 by MO in Israel

(8) Tisha Kabin- forum founded in 2002 by MO in Israel

(9) CalmKallahs- founded in 2003 by MO American female wedding planner

(10) Haskafa.com- founded in 2003 founded 2003 of all Orthodox backgrounds

Non-Jewish womens' blog sites include

(1) www.blogger.com

(2) www.allwomenstalk.com

³⁴ Schwartz-Baumel, Judy Tydor, Frum Surfing: Orthodox Jewish Women's Internet Forums as a Historical and Cultural Phenomenon, *Journal of Jewish Identities*, 2009, 2 (1)

(3) www.blogsdaisy.com

Some general blogs include:

(1) www.blogger.com

(2) www.blogspot.com

(3) www.livejournal.com

In Lieber's study Number 5 Blogger Chayyei Sara, who defined herself as , Orthodox Jewish 30 something living, playing, writing, dating in Jerusalem, in one of her postings questions the stereotypes about women and the Blogosphere. She writes in response to an article by Marcus Freed's in London's Jewish Chronicle Febr. 2006 "How the Internet is lifting the veil from Orthodox Jewish Women."

Chayyei Sara-

"Untillogs came along, the Orthodox community was so closed. There was no way to really get to know any Orthodox people! Orthodox women in particular were shut up in their homes with no one to talk to and their lives were state secrets! But now thanks to the internet, we're learning, fascinating things! Rebbetzins can have a sense of humor! Check it out at Renreb.com! Shomer negiah women have sexual urges? OMG Who knew? Get the details at shomernegiahblogspot.com Whoa, Orthodox mothers in the Five Towns have Political opinions! This is breaking news. The veil has been lifted! Its's a window into the Orthodox world! The internet is just amazing.³⁵

OrthoMom responded:

Shifra: It's good we have blogging or else Orthodox women like us would never be able to speak our minds. Thank G-d the veil has been lifted- we'd been suffering in silence much too long! Give me a BREAK! I think it's great that you and the Rebbitzen are getting well-earned press but man... someone needs to get out more.

Sephardic Lady added :]

Veil? I express these opinions at the table. I'm sure that most of the female bloggers do too³⁶

Hirshel TZig commented:

Explain to me the great freedom that is tot blog? Are you trying to tell us that Orthodox Women are victims of the Taliban or some other terrible regime, and that their only outlet is the internet?

³⁵ Lieber, Andrea "A Virtual Veibershul: Blogging and the Blurring of Public and Private Among Orthodox Jewish Women, in College English, vol. 72, # 6, July 20120 National Council of Teachers of English, 2010.

³⁶ [Sun. Feb 26, 2006]

As with various cultures Jewish bloggers coin their own abbreviations of terms such as:

- (1) DH= dear husband
- (2) DD= dear daughter
- (3) DS= dear son
- (4) LOR= Local Orthodox Rabbi
- (5) MO= Modern Orthodox
- (6) OJW= Orthodox Jewish Womens'
- (7) TH= Family purity= Taharat Hamishpacha³⁷
- (8) sL= So Long
- (9) OMG= O My G-d
- (10) BT= Baal Teshuva or Babylonian Talmud
- (11) BTW By the way
- (12) LOL Lots of Luck or Laugh out loud
- (13) TTYL talk to you later
- (14) BRB be right back
- (15) FYI For your information
- (16) AKA also known as

³⁷ See: Zimmerman, Deena R., "So She Can Be as Dear to Him as on Their Wedding Day? Modern Concerns With Hilkhhot Niddah as Demonstrated by Anonymous Email Quesitons", in *Gender Relationships in Marriage and Out*, pages, 225-241; Zimmerman uses unique data sources to analyze the sentiment expressed by Rabbi Meir in the context of modern observance of taharat hamishpahah. The challenges she gives voice to via discussion forums in this paper are not meant to be an attack on the importance of this mitzvah or to be interpreted as a call to amend the halakhic process or halakhah as currently practiced. Rather, they are meant to simulate discussion of the real experiences of modern couples observing these laws. www.yoetzet.org provides a unique opportunity to obtain such statistics. Yoetzet.org was launched in November 2002 to provide 24/7 access to information about taharat hamishpahah to English readers worldwide. In addition to approximately 1000 articles the site includes "Ask the yoetzet" feature when individual questions can be asked and all questions are answered by yoatzot halacha (women halakhic consultants) under rabbinic supervision, generally within 48 hours. The questions then undergo a second round of evaluation and, after assuring that all identifying information is removed about 1/3 are posted publicly on the site. As of January 18, 2005 a total of 2362 questions from 1527 email addresses had been sent to the website. Of these 878 did not involve niddah or related halakhot (most were non-halakhic medical questions for an obgyn) and were excluded from analysis, leaving 1484 questions as the denominator. Questions asked included, "the anxieties of mikvah night", contraception, childbirth, climacteric, menopause, halakhic infertility, frequency of separation.

(17) TTFN Ta ta for now

This nomenclature is not only shorthand but characteristic of the succinct and non-wordy nature of in another genre phone texting that often limits the number of characters. While the 19th century is characterized by writing long Bildungsroman, our age, although flooded with information, tends to communicate in short snippets that cater more to the sound bite, quick fix, fast food mentality of the post-modern condition. One study found that women are also more probable to use the computer keyboards ability to type smiley faces and exclamation points and other notational symbols signifying much expression in shorthand. Susan Herring argues in "Gender and Power in On-Line Communication" that politeness is one common means through which gender is cued in asynchronous CMC. Women are more likely to thank, appreciate, and apologize, and to be upset by violations of politeness and more often challenge offenders who violate online rules of conduct. Predominately female groups have more and stricter enforcement of positive rules designed to ensure the maintenance of civil environment.³⁸ In contrast men generally appear to be less concerned with politeness; they issue bald face threatening acts such as unmitigated criticism and insults violate on-line rules of conduct, tolerate or even enjoy flaming and tend to be more concerned about threats to freedom of expression than with attending to others social face.³⁹

III. Jewish Womens' Education in the Last 100 years⁴⁰

Rochelle Furstenberg argues that a revolution in Womens' education is taking place as the production of talmidot hachamot is ever increasing by the institutions that teach scores of women in programs designed for womens' study of Jewish sources. The most revolutionary development has been the emergence of women who are studying Talmud and halakhah whereby women are penetrating this vast and complex web of texts that usually requires lifetimes to grasp. In the past their roles as mothers and wives would not allow women the necessary stretches of time to become proficient in the large body of talmudical texts.

David Schnall⁴¹ has documented the tragedy in the secular world of Jewish women who postpone having a family opting for a career in medicine or law instead which also takes substantial amounts of time investment. Schnall notes the trend and phenomena of eligible young people voluntarily opting to delay marriage and child bearing that is without precedent in Jewish history. His study indicates that fertility patterns frequently gave way to professional concerns and goals. Women are discriminated in this regard due to their different biological time clocks for having children, as Freud noted when he

³⁸ Hall, Kira 1996; Cyberfeminism. In S. Herring (ed) Computer-Mediated Communication: Linguistic, social and cross cultural perspectives, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, p. 147-70

³⁹ Herring, Susan C., "Gender and Power in On-Line Communication", in Handbook of Language and Gender, edited Janet Holm and M. Meyerhoff, Blackwell Publishers, 2003

⁴⁰ See: Rosenberg, Esti, "The World of Women's Torah Learning- Developments, Directions, and Objectives: A Report from the Field, in Tradition, Vol 45, no. 1 Spring 2012; The Next Generation of Modern Orthodoxy: The Orthodox Forum, (ed. Hain, Shmuel), Robert Hirt Series editor, The Michael Scharf Publication Trust of the Yeshiva University Press, NY, 2012, p. 174-205

⁴¹ Schnall, David J., 'Feminism, Fulfillment and Family Values- But is it Good for the Jews?', in Tradition, 25 (1), Fall 1989

stated that Biology is destiny. Because of economic forces that require a two income household he notes that we may be spawning a Jewish generation whose earliest memories are of Polish fairy tales and Jamaican lullabies as babysitters spend more time raising Jewish children than the parents stretched to earn a living to support the standard of living sought in modern day America by many upper middle class Jewish households. He also proved that families with no children because career came first, are less likely to affiliate with a synagogue or a Jewish organization than those who do have children. Schnall's conclusion is that within 25 to 50 years the only group of Jews with significant population increase will be the Haredi population.

Despite this noted phenomena that much is sacrificed in Jewish population increase when young people are busy at learning or pursuing a career, Schnall's findings are challenged by those of Rochelle Furstenberg, who documents women learners who have both family and careers in learning Torah. Perhaps career is the wrong word for the ethos of Rabbinic Judaism is that "learning Torah is our real job" but has this always applied to women? The change perhaps began around 1918 when the Hafetz Haim supported women's study in greater intensity. For many millennia of Rabbinic culture the rabbis posited that while it is the highest mitzvah for men to study Talmud, this is not incumbent upon women. There is a makloket among the tannaim as to whether fathers are permitted to teach their daughters Torah. "Ben Azzai claims that each man must teach his daughter Torah, while Rabbi Eliezar argues that he who teaches his daughters Torah perpetrates foolishness (Masechet Sota). This is not to say that there were not learned women in Rabbinic history for there were many. However women learned different texts than men. However women like Bruria, the daughter of the scholar Hananiah b. Teradyon and was married to the second century scholar Rabbi Meir (a student of Rabbi Akiva who later helped compile the Mishnah and Aher who he is said to have eaten the pomegranate and thrown away the klippa), Bruria presented the model of a learned women of halakhah. However a later midrash that Rabbi Meir's students managed to seduce her might suggest the fate that awaits the learned women. At the same time it is believed Rashi's daughters studied Talmudic texts. In the 16th century in Poland Rivka Tichtener wrote "Myaneket Rivka" a book of halakhic instruction for women which included moral teachings as well as selections from the Talmud and Mishnah. In the 18th century Leah Horowitz daughter of Yoel Segal Horowitz rabbi in Bolichev and then in Boride was known to be a learned women in halakhah. In his memoirs a wine merchant named Ber Bolichev describes how as a youth he would come to study with Leah Horowitz's brother on Shabbos afternoon. When the brother left him to figure out the Talmudic text on his own, Leah Horowitz would see that he was puzzled and she would help him work through the *sugia* . She later wrote Techinat Imahos, a supplicatory prayer for Rosh Hodesh Elul in which she suggests the crown of Torah can even be worn by women.⁴² However for most women in the medieval ages the siddur, Tzenah renanah, and Me'am Loez constituted learning in Yiddish and Judeo-Arabic. When in the modern period women began to study secular studies in the Gymnasia becoming more learned in secular studies than in Jewish religious studies as a counter to this Sara Schneirer established the first Bais Yaakov School in Cracow in 1918. She received permission to found this girl's school from Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaCohen, the *Hafetz Chaim*. The Hafetz Chaim felt that lack of Jewish

⁴² Furstenberg, Rochelle, "The Flourishing of Higher Jewish Learning for Women" no. 429, 26 Nisan 5760/ 1 May 2000, www.jcpa.org

knowledge was undermining Jewish life and he advocated for the formation of the Bais Yaakov movement. Furstenberg writes, "The *Hafetz Chaim's* decision was the great watershed in women's religious education. As the great waves of immigration of the 20th century brought Jews to Western Europe and the U.S. and Israel, religious educators in these countries could look to this decision as justifying increasingly intense Jewish education for girls through high school.⁴³ Perhaps the takeoff of Womens' education in this century can now be represented by a general overview of a Time Line:

(1) 1950s **Stern College for Women of Yeshiva University** founded with advanced Jewish studies program

(2) Mid 190s Dr. Yehudah Copperman [an Irish born oleh who had studied in Hebron Yeshiva] and Tzipporah Pincus Cooperman [from Chicago] found **Jerusalem College for Women**, Michlalah, emphasizing close textual analysis of *Tanakh* [learned women like Maida Katz, Malka Bina, Bryna Levy studied at the Michlalah]

(3) 1967 War, Many American Women flock to Israel to learn with heightened sense of pride and belief in success of the Israeli state, many *Baalei Teshuvos* bringing religious feminism to Israel

(4) **1979 Drisha Institute in NY**

(5) 1976 Rabbi Chaim Brovender [doctoral student in Semitics at Hebrew University] founded **Bruaria Beit Midrash** using havruta model which **became Midreshet Lindenbaum** and integrated into **Ohr Torah Institutions in 1986**

(6) **LCW founded 1974 (3 Years after Mens Yeshiva in Kew Gardens)**

(7) Dr. Nechama Leibowitz- model of inspiration for women teaching Bible in Israel; Dr. Leibowitz came to Eretz Yisrael in 1930s after studying in Germany, master teacher,⁴⁴

(8) 1988 Malka Bina Jerusalem based **Matan, the Sadie Rennert Women's Institute for Torah Study** with programs in Ramat Harsharon-Raanaana, Haifa and Beersheba

(8) 1990 Nishmat, founded by Chana Henkin

(9) 1982 Bar Ilan Midrasha- women undertake a Jewish studies program parallel to the Bar Ilan men's Kollel program

(10) 1997 Beit Mirash Hagevoah L'Nashim at Kibbutz Migdal Oz

⁴³ Furstenberg, Rochelle, "The Flourishing of Higher Jewish Learning for Women" , no. 429, 1 May 2000

⁴⁴ See: Peerless, Shmuel, To study and to teach : the methodology of Nechama Leibowitz, Jerusalem ; New York : Urim Publications; Leah Abramowitz, Tales of Nehama: Impressions of the Life and Teaching of Nehama Leibowitz. Gefen Publishing House, 2003; Yael Unterman, "Nehama Leibowitz: Teacher and Bible Scholar." Urim Publications, 2009; Hayuta Deutsch, Nehama: The Life of Nehama Leibowitz Yedioth Ahronoth and Chemed Books, 2008.

(11) Kibbutz Hadati = w The name derives from the initials of Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (the "Natziv of Volozhin" 1816 – 1893) who was one of the greatest rabbis of Russia at the end of the 19th century. The kibbutz was set up on 17 January 1946 at a place previously known as "el Wakwaka", by a group of young people of the Bnei Akiva Movement from Germany omen's Hesder program = army and study at Kibbutz Ein Hanatziv, Many Orthodox Jewish girls attend a midrasha in Israel for a year or more following high school. Some midrashot are designed for BT.s

List of Midrashot in Israel⁴⁵

Bat Ayin

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin [1]

Beit Shemesh/Ramat Beit Shemesh

Bnos Chana [2]

Machon Maayan [3]

Tiferet [4]

⁴⁵ See: <http://www.science.co.il/Midrashot.asp>

Midrasha	City	Phone		
Igud Hamidrashot	Jerusalem	02.6222279		
Matan - Women's Institute for Torah Studies	Jerusalem	02.5944555		
Midreshet Ein HaNatziv	Ein HaNatziv	04.6062900		
Midreshet Amiad	Jerusalem	02.6228040		
Midreshet Aviv	Tel Aviv	03.6092229		
Midreshet Bat Zion	Jerusalem			
Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin	Bat Ayin	02.9934945		
Midreshet Binat Shvut Rachel		02.9947366		
Midreshet Emuna	Jerusalem	02.5324112		
Midreshet HaOr HaTzafon Akko		04.9550157		
Midreshet HaRova	Jerusalem	02.6265999		
Midreshet Lindenbaum	Jerusalem	02.6710043		
Midreshet Maamakim	Jerusalem	02.6547210		
Midreshet Neve Hadasa	Safed (Tzfat)	04.6924307		
Midreshet Noga	Kedumim	09.7928875		
Midreshet Oria	Givat Shmuel	03.5326677		
Midreshet Orot Etzion	Givat Washington			
Midreshet Orot Hagalil	Hatzor Haglilit	04.6931170		
Midreshet Shaanan	Haifa	04.6067571		
Midreshet Shuva Ofra		02.9973832		
Midreshet Tal Menashe	Tal Menashe	04.6350666		
Midreshet Tel Hai	Kiryat Shemona	04.6942429		
Midreshet Yeud	Jerusalem	02.6449010		
Nishmat Center for Advanced Jewish Study for Women	Jerusalem	02.6404333		
Women's Midrasha	Ramat-Gan	03.5318270		

Ein HaNatziv

Midreshet Ein HaNatziv [5]

Elkana

Michlelet Orot [6]

Hebron

Midreshet Hebron [7]

Jerusalem

Bayit VeGan

Afikei Torah [8]

Darchei Binah [9]

Midreshet Moriah [10]

Gilo

Midreshet AMIT [11]

Givat Shaul

Machon Tal/Midreshet Ma'amakim [12] (Hebrew)

Har Nof

Ba'er Miriam [13]

Neve Yerushalayim

Bnos Chava [14]

Me'ohr Bais Yaakov [15]

Michlelet Esther [16]

Midreshet Tehillah [17]

Kiryat HaYovel

Emunah V'Omanut [18]

Midreshet Yeud [19]

Kiryat Moshe

Midreshet Rachel V'Chaya [20]

Pninin [21]

Malha

Sha'alvim for Women [22]

Mattersdorf

Beth Jacob Jerusalem

Old City

Midreshet HaRova [23]

Pat

Nishmat [24]

Ramat Eshkol

Bnot Torah (Sharfman's) [25]

Ramat Shlomo

Machon Shoshanat Yerushalayim [26]

Ramot

Tikva [27]

Tomer Devorah [28]

Romema

EYAHT [29]

Talpiot

Midreshet Devora [30]

Midreshet Lindenbaum [31]

Zichron Moshe

Ohr Chaya [32]

Kiryat Malakhi

Nachlas Har Chabad [33]

Migdal Oz

Migdal Oz [34]

Ofra

Midreshet Shuva [35]

Shvut Rachel

Midreshet Binat

Tel Aviv

Midreshet Aviv [36]

Tsfat

Machon Alte [37]

Sharei Bina [38]

Israel, Currently Closed

Bnot Shilo

Machon Gold

(12) 15 Midrashot associated with Mercaz HaRav Yeshiva

(13) 1976 Shalom Hartman Institute

(14) Midreshet HaRova is one of Israel's leading seminaries, with more than half a dozen programs serving hundreds of women of all ages from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities. Located in the heart of the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City, Midreshet HaRova enjoys an enrollment of over 1,000 students in total.

(15) Yakar, Rabbi Dr. Michael Rosen zt"l founded the Yakar Center for Tradition and Creativity in London in 1978, in Jerusalem in 1992 and in Tel-Aviv in 2007

(16) Beit Midrash of the masorti movement

The main centers of learning are:

Hakerem Masorti Congregation, Karmiel

Moriah Masorti Congregation, Haifa

Masorti Congregation, Zichron Yaakov

Bet Yisrael Masorti Congregation, Netanya

Hod Vehadar Masorti Congregation, Kfar Saba

Midreshet Iyun, Tel Aviv

Adat Shalom Emmanuel Masorti Congregation, Rehovot

Eshel Avraham Congregation/Shiluv Institute, Beersheba

Magen Avraham Congregation/Shiluv Institute, Omer

(17) Chabad in Australia Ohel Chana Seminary in Melbourne Australia founded by Rabbi Zalman Serebranski (ztsl); Beth Rivkah and Beth Chana Girls' schools that span the globe from Melbourne, Australia, to the huge campus in Kfar Chabad II in Israel; Machon Chana in Brooklyn, New York, Beth Chana in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Machon Alta in Safed, Israel, and Ohel Chana in Australia are notable examples of institutions that have provided an intense intellectual experience to thousands of women, who had little or no Jewish education; Shortly after ascending to the leadership of Lubavitch, the Rebbe founded Lubavitch Women's Organization ("*Agudas N'Shei Chabad*"), which was and remains unique. It was the first major women's organization which did not emphasize the objectives of fund raising and auxiliary activities, but education. Chabad women from these seminaries were some of the most intellectual and Jewishly well educated in the world according to many. For an English transcript of Rabbi Zalman Serebranski's last video recorded Torah teachings see David B Levy's translation from the Hebrew and Yiddish provided by Rabbi Chaim Dalfin.

(18) Pardes Institute COED learning; A two year program of traditional text study at Pardes, leading to a career as a teacher in a Jewish day school in North America. The program is generously subsidized and includes monthly living stipends. An optional Masters in Jewish Education is available with most tuition covered. The Pardes Educators Program was developed with and is funded by a grant from The AVI CHAI Foundation.

Thus in the last 25 years the paradigm of only men learning in Yeshivah is being complemented by serious Womens' torah seminary education that has made great scholastic, spiritual, and sociological great strides in the area of success. The world of Womens' Torah learning is expanding and growing in leaps and bounds, but some worry about the economic crisis of the global economy and whether the expansion of Womens' torah institutions will be as vibrant over the next decades as it was in the past 25 years. While Midreshet Lindenbaum, and matan in Jerusalem along with Midreshet HaKibbutz Hadati in Ein HaNetiv were some of the first forums for serious womens' torah learning what will be the future for womens' torah learning. Michlalah-Jerusalem which begin 20 years prior to the above three

institutions combined academic studies with Torah learning in a unique way, but there is a recent trend to stress less on secular studies and more on Torah learning. The learning in Michlalah was at a high level focused primarily on the teaching of Tanakh and its pirushim. The idea of gemarah study at that time was for most unthinkable while today the Torah she be'al peh programs open to women do incorporate the study of mishna and halakhah and isolated citations of Talmudic sugyot on photocopied pages. Also Aggaddata is studied in great depth. In the past and still today for the truly frum, the general atmosphere was that a woman encouraged the building of a home and family and a woman's spiritual virtue was measured by the level of her investment in furthering her husband's development as a Torah scholar. Today with the feminist movement, egalitarianism, and more economic leveraging of woman's greater potential as wage earners this model is beginning to shift. In the past for the majority of women the stereotype is that a woman could learn with her father, sit in the women's section as a passive listener who hears but neither sees nor is seen. That stereotype of course is just a cliché and women's voices were heard perhaps more than their husbands' voices because it was because of the advice and sacrifices of women that men's Torah scholarship was made possible in Yeshivot. Today change is happening and the status quo of the past is being leveraged by economic, sociological, and cultural forces all influenced by the furtherance of women's rights and equality in society. Rabbanit Malka Bin and R. Chaim Brovender were partners in these winds of change that are blowing more strongly today. Midreshet Lindenbaum was geared towards and older student which was originally called Midreshet Bruria whose target audience was Israeli women before and after national army service. These women would learn for a year and then continue on to University studies. These institutions chose for themselves the designation Midrasha and thus distinguished themselves from the name Yeshiva. About 10 years later Herzog College and Yeshivat Har Etzion would ask Esti Rosenberg to establish a Torah framework for women in Kibbutz Migdal Oz in Gush Etzion, an institution which was a Beit Midrash for Women. Midrasha as a term was rejected in favor of Beit Midrash to signify the chain of transmission and continuation of Torah study and service to Hashem (communal prayer) for millennium of generations that men's battei midrashoth existed across Jewish history mentioned as early as the Mishnah and before that. Tanakh and Jewish thought were taught to introduce the concepts of seder and havruta for women's learning, a change that turned study from the monastic model of isolated learning in a library conceived as a sanctum silentia to a reverberating beit Midrash in which the students listen and debate with shiurim from a rabbi with whom dialogue can be furthered. Esti Rosenberg's efforts received the blessing of her father, R. Aharon Lichtenstein, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion and the heads of Ohr Torah Institutions, R. Chaim Brovender and R. Shlomo Riskin. Most of the teachers in these institutions were graduates of Yeshivat Har Etzion which over the years was under the great influence of Rav. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, who three decades earlier some feel had led the way for women to study gemara at the Maimonides School that he established in Boston, and ran with his wife, and later at Stern College for Women. Some Israeli Rabbanan of the Torani communities resisted these developments "for the sake of heaven". They questioned, "Are women allowed to study gemara? Should Torah institutions encourage the opening of new areas of gemarah study to women which traditionally had been diffracted into other areas such as Tanakh and Jewish thought study? They wondered would the status of the man in the family as the ultimate Torah authority in the classical family structure be undermined by perhaps a wife more learned than the husband. Is a woman permitted to ignore the exemption from time bound positive precepts that is granted to women and

decide that she wishes to intensively immerse herself in Torah, despite the fact that the *vehsenantum lebanakhah* (teach them to your sons) literally exempts women from Talmud Torah. Does the new desire for *gemarah* learning involve the upheaval of the natural order and a lack of understanding regarding the traditional role of women as wife and mother? Is there the risk that in the wake of women's exposure to the profundity of Torah learning, will women invest themselves less in home building and invest their energies in an arduous course of Talmudic studies? What was the final destination of the new winds of change of women learning *gemarah*? Will women who engage in advanced Torah study become *Poskim*? *Rabbaniyot*? Community leaders? Are we on the brink of the dawn of the messianic age which the Rambam notes in *Sefer Shoftim*: The one preoccupation of the world will be to know Hashem. Then the *Shekhinah* (female manifestation of Hashem) will envelope the earth, and the radiance of the *Shekhinah* will illuminate the crowns of the righteous in *olam habah*?

The fear of change and reform in the orthodox haredi community dictated an intensity of reaction and spiritual opposition alongside additional social questions that disturbed the conservative areas of the Haredi right. The question of motives and intention was asked? Were women studying at high levels of Torah learning for the right reasons? Or mere Foucaultian power-knowledge regimes leveraging? Did the motivation for Torah knowledge stem from pure motives or the left feminist ideals of power leveraging for material gain only? Often Orthodox women had to prove their commitment to halakha and rabbinic authority and protest that they were not liberal secular feminists on the right but rather Orthodox feminists on the right. Then there is the Freudian maxim that "biology is destiny" raising questions that a woman's commitment to a large argeous body of wisdom such as *gemarah* learning would delay her ability to procreate in traditional marriage although birth rates are increasing for older women due the result of advanced fertility treatments in science which the *gemara* predicts that *biyamei hamashiah* women will give birth to multiple children at much older ages. Women learning Talmud were also faced with the dilemma that some men would not want to marry women who know more than he does, and that Torah study in general puts finding a husband in jeopardy despite the Rambam's affirmation that the world is redeemed by the quest for *hokmah*, *binah*, *vedaas*, the quest for intellectual virtue, the development of the life of the mind, and cognitive attainment. Women studying at *Midrashot* in the early years were sometimes perceived as free spirit trail blazers and "weird and strange" (a *loshon* for witchcraft in the *gemarah* and Shakespeare) in the eyes of their peers and parents. In the early days a great majority of haredi high schools and *Ulpanot* did not encourage their women students to turn to in depth Talmud Torah learning upon completion of their secondary education, for the reasons mentioned above, and primarily to get on with starting a family after marriage. So much has changed and the winds of change continue to refreshingly invigorate women's torah study with the potential to penetrate to deep learning. Disagreement for the sake of heaven continues today but the first generation of 20th century female torah learners was imbued with a pioneering and adventurous spirit along with abundant faith and confidence in both the justice and urgency of their cause. The inner strength of these trail blazers in Women's torah study is to be admired for it is never easy to initiate change nor challenge the status quo. The Rambam speaks of the healthy yearning that is the redemptive aspect of the soul of the human being to draw closer in "being with Hashem, the Being quo being" to be partners in Torah yearning to draw closer to Hashem. Deepening torah study and intensifying their religious experience was a conviction that these women felt was a

spiritual calling and their conviction. Despite the zeal (zizirut) and vision of these early women learners who trail blazed new paths in women's' torah scholarship the reaction to their visionary aspirations often countered and gave rise to resistance. Often the voicing of the need for extremely slow and guarded progress was espoused by the far right. This may have discouraged some women thirsty for the wellsprings of torah at these new institutions for Womens' torah learning post-secondary schooling. Yet these women weathered the resistance by acquisition of the tools of torah learning to learn on their own, starting out in sederim and shi'urim in gemara, proficiency in Tanakh, and deeper familiarity with Torah texts. Could the debates of Abaye and Rava be carried on by this new generation of innovators the right wing asked in the way in which it has been since millennium past? High level Habburot, musar, communal prayer, were these to be extended to women according to the right wing traditional haredi communities? Could women eventually establish their own Yeshivot that rivaled one another as the Volohin Yeshivah and the Musar Yeshiva in Europe did with utmost creativity and revitalization? Could a scholarly elite of women torah learners emerge as they have from the Harvard of Yeshivot like Mir, Ponevitch, and Brisk? Is the dream and vision underlying women's Torah learning to produce female torah scholars who would be able to participate in scholarly Torah discussions at the leadership levels, or perhaps the primary goal to raise female balebativot who are dedicated to the love of Torah and its financial support? Since women are not required to daven in a minyan could women maximize the time spent in communal prayer to further devote themselves to intense Talmud learning although spiritual liturgical service of the heart is ultimately linked with learning? Would women Midrashot ever be able to rival male yeshivot which on Hagim and Shabbat come alive with spiritual unity and singing and a high level of esprit de corps organize around the halakhah that men must daven in a minyan 2 or 3 times a day by Jewish law. Did some women feel the need for the intensive all-embracing experience of deep torah learning punctuated by communal prayer, day and night? Would women be satisfied with learning Talmud torah, or did they need to build a world of communal liturgical service of the heart in communal prayer, singing during Hagim and Shabbos celebrating together in an esprit de corps that characterizes men Yeshivot that expresses the Hechalot and longing of King David to "Dwell in the house of the L-rd all the days of my life" (Tehillim 27:4), which characterizes some mens Yeshivot where night seder so that everyday 24/7 Torah is learned as on Shavuot, so the watch not stop for guarding the memory of sacred tradition. Would detachment from secular society that characterizes some cradle to grave elite male Yeshiva learners by favoring immersion in the world of Torah eventually be accessible to female torah students? Because the intensity and power of the encounter of with torah that is part of a living masorah is so exciting and transformative would the opportunity for such intellectual-moral-spiritual development be eventually opened to women coming in contact with the sources of the oral law drawing one closer to Hashem. Some women who were leading the revolution in womens' torah study were often advanced in their development of serving as mothers in a marriage relationship so that they did not have time for the immense hours of hard work required by learning gemarah. With the entry of younger women in deep Talmud torah learning whose biological time clocks provided more lag time for the leisure to learn torah, the Midrashot grow at astounding pace and in a broadening framework. Often the rabbis who lead these women to forge new paths of understanding in torah learning did not see this as their life project and invested their time in joint appointments at mens' Yeshivot. Thus the question of the next generation of torah teachers, women mostly arises, as a potential in the expanding process of Womens' torah education. *The halakhic* inability to join together for prayer quorum made it impossible

for womens' Midrashot to operate in tandem with mens' yeshivot where learning is punctuated by intense communal prayer. If the women would stay in the midrasha for Shabbat how would they pray communally and if they remained for Rosh Hashanah how would they great the intense spirit of teshuvah and selichot that permeates the atmosphere of mens' yeshivot during the Yamim Nora'im and time leading up to that pinnacle of spiritual height? How would the draw close to the male rabbis teaching them if they could not dance with them on Purim night but only together as women communally? If their teachers were women what *kevudim* could be given to their moraot? Thus womens' torah education became intensely intellectual and text based although as rabbinic tradition note women are at a higher spiritual level than men. In fact the prayer quorum of a minyan is because the 10 bad spies gave evil report of the land of Israel which the women did not. Undoubtedly some womens' desires will deepen into the future and they will demand a comparable experience with the mens' yeshivot and all that that entails, such as Rabbinic tischs, the sihot of great Rebeim, the enthusiasm of rebbeim during Hagim and Shabbos, and intense immersion into torah learning at the eclipse of the time for secular studies. Some women await the day of not merely learning day to day texts on an intellectual and spiritual basis in Midrashot but a world of serving Hashem in all dimensions with Rebbeim who are not merely conduits of knowledge but spiritual mentors throughout life in an intense environment where torah is breathed, lived, and imbibed 24/7 all year- expressing the desire to dwell in the house of the L-rd all one's days and nights. It was Rabbi Lichtenstein who saw in womens' torah learning in general and in their learning gemarah in particular, a positive le-khateillah development.

Since the early founding of *Midrashot* more followed such as Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav and late Har HaMor supported the establishment of Midreshet HaRova, Yeshivat Or Etzion established Midreshet Orot Etzion and in the community of Maon a midrash was established in the spirit of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav with a Hassidic flavor. This expansion influenced the future course of the midrashot's development. As in the yeshiva world, different midrashoth bear the same designation and the same framework, but are very different in their inner contents. In these new midrashoth gemara is hardly studied and the curriculum mostly revolves around issues of Jewish faith and thought and preparation for a woman's most important role, motherhood and raising children. In many of these places study is perceived not as a le-khateillah pursuit, but as a be-di'avad activity in order to allow for the acquisition of practical skills for the world and raising children. There are also 1 year programs directed at strengthening religious devotion and observance and commitment. The gulf in the underlying assumptions of the different schools about a woman's place in the torah world is great.

Currently about 30 midrashot are scattered across the state of Israel with a student population of over a thousand young women every year and serious frameworks of study for older women are found in several Israeli cities and the Religious Zionist camp is coming to more greatly accept the changing depth of study of Women in Talmud torah. The allocation of financial resources for the specific purpose of building batei Midrash for women attests to the winds of change and that woman's torah learning will most likely continue to be an everlasting edifice. Magnificent batei Midrash have been dedicated In Migdal Oz, in Nishmat, and in Midreshet Lindenbaum. Since the thirst for torah learning is overpowering, since some women continue to drink from its wellsprings, it is predictable that further

inroads will continue to be made as the consciousness of the breadth of the Torah as wider than the “sea” requiring long years, many *gilgulim* of lifetimes of learning, so that Torah is a way of life and not merely an academic discipline. It is a desire without an end to desire so that Koheleth can proclaim, “all rivers run to the sea, yet the sea is not full”.⁴⁶

In the women’s beit Midrash founded by Yeshivat Har Etzion and Herzog College a three year program was established with the goal of training teachers. The goal of the program is to train women teachers to teach women. The program has been running about 7 years, alongside a regular 1 year program. It is intended primarily for the graduates of the one year Beit midrash program. The program’s goal is to effect change in the Torah education of girls in Israel on the elementary and high school level, and to produce mentors and role models.

Matan established the Advanced Talmudic Institute which operates a 3 year program designed for women with a strong background who wish to engage in advanced Gemara learning and plan to teach gemara in different frameworks. The program is intended for women with a B.A. or beyond and operates 4 days a week between 8:30 am and 3:30 pm. Each year about 10 women operate in this high level of learning atmosphere. A similar program is offered in *Tanakh* that is combined with the pursuit of a M.A. The goal of the tanakh degree is to produce educated women to teach in the high schools and post-high school programs.

Shlomo Riskin has advocated for Ohr Torah institutions under the direction of Mrs. Nurit Fried to expand the torah activities of women to include advocating for women caught up in divorces in the Rabbinical courts. Following a struggle that included petitioning Israel High court of Justice against the ministry of Religion, women were granted the authority to represent both women and men before a rabbinical court in cases of divorce. During the mid-1990s the first class of women rabbinical court advocates (to’anot rabbaniyot) was established and functioned in getting women gets. The positions of advocate was open to women who mastered Even ha-ezer and other sources. After 2 years of study the women sat for examinations administered by the Rabbinat of Israel. It was felt that a woman advocate could alleviate the stress of the status of an agunah. The goal of Riskin was to effect change in the rabbinical courts based on more gender equality and produce women who can represent women in times of crisis.

Another new phenomena is the *Kollel Halakha* for the training of the Yo’atsot Halakha. Ten years ago Midreshet Nishmat headed by Rabbanit Chana Henkin together with her husband Rabbi Yehuda Henkin established the program of Yo’atsot Halakha in matters pertaining to taharat hamishpah. Later the Women’s Halakhic Hotline was in operation allowing women to anonymously call in questions relating to taharat ha-mishpaha to the Yo’atsot Halakha. The program functions under the supervision of the Midreshet Nishmat rabbinic staff (Rabbis Yaakov Warhaftig, R. Menachem Burstein from Macho Puah, and others) train the Yo’atost Halakhah focusing on areas of taharat hamishpahah. It is a 2 year program. The students must also take courses in medicine and psychological and emotional issues relating to women. After two years the students have an oral examination to pass and become Yo’etset

⁴⁶ See opening of Midrash Tehillim

Halakha. The program emphasizes that the women are advisors and not decisors. The necessity for this was criticized as undermining the authority of Rabbinic authorities in *maseket Niddah*, yet it was felt that the need to introduce women into a sensitive area in the encounter between women and halakha was a must. Statistically the number of questions directed to the Yo'etset is double that that had been previously addressed to the communal rabbis on those topics. Women who refrained from asking sheilas in this area are now more encouraged to do so.

In the beit midrash of Migdal Oz on yom kippur another new development has arisen. Rabi Lichtenstein of Har Etzion and Rabbi Amital argued that a contingent of at least 50 married men may pray in the womens' beit midrash surrounded by many hundreds of woman if there is a mehitzta. Men pressured to attend to make a minyan of 50 are not allowed and must attend of their own free will. The minyan is composed mostly of members of the staff, parents of students, and husbands of former students. Member sof the beit midrash staff lead the service and women such as Esti Rosenberg gives a sihot on the night of Kol Nidrei and before Ne'ila from the womens' section with men listening from the mens' section.

Arguments obviously can be made for women engaging in deep torah study such as:

(1) A woman who studies Torah in a Beit Midrash raises the level of torah discourse for her family

(2) Such women scholars can better be prepared to staff the roles of Jewish leadership

(3) Womens' scholarship answers the needs of the evolving Jewish communities such as the Yo'atsot Halakha.

(4) Womens' ways of knowing and insights that differ from men, have much to teach men in the general balebatim community and yeshivot communities. Rav Soloveitshik's essay, "*U-Vikkashtem mi-Sham*" notes, "The questions that women ask me are different than the questions raised by men, and I have begun to teach the men differently in light of the questions posed by the women which provided me with new perspectives on the text being studied".

(5) The messianic age understood by Rambam is based on cognitive attainment so that the one preoccupation of the world will be to know Hashem, and this includes men and women, so that knowledge of Hashem will be as wide and expansive as the waters in the "sea", a trope for the Bavli and oral torah in general, a state of being whereby the shekhinah, the female manifestation of Hashem will envelope the world in pursuit of *hokmah, binah, vedaas*, the life of the mind, and attainment of intellectual-moral-spiritual virtue. Rambam understood that Hashem gave the torah to his people Israel and that includes both men and women, and their perhaps different ways of knowing the text.

IV. Teaching Torah to Women⁴⁷: Traditional views based on a long millennial reception history of the text

⁴⁷ See Shanks Alexander, Elizabeth, "The Impact of Feminism on Rabbinic studies: The impossible Paradox of Reading Women in Rabbinic Literature".

We are living in an age which has seen the rise of feminist movements within the ranks of Orthodoxy. Numerous women seek involvement in Judaism on an intellectual level that previously they may have been marginalized from.

In Kiddushin⁴⁸ 29b⁴⁹ the Talmud states:

How do we know that she (the mother) has not duty to teach her children? Because it is written *velimaddetem* (and you shall teach), which also reads *ulemaddetem* (and you shall study: hence whoever is commanded to study is commanded to teach; whoever is not commanded to study is not commanded to teach and how do we know that she is not bound to teach herself? Because it is written *ve-limaddetem* (and you shall teach)- *u-lemaddetem* (and you shall learn) the one whom others are commanded to teach is commanded to teach himself; and the one whom others are not commanded to teach is not commanded to teach himself. How then do we know that others are not commanded to teach her? Because it is written, "And you shall teach them you your sons⁵⁰ - but not your daughters."⁵¹

The gemarah concludes that a woman is not obligated to teach or learn Torah. However there raises the question, "May a woman study Talmud?". A source of this controversy is the sugya in Sotah 20a-21b.⁵² The Mishnah deals with a woman suspected of committing adultery but claims she is innocent. She must submit to drinking the bitter waters as prescribed in Bamidbar 5:11-31 If she is innocent she will be unharmed by the waters but if not her thigh will cave in and stomach bloat. However the

⁴⁸ This gemarah is preceded by a discussion [regarding] all the commandments [that pertain] to the child and which are incumbent upon the parent- men are obligated and women are exempt (m. Kiddushin 1:7). Likewise in Tosefta Kidushin 1:11 we read, "What are the commandments of the parent to the child? To circumcise him, to redeem him, to teach him Torah, to teach him a trade, and to marry him off (T. Kidushin 1:11)

⁴⁹ Some translations state: To teach him Torah

- A. From where do we know this? As it is written and you shall teach them (*velimadtem*) to your sons (*beneikhem*)
- B. And where his father did not teach him, he is obligated to teach himself, as it is written and you shall study (*ulemadetem*) (Deut. 5:1)
- C. How do we know that she (the mother) is not obligated to teach? Since it is written and you shall teach them (*velimadtem*) which as the same spelling as and you shall study (*ulemadetem*): thus whoever is commanded to study is commanded to teach; whoever is not commanded to study is not commanded to teach.
- D. And how do we know that she is not obligated to teach herself? Since it is written and you shall teach them (*velimadtem*) which as the same spelling as and you shall study (*ulemadetem*) thus the one who others are commanded to teach is commanded to teach himself; the one whom others are not commanded to teach is not commanded to teach himself.
- E. How then do we know that others are not commanded to teach her (the daughter)? Since it is written and you shall teach them, your sons- your sons but not your daughters (Kiddushin 29b).

⁵⁰ See Sifrei Deut. Piska 34: And you shall teach them (these words) to your sons (Deut. 6:6). These are your disciples. And thus do we find that everywhere in scripture disciples are called sons... And just as disciples are called sons, so too the master is called a father.

⁵¹ According to the gemara a woman's exemption from the commandment of Talmud Torah is manifested in 3 ways: (1) a woman is not required to teach her sons Torah, (2) A woman is not required to learn Torah herself, (3) A father is not required to teach Torah to his daughters. See also Kiddushin 34A and Shabbat 32b; Yerushalmi Brachot 2:7; Eruvin 10:1 Rambam Talmud Torah 1:1 Sotah 3:20, Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 246:6, Shulchan Aruch Harav, Talmud Torah 1:14

⁵² Variant readings see: Dikdukei Sofrim Hashalem edition of Sotah P. 299

Mishnah discusses cases where in fact she is guilty but the effects of the water take 3 years. This happens if she has merits which have the power to protect her for a limited amount of time. Then the Mishnah quotes the following dispute:

Hence declared Ben Azzai, ' a man must teach his daughter Torah so that if she must drink the bitter waters she may know that the merit will suspend her punishment.⁵³ Rabbi Eliezer says "If a man teaches his daughter Torah, it is as though he taught his daughter *tiflut*⁵⁴." R. Yehoshua says "a woman prefers a kav together with *tiflut*⁵⁵ to nine *kavs* together with restrictions of chastity."⁵⁶

The gemarah does not provide a definition of the word "Torah." Are Hazal referring to the Torah Shebichtav (written torah with mephorshim) or Torah shebeal Peh (oral torah) or both? Ben Azzai obligated the father to teach his daughter the oral and certainly the written torah. Since the underlying rationale of Ben Azzai's requirement is to ensure that every woman be familiar with the fact that certain merits can delay the effect of the waters, he obviously requires the study of the *Oral Torah* since the delaying effect of merit is not mentioned in the Written Torah itself.⁵⁷ Rabbi Eliezer is understood in 2 ways: (1) perhaps he agrees that woman may or should be taught the written Torah and only berates a father who teaches his daughter the oral torah, (2) it is possible that he rebukes a father for even teaching his daughter the written Torah. R. Yehoshua's description is more strict. His description of woman can be interpreted in two ways, (1) Perhaps his opinion is identical with R. Eliezer's and his statement was merely made in order to further substantiate his colleagues. (2) if we assume that R.

⁵³ That is if the woman learned Torah she will know the reason the water did not kill her immediately in spite of her guilt is because of a *z'chut* (Rashi) The Meiri however explains that Ben Azzai is referring to other women who are present and perhaps know of the woman's guilt. If they have learned Torah they will know that the words of Torah are true and that the water will eventually take effect. See Tiferet Israel on Mishnah

⁵⁴ The first meaning of *Tiflut* is found in Iyov 6:6 "Can that which is tasteless (*tofel*) be eaten with salt?" According to this *tiflut* would mean trivial or irrelevant things (opinion of Rambam *hilchot Talmud Torah* 11:3) and Meiri (*Sotah* 20b). The Rambam states that since women due to child rearing are generally not ready to dedicate themselves completely to Torah study, their knowledge will necessarily be superficial. Given such superficial knowledge a woman will not be able to appreciate the depth and scope of Rabbinic learning and will come to consider it irrelevant and trivial, *haval havalim*.

⁵⁵ The second meaning of *Tiflut* is immorality or lechery. Rashi explains that according to R. Eliezer if a woman will be taught Torah she will acquire wisdom and she will thus understand how to conduct immoral affairs without being discovered (see *Responsa Maharil* 199. The Ramo in Y.D. 246:6 clearly concurs with this interpretation. This interpretation is based upon a verse in Jeremiah 23:13: "And I have seen *tifla* in the prophets of Shomron. Rabbi Eliezer expressed the same opinion in even stronger terms in an incident recorded in *Yerushalmi* (*Sotah* 3:4). A wealthy and educated woman once asked R. Eliezer an incisive question regarding the chapter in the Torah relating to the *egel HaZahav* i.e. an orgy. He replied that "There is no wisdom in women except with the distaff (spinning wheel). The Rabbi's son Hyrcanus reminded his father that perhaps it would have been better to answer her question since she was in the habit of giving large annual tithes to their family who were Leviim but R. Eliezer stated, "Let the words of the Torah be burnt, but they will not be handed over to a woman" (see *Avot D'Rabbi Natan* 18, *Chagiga* 3a and *Yoma* 66b).

⁵⁶ Thus the 3 opinions may be summarized as follows: (1) According to Ben Azzair a father is obligated to teach his daughter Torah, (2) R. Eliezer in the Mishnah does not actually cite a specific ruling He simply berates a father who has chosen to teach his daughter. (3) R. Yehoshua does not mention either a woman's studying Torah or a father's obligation concerning his daughter's Talmud Torah. He states his evaluation of the nature of an average woman.

⁵⁷ See R. Yoshiyahu Pinto (RIF) to *Ein Ya'akov* in *Sotah*, *Vayael Hacohe* Moshe P. 435. Or *HaMizrach* 17 P. 43. R. Tzadok HaCohen of Lublin suggests an alternative interpretation in *Otzar HaMelech* T.T. 1:13

Eliezer only rejects Ben Azzai's decision concerning the oral torah but concurs with his Heter to study the written Torah, it is possible that R. Yehoshua in his assessment of women rules that their being taught the written torah also falls under the category of *tiflut*.⁵⁸

To understand these makloket we must turn to the famous ruling of the Rambam⁵⁹. Rambam writes:

A woman who studies Torah is rewarded but not to the same degree as is a man, for she is not commanded and anyone who does that which is not commanded to do, does not receive the same reward as one who is commanded but only a lesser reward. However even though she is rewarded Hazal commanded that a man must not teach his daughter Torah. This is because the mind of the majority of women is not disposed to study and they will turn the words of torah into words of nonsense according to their limited understanding. Our sages said that anyone who teaches his daughter Torah is to be considered as if he had taught her trivial and unimportant things. What were they referring to? The oral torah. However the written torah should not be taught before the fact (*lechatchila*) but if he has taught her, it is considered as if he has taught her *tiflut*.⁶⁰ (*Yad Talmud Torah 1:13*)⁶¹

The Shulchan Aruch⁶² quotes the Rambam and the Ramo adds, "However she is obligated to study those laws which apply to women."⁶³ The Rambam rules that a woman is to be rewarded for studying torah but not as much as men who are commanded to do so. On the other hand he accepts R. Eliezer's strong disapproval of a father who teaches his daughter Torah noting the dangers involved in such an

⁵⁸ See Megillah 15b

⁵⁹ Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:13

⁶⁰ The Rambam quotes the opinion of R. Eliezer thereby indicating he follows his ruling. He endorses the liberal interpretation of Rabbi Eliezer which considers only the teaching of the oral torah to be *tiflut*. Nevertheless he proceeds to forbid before the fact *lechatchila* even the study of the written torah which should be permitted according to the liberal interpretation which sees no disagreement between R. Eliezer and ben Azzai as far as the written torah is concerned

⁶¹ אשה שלמדה תורה יש לה שכר אבל אינו כשכר האיש. מפני שלא נצטווית. וכל העושה דבר שאינו מצווה עליו לעשותו אין שכרו כשכר המצווה שעשה אלא פחות ממנו. ואע"פ שיש לה שכר צו חכמים שלא ילמד אדם את בתו תורה. מפני שרוב הנשים אין דעתן מכוונת להתלמד אלא הן מוציאות דברי תורה לדברי הבאי לפי עניות דעתן. אמרו חכמים כל המלמד את בתו תורה כאילו למדה תפלות. במה דברים אמורים בתורה שבעל פה אבל תורה שבכתב לא ילמד אותה לכתחלה ואם למדה אינו כמלמדה תפלות: Maimonides codifies the Talmudic law. The Rambam's assertion that women were not commanded to study torah finds ready authority in the Talmud in Qidushin but also in Sota 21a: When the Mishnah says that the merit can suspend the effects of the bitter waters for up to 3 years what merit was it referring to? Could it be the merit of Torah? But surely she does it as one not commanded So it must refer to the merit of *misvah*. But does *misvah* merit afford that much protection? Ravina said it absolutely refers to Torah merit and not to *misvah* merit. And as for the objection that she does it as one not being commanded even though she is not under orders to study, the reward for taking their sons to their scripture and Mishnah lessons and waiting patiently for their husbands until they return from the *beit midrash*, do they not *plg* (share/divide/split) that reward?" Rambam attributes to the sages "whoever teaches his daughter Torah is as if he taught her *tiflut*" to the Talmudic consensus.

⁶² Yoreah Deah 246:6

⁶³ Halachah quoted in name of Agur (Hilchot Tefilla 2) who quotes the Smag. However it has been pointed out that in fact the origin of this Halacha is in the Smak (*sefer Mitsvoth Katan*) in the introduction by his student. Also found in *Beit Yosef* Y.D. 340

action. How do we reconcile the Rambam's ruling with the many recorded historical accounts of prominent Jewish women who excelled in their knowledge of both written and oral Torah?⁶⁴

So what is it? May women study only written torah or both written and oral torah?

The TAZ⁶⁵ provides a source for the Rambam's distinction between written torah and oral torah. In Devarim 31:10-13 the King is commanded to read certain sections of the Mishnah Torah (devarim) before all of Israel during the Sukkoth festival at the end of each 7 year period and this is called Yom HaKahal- the day of assembly. The Torah states, "You must gather together the people, the men, women and proselytes from their settlements and let them hear it."⁶⁶ The TAZ notes the women were

⁶⁴ Tosefta Kelim (B.K. 4:9) quotes a ruling in the laws of ritual purity in the name of R. Meir's famous wife Bruriah. Bruriah's erudition may be found in Tosefta Kelim B.M. 1:4. Gemara Pesachim 62b, Eruvin 53B Shabbat 133b. In sefer Sibuvei R. Petachya of Regensburg (p.9) it is recorded that R. Shumuel b. Eli The Gaon of Baghdad in the late 12th century had a daughter who was fluent in scripture and Talmud and taught these subjects to male yeshiva students through the second story window. The Chidah in Shem Hagedolim tells us that Rashbatz (3:78) quotes a solution to a difficult talmudic problem in the name of a certain Rabbanit. In a gloss to the Responsa of the Maharashal (no. 30) we find that Rebbetzin Miriam (the grandmother of the Maharshal) taught halachah to advanced Yeshiva students from behind a partition. The son of R. Yehoshua Falk (author of the Prisha and the Sma) in his introduction to the Prisha quotes novella in the name of his mother Baila who he says was proficient in many areas of halachah. Regarding other educated women of this period see: Cecil Roth: Outstanding Jewish Women in Western Europe 15-17 Centuries, in The Jewish library vol. III, edited by Leo Jung p. 151ff., and Shlomo Ashkenazi Dor U'Manhigav P. 199-268. Recent times Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer employed the sister of the Aderet of Ponevitzah who was instrumental in editing his classic commentary on the Rambam. Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld was said to have set chavruta with his wife for ½ hour each day in order to study Orah Chaim (sefer Amud a D'nehora P. 13). He rules that women are not exempt from commandments involved in the PARDES. namely knowledge of G-d and his unity and the love and fear of G-d as explained in Hilchot Yesodei Hatorah. According to the Rambam the PARDES refers to physics (maaseh bereshit) and metaphysics (maaseh Merkava). However The Rambam holds it is not proper to walk about in the PARDES unless one has filled his belly with bread and meat, the knowledge of what is forbidden and permitted etc. He concludes that his prerequisite knowledge is available to all men and women alike (Yesodei HaTorah 4:13). This seems to imply women may study the Havayot of Abaye and Rava.

⁶⁵ Y.D. 246.4, note 4

⁶⁶ Isaac Sasson (p.68) demonstrates the midrashic mechanism employed to neutralize Dt. 31:12 and bring it into line with the mishna's views of women. The text is slightly less egalitarian in the covenant of the plains of Moab where we read, "Moses summoned all Israel and said to them... You stand today all of you before Hashem your G-d your tribal chiefs your elders and your officers all the men of Israel. Your children your wives and the stranger in the midst of your camp from the woodchopper to the waterdrawer. Ready to enter into the covenant of Hashem your God and into his oath which Hashem your God is making with you this day... To the end that he may constitute you today as his people and he become your God.... The concealed (things) belong to Hashem our G-d; but the revealed to us and our children for ever to do all the words of this Torah (29:1, 10-13, 28). Since the tappekhem and neshekhem end in the possessive pronoun masculine, the addressees of the summons presumably were male heads of families. In Deut. 31 on the other hand, Moses is briefing priests and elders. The laity- men, women, and children are all third person and minus the possessive pronoun. Another scriptural passage that puts sons and daughters on an equal covenantal footing is Dt. 17:2-3; "If there be found among you a man or woman who does what is wrong in the eyes of Hashem your G-d by breaking His covenant and going to worship other gods" Dt. Unlike Exodus and Leviticus is less restrictive in exclusion of women from the atonement-effecting meals (Ex. 29:33; Lev. 10:17). In search for an apanage peculiar to women commentators are wont to come up with a woman's monthly period." Three women Leviticus encumbers with severe defilement as a consequence of secretations from within their bodies: the parturient, the niddah, and the zavah. Al tiggeshu el ishah (do not go near any woman) refers to the injunction to follow the laws of family purity. Joseph Blenkinsopp writes, "Whatever

included in this day of public learning. Thus this is in conformity with the Rambam that teaching women written torah is not in the category of Tiflut. The TAZ asks however if the proof from the example of Yom Hakahal is valid why then did the Rambam insist that even written torah should not be studied lichathilah? The TAZ answers his question, 'It seems to me that over there (Yom Hakahal) the King only taught the simple meaning of the text (peshat) which in truth is completely permissible even according to us as it is the custom every day. However the study of the meanings of the Torah by means of hitchakmut and havanah (thorough analysis) is what was prohibited in our case. This is the meaning in the statement in the Talmud (chagiga 3a) "men in order to study and women in order to listen."- the women were only permitted to listen to the simple explanation of the Mishnah Torah but took no part in its study. Thus according to the TAZ the Rambam's prohibition to teach women the written torah refers only to an in-depth analytical form of study and not a more basic one i.e. *peshat*.⁶⁷

The Magen Avraham Orach Chaim 282:6 derives from the *Yom HaKahal* that women are obligated to hear the weekly readings of the Torah.⁶⁸ Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chajes (Maharatz) cites the Taz and offers an interesting proof to verify his explanation from the aforementioned case of the woman who approached R. Eliezer with a question regarding the sin of the Egel HaZahav. The Maharatz points out that perhaps the Rabbi Eliezer refused to respond to her question only because to do so would have required an analytical explanation of the text. R. Eliezer Rokeach author of Maase Rakeach agrees with the TAZ. He concludes that the primary issur involved is the study of the oral torah which lends itself to technical hairsplitting and hence the possibility of misinterpretation or misuses to which women "are prone." The written torah he says was prohibited according to the Rambam as a result of a gezerah if we permit women to study the written torah, they would be curious to study the oral torah, which is forbidden.

its original rationale the sequestration of the woman during her menses and after childbearing served to perpetuate her essentially private status and justify her exclusion from public office, including the Temple cult. (see in *Families in Ancient Israel*, "The family in the First Temple Israel" edited by L. Perdue, Louisville, KY 1997, p.75. Cf Shulamit Valler: "Jewish society had been a temple society and its central ideology was one of purity. The periodic changes arising from female physiology appeared to threaten the purity and spirituality of men. Men's fears led them to want to subordinate women in everything concerned with their sexuality and reproductive powers (Women and Womanhood in the Talmud, Atlanta, GA 199, p.xviii). In the Tanakh what comes closest to the offerings by fire which Dt. 18 allocates outright to the Levites. The Levitical priests even hew hole tribe of Levi shall have no holding or patrimony in Israel the offerings by fire of Hashem and His patrimony shall they eat. (Dt. 18:1-2) The text's implication is that the priestly tribe subsists on these allocations which are its staple. Men's mitzvot may include knowledge of the laws of niddah-hallah, and hadlikat haneirot but men cannot know niddah condition biologically analogously some would assert women's mitzvot lack learning torah. Since women were not commanded to study torah should they do so they cannot in rabbinic understanding look to reap the harvest destined for those under orders namely male Talmud students. This rationale tallies with Maimonides' understanding.

⁶⁷ The halakchic decision for Shoel U'Meishiv (4:41) is in accordance with the TAZ See Tos. Sotah 21b and Chagiga 3a which quotes the Yerushalmi. The father in law of the TAZ the BACH has reached the same conclusion in his commentary on the Tur (Y.D. 246) However the BACH notes one should not teach women derech keva but only in the form of shmiya. The BACH alludes to the paradox of the Rambam where a woman is rewarded for Torah study while her father is forbidden to teach her torah on a simple level yet learning on an irregular basis is considered a mitzvah.

⁶⁸ See Resp. Taz Eliezer vol. 9, no. 3, P. 31

This eventually would exist only where a woman studies the written torah in a manner which itself is analytical. However women may study the simple meaning of the text.⁶⁹

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi in his *Hilchot Talmud Torah* (1:14) rules that teaching women oral torah is considered *tiflut*, but he fails to mention any issur regarding the written torah. There are those who understand this omission as clear proof that the Rav in opposition to the ruling of the Rambam and Shulchan Aruch permits women to study the written Torah without any limitations regarding the depth of the study.⁷⁰ This is in accordance with the Piskei HaRID (Nedarim 37a) Others disagree with this interpretation of the Shulchan Arukh HaRav⁷¹. I.e. The *Ateret Zkenim* who rules that women must study the written torah.⁷²

One may ask how the ruling of the RAMO in gloss to Shulchan Aruch 246:6 states women must learn the laws that apply to her. How does this relate to the Rambam's ruling? In Sefer Hasidim we find the following:

A man must teach his daughters the mitzvot the piskei halachot. Concerning what was said that whoever teaches a woman Torah it is as if he taught her *tiflut*, this refers to the depth of the Talmud, the rationale of the mitzvot and the secrets of Torah. These are not taught to women or a child. However she should be instructed in the laws of the *mitzvot*. If she is ignorant of the laws of the Shabbat how can she possibly observe it, and similarly with all the *mitzvot*. We find that in the days of Chizkiyahu the King of Judah, men, women, and children knew the laws of sacrifices and ritual purity.⁷³

The student of R. Yitzchak of Corbeille in France also write in the introduction of the Smak, "And he also wrote that we must tell the women the positive and negative mitzvot that apply to them. The Kriah (reading) and dikduk (careful study) in these mitzvot will benefit them, just as Esek Hatalmud benefits men."⁷⁴

The question arises if women are obligated to say the birchat Hatorah. The Shulchan Aruch clearly states, Women recite the blessing over the torah."⁷⁵ However in R. Yosef's commentary on the Tur he elaborates quoting the Maharil who bases his distinction upon the Rambam between written and oral torah. Women may recite Birchat HaTorah because they too many study the written torah.⁷⁶ Then the

⁶⁹ Maaseh Rokeah on Rambam T.T. 1:13. R. Yosef Halevi Boskowitz son of the Machatzit Hashekl in Seder Hamishnah (T.T. 1:13) writes that according to the torah women are only exempt from Talmud Torah but are permitted to study and by doing so receive the reward of one who is not commanded but performs a mitzvah. R. Boskowitz concludes that the Rambam forbids *lichathila* study of the written torah by women for fear that it might lead to the study of oral torah.

⁷⁰ Resp. Tzits Eliezer, vol. 9, no. 3 P. 31; R. Shmuel Ashkenazi Notes on Hilchot Ralmud Torah P. 555

⁷¹ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson in Likutei Sichot vol. 14, P. 150, ff. 12

⁷² Ateret Zkenim Orach Chaim 47:14

⁷³ Sefer Hasidim 313; See Vayoel Moseh Kuntres Lashon Hakodesh ch. 41-42, Resp. Shoel U'maishiv 4:41 Shiurei Beracha O.C. 47, Yosef Ometz 67

⁷⁴ The Smak states that women should study the laws of their mitzvot by means of a text.

⁷⁵ Orach Chaim 47:14

⁷⁶ Maharil 199

Mahaber cites the Maharil's concluding statement, "and certainly women recite the blessing according to the SMAK, who wrote that women are obligated to study their mitzvot. The GRA disagrees writing:

And their opinion is unacceptable for a number of reasons. The torah itself (as interpreted in the Gemara) shouts to us, "And you shall teach your sons" and not your daughters. So how could women possibly say "Who has commanded us or who has given us the Torah? Clearly the matter must be explained according to what is written in Tosafot and the other poskim, that women are permitted to recite a bracha whenever they choose to perform a *mitzvat aseï sheHazman Grma* (positive commandment performed at a particular time) although the Rabbis have taught, "whoever teaches his daughter Torah it is as if he has taught her *tiflut*. This statement was only made in connection with the oral torah.

Rabbi Yosef Ber Soloveitchick in the Beit HaLevi⁷⁷ like the Vilna Gaon before him could not accept an approach which so explicitly seems to contradict the accepted Talmudic dictum that women are exempt from the mitzvah of Talmud Torah.⁷⁸ Nevertheless a group of Rishonim and Achronim determined that women must recite the Birchot Hatorah because they too are obligated to study the mitzvot which apply to them. The fact that women can recite the Birchot Hatorah is a result of a psak by Rabbenu Tam that women are allowed to make brachot even on those commandments from which they are exempt.⁷⁹ According to the Beit HaLevi once a woman is familiar with her *halachot* she is no longer required to study them in any form.⁸⁰

Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky in one of his response in *Achiezer* deals with the question of whether extra money which was originally designated for a men's yeshiva may be transferred to the account of a local girls yeshiva (Beit Yakov). In his reply he quotes the suggestion for the questioner himself, that the solution to the problem could very well depend on how we define the nature of a woman's Talmud Torah as opposed to that of a man. Since women are exempt from the actual mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*, their obligation to study the mitzvot can only be categorized as a *Hechsher Mitzvah*.⁸¹ The conclusion is

⁷⁷ Beit HaLevi 1:6; See Beit HaLevi on the torah parashat mishpatim; Beit HaLevi makes an important distinction between two forms of Talmud Torah: (1) study of torah, (2) knowledge of torah; although the SMAK and others hold that women must study their mitzvot they do not perform any mitzvah in the act of studying.. Their only obligation is to know the mitzvot which apply to them and "study" is simply a means of obtaining that knowledge. That is why the men came to study and the women to listen- to gain information necessary from them to observe the commandments. The fact that women can recite the Birchot Hatorah is a result of a psak by Rabbenu Tam that women are allowed to make brachot even on those commandments from which they are exempt.

⁷⁸ Rambam T.T. 1:1

⁷⁹ See Beit HaLevi also *minchat Chinuch* and *Mitzvah* 430

⁸⁰ The Chida in *Birkei Yosef* (Orach Chaim 47) reached the same conclusion as the BEit HaLevi from a stext in Shabbat 33b) which quotes Rabbi Shimon as saying that the disease of askara is caused by bitul torah. The gemara asks if Rabbi Shimon is correct then why do women who are exempt from Talmud Torah also die of Askara? The gemara answers that women die of askara because they disrupt the Torah of the their husbands.

⁸¹ In halachic terminology an act which is a prerequisite to the fulfillment of a mitzvah is known as "Hechsher Mitzvah".

that there would be a problem in transferring funds that were set aside for a *mitzvah* in order to be used for the purpose of a *Hechsher Mitzvah*.⁸²

There are authorities like the BACH however who understand that the woman's responsibility to study mitzvot and recite the brachot implies that her torah study is more than just a hechsher mitzvah. The BACH quotes the Maharshah "Women have affinity to the words of the torah when they study mitzvot that apply to them."⁸³ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson notes that in the case of women and Talmud Torah, although the torah exempts women from Talmud Torah it obligates them to observe their commandments. In order to attain this end their existence and indispensable means = study Because of its necessity this study gains its own significance and identity although it does not fall under the general category of *Talmud torah*. This is the meaning of women "having an affinity" to Talmud Torah. Thus a woman may recite birchot hatorah and many continue to be involved in her act of Talmud torah even after she has acquired enough knowledge to observe the commandments.

Let us return to the generalization of the Rambam that "the mind of the majority of woman is not adapted to be taught etc. The sages said 'anyone who teaches his daughter Torah is as if he taught her *tiflut*. The Penei Yehoshua, Rabbi Yehoshua Falk in the Prisha comments:

The minds of most women are not adapted to be taught torah. However if a woman has taught herself, it is apparent to us that she is no longer included in the category of *rov* (most) women. Therefore the Rambam wrote that she is rewarded and this refers to a woman who has studied Torah properly and consequently will not turn the words of the Torah into words of nonsense. A father is forbidden to teach his daughter Torah lest she turn the words of Torah into words of nonsense since he does not know what lies in her heart.⁸⁴

The implication is that for sincere motivated women a father or teacher may impart torah knowledge upon women who demonstrate proper intention. The Chida points to the case of Bruriah whose vast knowledge of the written and oral torah is recorded in numerous places in the gemara. Apparently he claims the rabbis after much scrutiny came to the conclusion that Bruriah could not be included in the category of the majority of women by virtue of her brilliance and sincerity. Since she was self-motivated to such a degree she was permitted to receive Torah instruction.⁸⁵

This more permissive approach to women's learning is articulated by Rabbi Baruch HaLevi Epstein, author of *Torah Temima*, who writes:

I have seen it fit at this point to copy something that I have found written in an old rare sefer called *Maayan Ganim* written by R. Shmuel ben Elchanan Yakov RekaValti, in which the author addresses a letter to a certain educated woman concerning the heter of women to study Torah: The statement of

⁸² *Achiezer III*, no. 79; See R. Yoel Teitelbaum *Resp. Divrei Yoel I*, P. 266

⁸³ *Tur Y.D.* 246

⁸⁴ *Tur, Yoreh Deah, Prisha* 246:6

⁸⁵ *Chida, Resp., Tuv Ayin*, no. 4; see also R. Isaac Abraham Kook *Igrot Reiya No. 467*; *The Tzitz Eliezer* (vol. 9, no. 3) quotes the Mesharet Moshe on the Rambam T.T. 1:13 who disagrees with the Chida who holds that exceptions of brilliant women do not break the rules.

our rabbis, “Whoever teaches his daughter Torah is considered as if he has taught her tiflut is perhaps referring to a father who teaches his daughter while she is still young and impressionable and tends to understand everything in a literal sense. Certainly in such a case there is reason to apply the warning since most women are frivolous and spend their time involved in trivial things.... However those women, who have motivation and desire understanding to be brought closer to the work of G-d as a result of their own choice to do what is right may ascend the mountain of G-d and dwell in his holy place. These women are considered exceptional and the Torah sages of their generation must encourage, strengthen, and direct them. Carry out your plans and succeed and from Heaven you will be helped⁸⁶

This heter applies to motivated and bright women who thirst for the waters of torah. Thus what appears to be a legal prohibition in both the *gemara* and the Rambam has been reduced to a practical warning for the majority of women but not exceptional women. Any mature woman who exhibits a sincere desire to study Torah, written or oral, has by doing so removed herself from the category of majority or average and must dedicate herself not to misuse torah.

The Chofetz Chaim also gave his brachah many believe to womens’ torah study by recognizing that contemporary society is different in that now many women regularly are involved in serious academic pursuits and should be allowed to make serious academic pursuits in Torah studies within the university setting.⁸⁷ Further beyond the university setting once a woman has demonstrated serious sincere motivation to learn torah according to maayan Ganim and the Chida, she should actually be taught torah by a competent *halakhic* authority. Rabbi Meiselman points to the historic precedent, the period of King Chzkiya concerning which the Talmud states, “They searched from Dan to Beersheva and did not find an ignoramus from Gevat to Antipot and could not find a young boy or girl, man or woman who was not completely conversant with the detailed laws of ritual cleanliness⁸⁸ Meiselman is pointing to a change in historical circumstances of women attending secular universities and other avenues open besides sitting at home and raising children and attending to housework. Rabbi Yisroel Meir HaKohen when referring to Bet Yaakov girls also recognized this historical change and writing in his commentary on Sotah states the following:

It would seem to me that his prohibition is only at those times of history when everyone lived in a place of his ancestors and the ancestral tradition was very strong for each individual and this motivated him to

⁸⁶ Torah Temimah, Devarim 11:17

⁸⁷ Meiselman, P. 39; In *Jewish Women in Jewish law*, Meiselman writes, “The learning of Torah is not obligatory for women as it is for men. A man’s ultimate task is an all-engrossing involvement in the study of Torah. A woman’s ultimate task is in another area and another direction. She is obligated to study and be proficient in the order to perform her mitzvot. All knowledge necessary for the performance of her tasks is obligatory. At times hwnne only technical knowledge is necessary only technical knowledge is required. Other areas of knowledge knowledge are optional. The sages were cautious about permitting women to venture into areas irrelevant to performance. Some scholars say that they forbade it. Most say that they urged caution and prudence out of fear of the dangers of superficial knowledge (p.40).

⁸⁸ Sanhedrin 94b; Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum in *Yaveole Moshe* offers a different opinion as do numerous poskim and ahronim.

act in the manner of his forefathers as it is written, “Ask your father and he will tell you.” In this situation we can say that women may not study Torah and she will learn how to conduct herself by emulating her righteous parents. However nowadays when the tradition of our fathers has become very weakened and it is common for people not to live in the same place as their parents and women learn to read and write a secular language, it is an especially *great mitzvah* to teach them Bible and the traditions and ethics of our sages like Pirkei Avot and Menorat HaMaor and the like, so that the truth of our holy heritage and religion will become evident to them; otherwise Heaven forbid they may deviate entirely from the path of G-d and violate all the precepts of the Torah.⁸⁹

While some like Arthur Silver⁹⁰ concluded that the Chofetz Chaim did away with the *halakhic* prohibition of teaching torah to women many rejected this interpretation including the Satmar Rav.⁹¹ According to the Satmar Rav the only innovation made by the Chofetz Chaim was to allow initially the non-analytical study of the Bible and Talmudic ethics on the part of women. The Satmar Rebbe mentions that the Chofetz Chaim did not make mention of any Mishnah or *gemara* in his famous heter. Similarly Rabbi Moshe Feinstein writes the following:

The sages commanded us not to teach women mishnayot which is Torah shebaal peh and falls under the category of tiflut. Therefore we should prevent women from studying it. Only *Pirkei Avot* which deals with matters of morals and ethical behavior should be taught to women in order to inspire in them love of torah as well as noble characteristics. Other tractates may not be taught.⁹²

Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin however enthusiastically endorses Women’s torah study and its implementation into the curriculum of *Beit Yaakov* and other girls’ schools in a *Responsum* where he writes:

Practically speaking the question of women studying the Oral torah requires further investigation. However in reality in the Beit Yaakov school the oral torah is never analyzed anyway... The statement of

⁸⁹ Likute Halachot Sotah 20A, see also Chofetz Chaim Collected letters 23 Shevat 5693, as quoted in R. Yaakov Fuchs, Halichot Bat Yisrael, P. 121 and conclusion of Chomat HAAdat.

⁹⁰ Silver, Arthur M., “May Women be Taught Bible, Mishna, and Talmud?, Tradition 17 (Summer 1978).; The Satmar Rav opposed this reading of the Chofetz Chaim.

⁹¹ There are fools who has misinterpreted the words of the Chafetz Chaim as they are recorded in his Likutei Halachot on Sotah.... Thereby attributing to him nonsense which he never spoke and consequently defaming the name of the Tzaddik. According to them it appears as if G-d forbid the Chafetz Chaim said that a clear halacha originating from the Talmud and Rishonim and codified in the shulchan aruch no longer applies. These writers have eyes but do not see that all the subjects that he mentioned (Torah Prophets and Ethics of Chazal) are not forbidden according to the din as I have explained. In spite of their being permitted a number of generations were strict and did not allow women to study even these subjects. There could have been a number of reasons for this stringency. One is that perhaps they were concerned that the study of these subjects might lead to the study of those areas which are prohibited to them. Therefore they relied upon the Kabbalat Avot- family transmission of the necessary halachot as we see in the Maharil. Regarding this the Chafetz Chaim wrote that because of the weakening of Kabbalat Avot in modern times it is no longer sufficient for a girl to rely on family traditions but rather it is a mitzvah to teach her those subjects which we are and always were permitted to teach women. This can be done in spite of the custom of previous generations to refrain even from this permissible area of study. The Chafetz Chaim never intended G-d Forbid to permit that which is forbidden according to the halakhah nor to disregard what Chazal described as teaching tiflut. Certainly in our feeble generation where Kabbalat Avot is weaker than ever, the prohibition remains in effect.

⁹² Iggerot Moshe Y.D. 3:87; See also Y.D. 2: 139, 2:109

Chazal “Whoever teaches his daughter etc.” was only made regarding the study of the oral torah by means of thorough analysis *and pilpul*.⁹³

Many of the 20th century authorities who rely upon the approach of the Mahril, Prisha, Chida, and Bach in order to permit torah study for women do not follow the heter to its logical conclusion- namely the permissibility to study or be taught oral torah.⁹⁴ The authority of the gemarah in Sotah and the Rambam cannot be written off. Yet in a Bruriah-filled environment the remarks of Rabbi Ben Zion Firrer are apropos:

Today, the question is not whether or not a woman should study torah, but rather should a woman study torah or should she study other subjects which are unrelated to the torah. An obsession to pursue the three of knowledge has taken hold of all people, women as well as men..... If a modern woman does not study torah, she will certainly study *tiflut*.⁹⁵

Such scholars accept the view of the Prisha and others as one which represents a sweeping heter for modern women to study and be taught both the written and oral parts of the torah. The sweeping heter recognizes that modern day Jewish girls are for the most part growing up in an atmosphere which discourages respect for traditional laws and values post the 1960s. In order to overcome these obstacles of laxity and penei ha dor penei ha kelev (Sotah) Rabbi Teitelbaum agrees that it is absolutely necessary that we establish and maintain *Yeshivot* for girls.⁹⁶ The curriculum in Satmar girls high schools includes written torah but commentaries such as Rashi are forbidden since they consist of an in depth analysis of the text as well as the drashot of Chazal.⁹⁷ Of course Mishnah and gemarah are forbidden in Satmar girls educational institutions. However books such as *Menorat Hamaor* and *Tzenah Ure-enah* may be studied since they are primarily mussar (ethics) texts which do not analyze the gemarah quoted⁹⁸ In other Charedi communities in Israel for instance the Psak of Satmar has had an effect. Chareidi Yeshivot for women limit curriculum to mussar texts, midrash, and legends of the Tzaddikim and of course the written tora and the analytical approach to studying torah is avoided but innovations as time marches on and as Rambam notes the one preoccupation of the world will be to know Hashem, harbor change, however slow change occurs in the Charedi worlds.

V. Jewish Women Educators

(1) Other leaders in Jewish education include:” Tziporah Heller who has helped thousands return more fully to the beauty of their Jewish heritage. Internationally known as an outstanding scholar of Jewish

⁹³ Resp. Moznayim Lemishpat No. 42 Hadea V’Hadibur Drush 3

⁹⁴ See R. Samson Rafael Hirsch, Horeb ch. 75, Commentary to Siddur Kriyat Shma

⁹⁵ Noam Vol. III P. 131-134; The same sentiments are expressed by Rabbi Meiselman, ‘Most say that the sages urged caution and prudence out of fear of the dangers of superficial knowledge. No authority ever meant to justify the perverse modern day situation in which women are allowed to become sophisticatedly conversant with all cultures other than their own. If in the 20th century American women are more familiar with the Protestant ethic than with the Jewish ideal, it is nothing but a violation of the original intent of Rabbi Eliezer’s statement (Meiselman, p. 40).

⁹⁶ Vayoel Moshe, p. 447 Letters vol. 1 No. 34 and 55

⁹⁷ Vayoel Moshe, P. 452

⁹⁸ VaYoel Moshe, p. 450

Studies as well as a gifted lecturer, she has been a full-time faculty member of Neve Yerushalayim College in Jerusalem since 1980. Her areas of expertise include textual analysis of Biblical literature and Jewish philosophy with an emphasis on the teachings of Maimonides and Maharal. She is also particularly well known for her courses devoted to the role of women in Judaism and analyses of the lives of women in the Bible. She is distinguished by her unique teaching style. Based on classical sources, her insights on virtually any topic within Jewish studies flow in a seemingly effortless stream. While leading her listeners along creative new lines of thoughts, she resorts to a disarmingly keen sense of humor to provide practical examples that illustrate and draw personal relevance from even the most abstract concepts. Rebbetzin Heller⁹⁹ is also noteworthy as an example of a woman who has managed to balance her responsibilities as a mother of a large family with her role as a leading public figure throughout her career in Jewish education. A sought-after speaker, her lecture tours throughout the United States, Canada, England and South Africa always draw enthusiastic crowds".¹⁰⁰

(2) Sara Yoheved Rigler¹⁰¹ is another orthodox woman educator leader "who is the author of three best-sellers: *Holy Woman*, *Lights from Jerusalem*, and *Battle Plans: How to Fight the Yetzer Hara* (with Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller). She is a popular international lecturer on subjects of Jewish spirituality. She has given lectures and workshops in Israel, England, South Africa, Mexico, Canada, and over thirty American cities. A graduate of Brandeis University, after fifteen years of practicing and teaching meditation and Eastern philosophy, she discovered "the world's most hidden religion: Torah Judaism." Since 1985, she has been living as a Torah-observant Jew in the Old City of Jerusalem with her husband and two children. She presents a highly-acclaimed Marriage Workshop for women [see www.kesherwife.com] as well as a Gratitude Workshop"¹⁰²

(3) Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis¹⁰³ "was born in Hungary. She came to the United States after surviving the Nazi's Bergen Belsen concentration camp. Determined to devote her life to fighting the spiritual holocaust among Jews in the U.S. and around the world, the Rebbetzin founded Hineni. She writes a weekly column for the Jewish Press, the largest Anglo-Jewish paper in the world, teaches Torah on TV and over the Internet, and has authored four bestselling books, "The Jewish Soul on Fire"; "The Committed Life"; "The Committed Marriage" and her latest release "Life Is A Test". The Rebbetzin lectures across the globe, has been featured in numerous publications, and has been given formal recognition for her accomplishments by major religious and civic organizations in the U.S. and Israel".¹⁰⁴

(4) Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg¹⁰⁵ is "the author of *The Murmuring Deep: Reflections on the Biblical Unconscious* published by Schocken in March, 2009. Paperback Schocken 2011; *Genesis: The Beginning of Desire* (for which she won the National Jewish Book Award) JPS 1995; paperback Schocken 2011, renamed *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis*; *The Particulars of Rapture: Reflections on*

⁹⁹ See: <http://www.tziporahheller.com/>

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.tziporahheller.com/?q=about>

¹⁰¹ See <http://www.sararigler.com/about.php>

¹⁰² <http://www.aish.com/authors/48865432.html>

¹⁰³ See: www.hineni.org/

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.hineni.org/rebbetzin.asp>

¹⁰⁵ See: <http://www.avivahzornberg.com/>

Exodus. (Doubleday 2001) Paperback Schocken 2011 ; Her next book on the Book of Numbers will be published by Schocken in 2014.; Her publications also include: 'Let me see that good land: The Story of a Human Life,' in *Answering a Question with a Question: Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Jewish Thought*, edited by Lewis Aron and Libby Henik (Academic Studies Press, 2009), 236-264.; 'Jonah: A Fantasy of Flight,' in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, Vol.18, No.3, May-June, 2008, 271-299; 'Seduced into Eden: The Beginning of Desire,' in *Longing: Psychoanalytic Musings on Desire*, edited by Jean Petrucelli (Karnac, 2006), 193-225.; 'Cries and Whispers: The Death of Sarah,' in *Beginning Anew: A Woman's Companion to the High Holy Days*, edited by Gail Twersky Reimer and Judith A.Kates (Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1997), 174-200.; 'The Concealed Alternative,' in *Reading Ruth*, edited by Gail Twersky Reimer and Judith A.Kates (Ballantine, 1994), 65-81.; She was born in London and grew up in Glasgow, Scotland, where her father was a Rabbi and the head of the Rabbinical Court. She studied with him from childhood; he was her most important teacher of Torah. She holds a BA and PhD in English Literature from Cambridge University. After teaching English literature at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, she turned to teaching Torah. For the past twenty-five years, she has taught Torah in Jerusalem at Matan, Yakar, Pardes and the Jerusalem College for Adults. Dr. Zornberg also holds a Visiting Lectureship at the London School of Jewish Studies. She travels widely, lecturing in Jewish, academic and psychoanalytic settings".¹⁰⁶

(5)The academic Susannah Heschel¹⁰⁷ is "the Eli Black Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College. Her scholarship focuses on Jewish-Christian relations in Germany during the 19th and 20th centuries, the history of biblical scholarship, and the history of anti-Semitism. Her numerous publications include *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (University of Chicago Press), which won a National Jewish Book Award and Germany's Geiger Prize, and *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton University Press). She is the author of over seventy articles and has edited several books, including *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity: Essays of Abraham Joshua Heschel* (Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust (with Robert P. Ericksen) *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism* (with David Biale and Michael Galchinsky).The recipient of many grants and awards, she has been a Rockefeller fellow at the National Humanities Center, and two years ago received an honorary doctorate in Humane Letters from Colorado College; in 2008 she received an honorary doctorate from the Augustana Theologische Hochschule, a Protestant seminary in Bavaria, Germany. In 2007, she received the John M. Manley Huntington award from Dartmouth, and in 2008 she was elected an honorary member of Phi Beta Kappa. During the academic year 2008-2009, she was awarded the Jacobus Family Fellowship by Dartmouth.In November 2009, she received an honorary doctorate of sacred letters from the University of St. Michael's College, the graduate faculty in Catholic theology of the University of Toronto, and in May 2010 she received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Trinity College, Hartford Connecticut, where she also delivered the Baccalaureate address.With grants from the Ford Foundation, she has convened a series of five international conferences of scholars in the fields of Jewish Studies and Islamic Studies, held at Dartmouth between 2002 and 2007. The Carnegie Foundation awarded her a Scholar's Grant that has given her two years of leave, starting in January,

¹⁰⁶<http://www.avivahzornberg.com/avivah-zornberg-bio.html>

¹⁰⁷ See: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~jewish/faculty/heschel.html>

2009, to write a book on the history of Jewish scholarship on Islam. During her leave, she is a Visiting Scholar at the Center for the Humanities at Tufts University, in Boston. Prof. Heschel has held visiting professorships at Princeton University, the University of Cape Town, and the University of Frankfurt. She has also taught in 2005 and 2008 at the University of Edinburgh. Between 1999 and 2008 she served on the Academic Advisory Committee of the Research Center of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and on its subcommittee on archival materials and publications. At Dartmouth she has convened a dozen major conferences and invited numerous guest speakers and visiting professors in Jewish Studies, in addition to her teaching and advising. She is also co-convenor of two faculty seminars, on psychoanalytic theory and on race. She serves on the faculty in the Jewish Studies Program, the Department of Religion, and the Women's and Gender Studies Program".¹⁰⁸

(6) Blu Greenberg¹⁰⁹ is "The originator of an apt and now famous dictum—"Where there's a rabbinic will, there's a halakhic way. The originator of an apt and now famous dictum—"Where there's a rabbinic will, there's a halakhic way". Blu Greenberg (née Genauer) is a traditionally observant Jewish woman who has become a prime voice for feminism as applied to Orthodox Judaism. A renowned "teacher of teachers," Greenberg's scholarly father, Sam Genauer, who was born in Czernovitz, Austro-Hungary in 1906, was brought to the United States at the age of two. He obtained a B.A. at Yeshiva University and in 1933 was ordained at its Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Rabbinical College. His homemaker wife, Sylvia (née Gensar), whom he married in 1933, was born in the Lower East Side of New York in 1913 and attended Seward Park High School and the University of Washington. Immediately after his ordination the couple moved to Seattle, where Genauer managed his family's clothing business. It was there that their three daughters were born: Judy (Brickman) in 1934, Blu on January 21, 1936 and Rena (Schlaff) in 1938. The family returned to New York when Blu was in the fifth grade.

Greenberg was raised in a loving traditional home and grew up content with her role as a "good Jewish daughter." As she states in her seminal book *On Women and Judaism* (1981), she "had a fine Jewish education, the best a girl could have." This meant that she was exposed to all Jewish learning, with the exception of Talmud studies. Greenberg's father took even more interest in her Jewish studies than in her secular studies. The personal dignity his study sessions afforded her may have contributed to her later development as a seminal Jewish feminist.

In 1957 Blu married Irving (Yitz) Greenberg (b. Brooklyn, 1933), a rabbi and communal leader who served as a pulpit rabbi in Riverdale, New York, from 1965 to 1972 and who is known for his liberal outlook and innovative Jewish social activity. The latter included founding CLAL (1973), an organization devoted to the Jewish education of leaders in the American Jewish community, and the Jewish Life Network (1995). A devoted couple who are mutually supportive of each other's work, they had five children: Moshe (b. 1961), David (b. 1963), Deborah (b. 1964), Jonathan (J. J., 1965–2002) and Judith (b. 1967), two of whom now live in Israel.

Growing up in the 1940s and 1950s, at a time when, as she put it, "even the term Bat Mitzvah was off-limits in Orthodoxy," Greenberg did not particularly question the male-preferential context of her

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~jewish/faculty/heschel.html>

¹⁰⁹ See: <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/greenberg-blu>

Orthodox affiliation. The surprise is that she came to question it at all. It was only as a young student at Brooklyn College, where she received a B.A. in political science in 1958, that an uncomfortable dissatisfaction began to brew in her soul. Studying with Nehama Leibowitz in Israel during her junior year in college, when she was one of three students at Yeshiva University's Teacher Institute for Jewish Women who were permitted to study abroad, Greenberg fervently wished to extend her stay to study further with the great Bible teacher. But when her parents (and most of her friends) protested, she realized "that it wasn't the sort of thing a nice orthodox Jewish girl would do" (On Women 26) and returned home, all the time aware that had she been a young man wanting to do the same kind of thing, every encouragement would have been forthcoming.

Other incidents began accumulating in her consciousness. When a beloved uncle died, only the male grandchildren were allowed to accompany the casket out of the synagogue. When a grandfather gave her sons a reward for special parts they had taken in a service, her daughter, age eight, said it wasn't fair, and Greenberg's ten-year-old son retorted, "Well, so what—you can't do anything in the synagogue!"

"The personal turning point came in 1973, when Greenberg was invited to give the opening address at the First National Jewish Women's Conference, an event that, in retrospect, may be seen as a catalyst in Jewish female communal life in the United States. With a unique point of view that respects Jewish tradition but at the same time recognizes the inequalities that adversely affect women in that tradition, she addressed the five hundred women who attended the conference.

Since that time, Greenberg—a gentle, generous, serene yet forceful and persuasive woman—has done a great deal of learning and teaching, becoming a highly-respected leader and sought-after speaker not only in the United States, but worldwide. In 1997 she founded the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA), after the overwhelming response to the International Conference on Feminism and Orthodoxy held in New York City—the first of its kind—made clear the tremendous need for an organization that did not view "feminism" and "Orthodoxy" as inherently contradictory. Over two thousand people attended the following year, when Greenberg chaired the second Judaism and Feminism gathering in New York City. Though she no longer serves as its chairwoman, she continues to guide JOFA and its conferences in exploring ways to reconcile the principles of feminism with the observance of Jewish law. She is actively involved in developing a Gender and Orthodoxy curriculum designed for use in Jewish schools in the United States.

Greenberg's theoretical position stems from the belief that women have the same potential as men "whether in the realm of spirit, word, or deed" (On Women 39); a belief that the tradition which she respects and upholds is too strong to be in danger from women's experimentation in the spheres of religious responsibilities, rights and rituals; a belief that women must take charge of their own destinies in this as in other areas rather than waiting for men to act on their behalf; and a belief that a woman's self-realization must underlie all her roles—loving, nurturing, parenting and career—each to be chosen with regard for her womanhood, selfhood and Jewish identity.

Greenberg, who holds an M.A. in clinical psychology from City University of New York and an M.S. in Jewish history from Yeshiva University, has long been passionately involved in both religious and political dialogue between Jewish and Palestinian women, and between various ethnic groups. She has served on the boards of many organizations including EDAH, the Covenant Foundation, Project Keshet and U.S. Israel Women to Women. She previously served as chair of the American Jewish Committee Patschek National Jewish Family Center, president of the Jewish Book Council of America, chair of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies Commission on Synagogue Relations and co-founder and first chair of the Federation Task Force on Jewish Women. She is a member of the inter-denominational Jewish Women's Dialogue of the American Jewish Committee and co-founder of the Riverdale Forum. She serves on the editorial board of Hadassah Magazine, the advisory board of Lilith, the Jewish Student Press Service and the International Research Institute on Jewish Women.

Inter-religious dialogue has been a long-term and steady passion of hers. Active in ecumenical circles, Blu was a founding member of Women of Faith (Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue, 1980–1992) and the Dialogue Project (Jewish and Palestinian women, 1989–1994). She has participated in the work of the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding and the Inter-Religious Friendship Group. She has been a participant in many interfaith and inter-ethnic enterprises, including the Jewish Tibetan Encounter in Dharamsala (1990) and several consultations of the World Council of Churches. She serves as co-chair of the Global Women's Peace Initiative of Women Religious Leaders and is a member of the Women's Multi-religious Networks of the Harvard Pluralism Project.

A participant in Bill Moyers's Genesis series and a consultant to the Dreamworks film, *The Prince of Egypt*, Greenberg is also a religious advisor to Channel 13's Religion and Ethics News Weekly. She taught religious studies at the College of Mount St. Vincent from 1969–1976 and has lectured at Pardes Institute in Jerusalem.

Widely respected, admired and beloved, Greenberg may be perceived as a model of those who seek peace and pursue it."

SELECTED WORKS BY BLU GREENBERG

Books

On Women and Judaism (1981); *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household* (1983); *Black Bread: Poems After the Holocaust* (1994).

Selected Articles

"Abortion: A Challenge to Halakhah." *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought* (Spring 1976); "Confrontation and Change: Women and the Jewish Tradition." In *Women of Faith in Dialogue*, edited by V. R. Mollenkott. New York: 1987; "Female Sexuality and Bodily Functions in the Jewish Tradition." In *Women, Religion, and Sexuality*, edited by J. Becher. Philadelphia: 1991; "Feminism, Jewish Orthodoxy, and Human Rights: Strange Bedfellows?" In *Religion and Human Rights*, edited by Carrie Gustafson and Peter Juviller. Armonk, New York: 1999; "The Feminist Revolution in Orthodox

Judaism in America.” In *Divisions between Traditionalism and Liberalism in the American Jewish Community: Cleft or Chasm*, edited by Michael Shapiro, 55–78. Lewiston, NY: 1991; “Hear, O Israel: Law and Love in Deuteronomy.” In *Preaching Biblical Texts: Expositions by Jewish and Christian Scholars*, ed. by Herman E. Schaalman and Frederick C. Holmgren. Grand Rapids: 1995; “In Defense of the ‘Daughters of Israel.’” In *Oxford Readings in Feminism: Feminism and Theology*, ed. By J. Soskice and D. Lipton. Oxford: 2003; “Is there Life after Death?” In *Wrestling with the Angel: Jewish Insights on Death and Mourning*, edited by Jack Riemer. New York: 1995; “Jewish Attitudes Towards Divorce.” In *The Jewish Directory and Almanac*, edited by Ivan Tillem. New York: 1984; “Judaism and Feminism.” In *The Jewish Woman—New Perspectives*, edited by E. Koltun. New York: 1987; “Orthodox, Feminist, and Proud of It.” In *Best Jewish Writing [2003]*, edited by Arthur Kurzweil. San Francisco: 2003; Chapter 16 of *Transforming the Faiths of our Fathers: Women who Changed American Religion*. Edited by Ann Braude. New York–Hampshire, England: 2002; “Women.” In *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, ed. by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and G. Wigoder. New York: 1997; “Women and Judaism.” In *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought: Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements and Beliefs*, by A. Cohen and P. Mendes-Flohr. New York: 1987; “Women Today—An Orthodox View.” In *Frontiers of Jewish Thought*, edited by Steven T. Katz. Washington DC: 1992¹¹⁰”

(7) Tal Ilan

Tal Ilan

“Tal Ilan is currently a professor of Jewish studies at the Free University, Berlin (Germany). She was born in Israel and received all her degrees from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is a historian who specializes in Jewish women’s history in antiquity.

Articles by this author in Jewish Women Encyclopedia:

Female Personalities in the Babylonian Talmud

Babatha

Beruryah

Hannah Mother of Seven

Hasmonean Women

Herodian Women

Mariamme I The Hasmonean

¹¹⁰ <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/greenberg-blu>, by Alice Shalvi and Shulamit Peck

Post-Biblical and Rabbinic Women

Rachel, Wife of Rabbi Akiva

Shelamziyyon Alexandra

Berenice

Salome

Helene, Queen of Adiabene

Some of Tal Ilan's books include:

Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity (2002)

Mine and Yours are Hers: Retrieving Women's History from Rabbinic Literature, *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums*

Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine (1995; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996)

The New Jewish Inscriptions from Hierapolis and the Question of Jewish Diaspora Cemeteries *Scripta classica Israelica: 25-28 Israel Society for the Promotion of Classical Studies (2006)*"

(8) Judith Hauptman¹¹¹

"Known in particular for her reinterpretation of talmudic sources along feminist lines, Judith Hauptman has spent her professional life engaged not only in the study of women's roles in Judaic thought, but also in an evaluation of the social and ethical norms of the rabbinic period that served to shape the outlines of a traditional faith passed down through the ages. Dr. Hauptman has also become acclaimed for her synoptic studies — a specialized area of talmudic research in which related texts are examined for their implications about the history of Jewish law. She does groundbreaking work in attempting to recover the form and substance of ancient rabbinic discourse.

Dr. Hauptman applies her insights to understanding the relevance of ancient sources to modern Judaism and to precipitating societal change. Over the years, her activist orientation has led her, for example, to call for the ordination of women by the Conservative movement and for eliminating discrimination against women in divorce law, both Jewish and secular.

¹¹¹ See Jewish Virtual Library at: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/hauptman.html>

A popular lecturer and prolific writer, Dr. Hauptman has published extensively. Among her most important articles are "Women in the Conservative Synagogue," in *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1992); "Abortion: Where We Stand" (*United Synagogue Review*, Spring 1990); "A Time to Mourn, A Time to Heal" (*Celebration and Renewal*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993); "Conservative Judaism: The Ethical Challenge of Jewish Feminism" (*The Americanization of the Jews*, New York: New York University Press, 1995); "Judaism and a Just Economy," (*Tikkun*, January/February 1994); and "Mishnah as a Response to Tosefta" (*The Synoptic Problem in Rabbinic Literature*, Shaye J.D. Cohen, Brown Judaic Series, 2000). Her books include *Development of the Talmudic Sugya: Relationship Between Tannaitic and Amoraic Sources* (Brown Judaic Series, 1987) and *Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice* (Westview, 1998).

She is currently writing a book on the Mishnah and the Tosefta, two early rabbinic works. Her main argument is that the Mishnah was not the first code of Jewish law to follow the Bible, but a reworking of an even earlier collection now embedded in the Tosefta. This approach will lead to new, more nuanced interpretations of the Mishnah.

In addition to her full-time post at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where she has taught since 1973, Dr. Hauptman is a frequent instructor in the adult education program at the 92nd Street Y in New York City. She has also served on the faculties of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion; City College of New York; the Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano, JTS's campus in Buenos Aires; JTS's Rebecca and Israel Ivry Prozdor supplemental Hebrew high school; the UAHK Kallah at Brandeis University and the Wexner Heritage Foundation Summer Institute in Lake Tahoe, California, and has studied at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Dr. Hauptman received a degree in Talmud from the Seminary College of Jewish Studies at JTS (now Albert A. List College) and a degree in economics from Barnard College and earned an MA and a PhD in Talmud from JTS. After serving as the Rabbi Philip R. Alstat Professor of Talmud for five years, Dr. Hauptman recently became the first to hold the E. Billi Ivry Chair of Talmud and Rabbinic Culture."

Hauptman systematically identifies legal innovations that the rabbinic legislators as she calls them made to improve women's lives, thereby finding in the ancient rabbis an expression for the same concerns voiced by contemporary feminists. Hauptman finds that the Tosefta records more liberal positions with respect to women than does the canonical Mishnah, which set the standards for later normative Judaism- thus collaborating Ilan's findings in this area of research.

(9) Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert

Associate Professor and Graduate Director of Religious Studies

Biography

“Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert's research interests include gender in Jewish culture, the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity, the discourses of orthodoxy versus heresy, the connection between religion and space, and rabbinic conceptions of Judaism with respect to Greco-Roman culture. Fonrobert is an associate professor in the department of Religious Studies who specializes in Judaism, especially Talmudic literature and culture. Her work is devoted to rabbinic literature and especially the Babylonian Talmud. Her first book, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (2000), won the Salo Baron Prize for a best first book in Jewish Studies of that year and was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award in Jewish Scholarship. She also co-edited *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (2007), together with Martin Jaffee (University of Washington). Currently, she is working on a project about the significance of the eruv, entitled *Replacing the Nation: Judaism, Diaspora and the Neighborhood*. Fonrobert is also co-director of the Taube Center for Jewish Studies, and affiliated with the Urban Studies program.”¹¹²

Key Works

Replacing the Nation: Judaism, Diaspora and the Neighborhood. In progress.

Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature. Ed. and introduction with Martin Jaffee. Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender. Stanford University Press, 2001.

"A Mikvah for Feminists"

"Cultivating a Multivocal Rabbinic Tradition"

(11)Cynthia Ozick¹¹³

“In conversation, one hears a soft, youthful tinkle, clear as a bell. Then there is the unfailing Old World politeness, the refinement of language, and a bright eagerness in the voice to share her thoughts, to hold nothing back. Yet, if the voice is poetry, the words are prophecy. One will hear this in the deep insights, the well-wrought thought, the keen incisiveness, and the sharp wit. These will come later-but they will come.

There is simultaneously something very young and something decidedly hoary about the persona of Cynthia Ozick. She herself recognizes this duality. In "The Break," a virtuoso comic performance that first appeared in the Spring 1994 issue of *Antaeus*, her younger self (who goes by the Hebrew name of Shoshana) solemnly announces her disengagement from the "white-haired, dewlapped, thick-waisted, thick-lensed hag" (who goes by the Greek name of Cynthia)-a writer disgustingly devoid of that hunger for success that drives great artists. What does this

¹¹² See: <http://humanexperience.stanford.edu/fonrobert/>

¹¹³ See Jewish virtual Library at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Ozick.html>

"seventeen-to-twenty-two-year-old" energetic, ambitious writer, who sees a whole row of luminescent novels on the horizon, have in common with this sixty-six-year-old woman who is resigned to her failures? "I would not trade places with her," shouts Shoshana, "for all the china in Teaneck."

Cynthia Ozick was born in New York City on April 17, 1928, the second of two children. She subsequently moved to the Bronx with her parents, Celia (Regelson) and William Ozick, who were the proprietors of the Park View Pharmacy in the Pelham Bay section. Her parents had come to America from the severe northwest region of Russia. More important for an insight into Ozick's temperament, they came from the Litvak [Lithuanian] Jewish tradition of that region. That is a tradition of skepticism, rationalism, and antimysticism, opposed to the exuberant emotionalism of the Hasidic community that flourished in the Galitzianer [Galician] portion of Eastern Europe. This explains, perhaps, why the Hasidic rebbe in Ozick's story "Bloodshed" is such a reasonable man, almost a Litvak. Ozick herself, she does not tire of repeating, is a misnaged, an opponent of mystic religion. In her stories, however, she wallows in mysticism.

Ozick describes the life of her parents with reverence. It was not unusual for them to put in a fourteen-hour day at the drugstore, often closing the store at one in the morning. Cynthia herself served as the delivery girl of prescriptions. Ozick describes her mother's life as a life of total generosity, of lavishness, of exuberance, of untrammelled laughter. Her father, a discreet, quiet man, a talmid khokhem [a Jewish scholar], who also knew both Latin and German from his Russian gymnasium years, ground and mixed powders and entered prescriptions meticulously in his record book. It is not without interest that, according to his daughter, he wrote beautiful Hebrew paragraphs and had a Talmudist's rationalism.

However, life was not without its childhood pain. At the age of five and a half, Ozick entered heder, the Yiddish-Hebrew "room" where, in the America of those years, Jewish pupils were sent for religious instruction. There she was confronted by a rabbi who told Cynthia's bobe [grandmother], who had accompanied her granddaughter to school, in Yiddish, "Take her home; a girl doesn't have to study." Ozick dates her feminism to that time and is especially grateful to her grandmother for bringing her back to school the very next day and insisting that she be accepted. Even the rabbi, to whom Ozick appears to bear no lasting animosity, had occasion to be grateful, for this girl had, as the rabbi would quickly learn, a goldene kepele [golden little head] that caught on quickly to the lessons. Ozick owes her knowledge of Yiddish to a certain Rabbi Meskin, a teacher who "taught girls as zealously as he taught boys," and to her grandmother.

At P.S. 71 in the Bronx, the hurt was of a different order. At home and in heder, the young girl was considered intelligent. In school, on the contrary, she was made to feel inadequate. She was, however, excellent in the bookish arts, such as grammar, spelling, reading, and writing. While Ozick describes the Pelham Bay section of the Bronx as a lovely place, she found "brutally difficult to be a Jew" there. She remembers having stones thrown at her and being called a

Christ-killer as she ran past the two churches in her neighborhood. She was particularly uncomfortable school because she would not, on principle, sing the particularly Christian Christmas carols, and was made "a humiliated public example for that." While writing *The Cannibal Galaxy*, a novel set in a Jewish all-day school, she asserts, "I thought of my own suffering, deeply suffering wormlike childhood in grade school; of my mother's endurances in grade school as an immigrant child.... Carelessness in a teacher of small children can bum in impotence for life, like a brand or horrible sign."

All was not dreariness in her childhood, however, for there remained the world of books. In "A Drugstore in Winter," Ozick describes how reading and "certain drugstore winter dusks" came together to the traveling library that arrived in her neighborhood every other week. She recalls that the librarians would come into the Park View Pharmacy after their rounds to have a cup of hot coffee at the fountain. Ozick would come in behind them, having chosen the two fattest volumes from the boxes of books and magazines offered to her. With these books her hands, she was transported to another world.

She began her reading with fairy tales. From older brother, she received the perfect birthday present - books. These books had a magical effect, forming her from a doltish schoolgirl into "who I am"--a reader, and perhaps a writer. "Some day when I am free of PS 71, I will write stories. Meanwhile, in winter dusk, in the Park View, in the secret bliss of the Violet Fairy Book, I both see and do not how these grains of life will stay forever."

Ozick owes her metamorphosis into a writer to the fact that her mother's brother, Abraham Regelson, was a Hebrew poet of no mean reputation. She feels that, somehow, he paved the way for her to embark on such a "strange" career-writer. Because of him, she says, "it seemed quite natural to belong to the secular Id of literature." At one time, she attributed her freedom to choose such a "frivolous" career as writer her gender. "My father loved me," she told an interviewer, "but I think one of the reasons from earliest childhood I felt free to be a writer is that if I had en a boy, I would have had to go be something else."

School became a serious pursuit for Ozick when she entered Hunter College High School in Manhattan. There she was made to feel part of an elite, a Hunter girl, in a place where academic excellence set one apart. Ozick describes this feeling fleetingly in the short story "An Education," in which Una Meyer excels in Latin, and in the long novel, *Trust*, contrasting the heroine's fruitful academic experience with her other's empty-headed schooling at Miss Jewett's finishing school.

In a reminiscence she entitled "Washington Square, 1946," she tells how, eager for the new life awaiting her in college, she arrived a day early at the as yet unpopulated and therefore desolate campus of Washington Square College of New York University in Greenwich Village. In the Village, she discovers a newsstand that carries the *Partisan Review*, the journal of the literary

avant-garde. Ozick will purchase her first non-textbook-book and browse through the Village's secondhand bookstores with the literary longing of youth. She will become a writer.

But first she would have to become an "old man." On graduation from college, Ozick set out for Columbus, Ohio, where, at Ohio State University, she pursued a graduate degree in English literature, earning a master's degree with the thesis "Parable in the Later Novels of Henry James." As she confesses in "The Lesson of the Master," she "became Henry James." She explains how she was influenced by him to become a worshiper of literature, one who, having to choose between ordinary human entanglement-real life-and exclusive devotion to art, chooses art. She chose art over life, she says, to her eternal regret. Ozick asserts that she acted on the teaching of her mentor at the wrong time, while still a youth. It is not clear, however, that she did in fact abandon *la vraie vie*, as Proust puts it, for, at the age of twenty-four, in 1952, she married Bernard Hallote. Upon receiving his degree, he would become a lawyer for the city of New York.

It is true, nevertheless, that during the first thirteen years of her marriage Ozick devoted herself exclusively to what she called "High Art," working on a philosophical novel, *Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love*, called "MPPL" for short. Ozick would abandon this effort after several years, "a long suck on that Mippel," she would remark wryly. She also spent six and a half years, from 1957 to 1963, on *Trust*, another massive novel, published in 1966.

Ozick underwent a cultural transformation during that time. She became a Jewish autodidact, mastering for herself much of the Jewish textual tradition. Having read, at age twenty-five, Leo Baeck's "Romantic Religion," an essay that "seemed to decode the universe for me," she was further influenced, by Heinrich Graetz's *History of the Jews*, to add a Jewish nuance to *Trust*.

By becoming a "Jewish writer," Ozick did not abandon the world. But she did begin to wrestle with the term "Jewish writer." In 1965, the same year her daughter Rachel -today a Ph.D. in biblical archaeology -was born, she published several poems on Jewish themes in *Judaism* and produced "The Pagan Rabbi," published in 1966. She also wrote a hilarious short story based loosely on the career of Isaac Bashevis Singer, "Envy; or Yiddish in America," published in *Commentary* in 1969.

Her stature grew quickly. Three of her stories have won first prize in the O. Henry competition, and five of her stories were chosen for republication in the yearly anthologies of *Best American Short Stories*. The editor of the 1984 volume called her one of the three greatest American writers of stories living today. She was nominated for the National Book Award and the PEN/Faulkner Award and won half a dozen coveted awards and grants, including both a Guggenheim and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. She was also given the precious commodity of time in the form of the American Academy of Arts and Letters Mildred and Harold Strauss Living Award for five years to pursue her craft. She has received several honorary

doctorates and was invited to deliver the Phi Beta Kappa Oration at Harvard University. In 1986, she was the first recipient of the Michael Rea Award for career contributions to the short story.

After *Trust*, Ozick shied away from the novel, publishing at regular intervals *The Pagan Rabbi and Other Stories* (1971), *Bloodshed and Three Novellas* (1976), and *Levitation: Five Fictions* (1982). She returned to the novel quirkily, as the result of the settlement of a threatened lawsuit by a Jewish day school headmaster who had read himself, justifiably or not, into the 1980 short story, "The Laughter of Akiva." That story, enlarged and completely rewritten, became the novel *The Cannibal Galaxy* (1983). Another novel, *The Messiah of Stockholm* (1987), is sandwiched between two volumes of essays, *Art and Ardor* (1983) and *Metaphor and Memory* (1989). A third volume of essays, *Fame and Folly*, containing pieces on T.S. Eliot, Anthony Trollope, and Isaac Babel, was published in 1996. Meanwhile, in England, an essay collection called *Portrait of the Artist as a Bad Character* has been published.

Of Ozick's fascinating female characters—from Sheindel, the sheytl-wearing rebbetzin [bewigged rabbi's wife] in "The Pagan Rabbi," to Hester Lilt, the "imagistic linguistic logician" of *The Cannibal Galaxy*, to Rosa, the bag-lady Holocaust survivor of "The Shawl"—none is more beloved by admiring readers than Ruth Puttermessenger, the protean heroine of Ozick's 1997 novel, *The Puttermessenger Papers*. At first glance, one would characterize Puttermessenger neither as heroine nor as beloved. She certainly would not be taken as a role model in either of the worlds to which she clings: the legal profession and the Jewish community, writ large. Most likely modeled on Ozick's lawyer-husband as much as on the writer herself, Ozick's Puttermessenger is beloved for her intelligent and exemplary readings of the Jewish textual tradition, for her practical involvement in the repair of the world, and for her ability to mingle the law with the lore. She is beloved because, although she is finally defeated, like all of us, by entropy, she teaches, by example, that every innocuous butter knife (the meaning of Puttermessenger) can cut through life to its core of meaning. As Ozick stated in a piece published in a special edition of *Life* magazine on "The Meaning of Life," "Our task is to clothe nature, . . . to impose meaning on being.... Our task is the discipline of standing against nature when nature-within-us counsels terrorizing.... Our task is to invent civilization."

That is Puttermessenger speaking, but it is also Rosa. In 1980, Ozick published, in the *New Yorker*, "The Shawl," two thousand words of finely honed impressionism, a rendering in miniature of the Holocaust in all its horror. A movingly dramatic reading of "The Shawl" by actress Claire Bloom was featured in 1995 on *Jewish Short Stories from Eastern Europe and Beyond*, a National Public Radio series subsequently published on audiocassette by the National Yiddish Book Center. In 1983, again in the *New Yorker*, Ozick published a sequel to "The Shawl," expanding it into "Rosa," a novella whose heft permitted her publisher to issue *The Shawl* (1989) as a separate volume, consisting of the story and the novella. Probably the most widely accessible of Ozick's demanding prose works, it is now found on the reading lists of most college courses on the literature of the Holocaust, along with works by Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi. Ozick told the Paris

Review in an interview that she would prefer not to make art out of the Holocaust. "I don't want to tamper or invent or imagine, and yet I have done it. I can't not do it. It comes. It invades."

If the Holocaust has invaded Ozick's consciousness-it is present in different guises in "The Pagan Rabbi," "Levitation," and *The Messiah of Stockholm* as well - all the more so has the ugly phenomenon of Holocaust denial invaded her conscience. In an article in the *Washington Post Book World* (January 15, 1995), explaining how she came to write the play *Blue Light* (1994), she relates how, as early as 1961, she came to realize that the world had attenuated the Holocaust into the "Second World War," as though Zyklon B, the deadly gas used to murder Jews, were nothing more than an artifact of war. The road from attenuation to revisionism to Holocaust denial became an increasingly simple one for her to trace.

During her fifth decade as a writer, Ozick became what she has called an "elderly novice." She had long before promised herself that she would one day write for the theater. Eager to wallow in the "delectable theatrical dark," she decided in 1990 to dramatize for the stage "The Shawl" and "Rosa." The play was originally scheduled to be produced by Robert Brustein at the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Ozick did several rewrites-making the figure of the denier more and more "satanic"-but the production was canceled for budgetary reasons. In 1992, after more revisions, the play received two staged readings in New York at Playwrights Horizons.

Its first full-blown production, under the direction of Sidney Lumet, took place at Sag Harbor's Bay Street Theatre. Finally, after fifteen or so revisions, *The Shawl* was produced off-Broadway, at Playhouse 91 of the American Jewish Repertory Theatre, in 1996.

Given Ozick's stature in the literary world, the play received considerable critical attention. Ben Brantley, reviewing it in the *New York Times* (June 21, 1996), was awed by Ozick's power "to let us temporarily, but thoroughly, inhabit someone else's mind." What Brantley missed, however, was Ozick's intention to be merciful to the cruel," that is, to the Holocaust deniers.

Although Ozick has only good things to say about Lumet and the other theater people she has worked with, she has expressed regret that she had to spend so much time on the mechanics and staging of play, time that otherwise might have been spent breathing inside a blaze of words," practicing the solitary art of the prose writer. Her recent return to essay and to prose fiction marks yet another beginning for Ozick, and the product is as fresh as the work of a young experimental novelist. Witness her entry into cyberspace in the fall of 1996 with a ten-day "Diary" on Michael Kinsley's Internet magazine *Slate*. (In the "Diary," Ozick reveals that she has been keeping a private diary since 1953, when she was twenty-five years old.) She has also had pieces on *The Portrait of a Lady* and Gertrude Stein, as well as a fictional account of a visit from a Muscovite cousin published in her regular outlets, the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and the *New Yorker*. Telling much about the heights that she reaches in American literature today, in 1997 the *New Yorker* published a major essay by Ozick on

Dostoyevsky. Posterity will judge whether Fyodor and Shoshana-Cynthia are playing in the same Garden."¹¹⁴

SELECTED WORKS BY CYNTHIA OZICK

Art and Ardor (1983); Bloodshed and Three Novellas (1976); Blue Light (1994); A Cynthia Ozick Reader (1996); Fame & Folly: Essays (1996); The Cannibal Galaxy (1983); Levitation: Five Fictions (1982); The Messiah of Stockholm: A Novel (1987); Metaphor & Memory (1989); The Pagan Rabbi and Other Stories (1971); The Puttermesser Papers (1997); The Shawl (play) (1996); The Shawl (1989); Trust (1966).

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Source: Paula Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore eds. *Jewish Women in America*. NY: Routledge, 1997.

IV. Women and Midrash (see original long version of power point for midrashim on all these biblical women)

Tamar Kadari¹¹⁵ has written excellent articles in the Jewish Women's Encyclopedia on topics s Women in the Midrash and Aggadah. Tamar Kadari received a B.A. in Hebrew Literature and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Midrash at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She teaches Midrash at Bar Ilan University and at the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies. During her period as a doctoral candidate she was a fellow at the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Her academic research focuses on Song of Songs Rabbah and its early interpretations. So far those entries In the Jewish Womens' Encyclopedia include:

Hebrew Women in Egypt: Midrash and Aggadah

Hebrew Women in the Wilderness: Midrash and Aggadah

Midrash and Aggadah: Introduction and Sources

Midwife: Midrash and Aggadah

Two Prostitutes as Mothers: Midrash and Aggadah

¹¹⁴ at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Ozick.html>

¹¹⁵ <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/author/kadari-tamar>

Women in Samson's Life: Midrash and Aggadah

Abigail: Midrash and Aggadah

Abishag: Midrash and Aggadah

Achsah: Midrash and Aggadah

Adah 1: Midrash and Aggadah

Asenath: Midrash and Aggadah

Athaliah: Midrash and Aggadah

Bathsheba: Midrash and Aggadah

Bilhah: Midrash and Aggadah

Concubine of a Levite: Midrash and Aggadah

Daughter of Pharaoh: Midrash and Aggadah

Daughters of Zelophehad: Midrash and Aggadah

Esau, Wives of: Midrash and Aggadah

Gomer, daughter of Diblaim: Midrash and Aggadah

Huldah, the Prophet: Midrash and Aggadah

Jael Wife of Heber The Kenite: Midrash and Aggadah

Lot's Daughters: Midrash and Aggadah

Lot's Wife: Midrash and Aggadah

Maacah 4: Midrash and Aggadah

Maacah the wife of David: Midrash and Aggadah

Merab, daughter of Saul: Midrash and Aggadah

Mother of Micah: Midrash and Aggadah

Naamah: Midrash and Aggadah

Necromancer of Endor: Midrash and Aggadah

Rahab: Midrash and Aggadah

Rizpah: Midrash and Aggadah
Serah, daughter of Asher: Midrash and Aggadah
Shelomith 1: Midrash and Aggadah
Shunammite: Midrash and Aggadah
Shua's daughter: Midrash and Aggadah
Timna, concubine of Eliphaz: Midrash and Aggadah
Widow of Zarephath: Midrash and Aggadah
Wife of Job: Midrash and Aggadah
Wife of Korah: Midrash and Aggadah
Wife of Manoach; Samson's Mother: Midrash and Aggadah
Wife of On Ben Pelet: Midrash and Aggadah
Wise Woman of Abel-beth-maacah: Midrash and Aggadah
Wise Woman of Tekoa: Midrash and Aggadah
Zeresh: Midrash and Aggadah
Zillah: Midrash and Aggadah
Zilpah: Midrash and Aggadah
Zipporah: Midrash and Aggadah
Deborah 1: Midrash and Aggadah
Deborah 2: Midrash and Aggadah
Dinah: Midrash and Aggadah
Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab: Midrash and Aggadah
Eve: Midrash and Aggadah
Hagar: Midrash and Aggadah
Hannah: Midrash and Aggadah
Jephthah's Daughter: Midrash and Aggadah

Jezebel: Midrash and Aggadah
 Jochebed: Midrash and Aggadah
 Keturah: Midrash and Aggadah
 Leah: Midrash and Aggadah
 Mahalath, daughter of Ishmael: Midrash and Aggadah
 Michal, daughter of Saul: Midrash and Aggadah
 Peninnah: Midrash and Aggadah
 Puah: Midrash and Aggadah
 Queen of Sheba: Midrash and Aggadah
 Rachel: Midrash and Aggadah
 Rebekah: Midrash and Aggadah
 Sarah: Midrash and Aggadah
 Shiphrah: Midrash and Aggadah
 Tamar: Midrash and Aggadah
 Vashti: Midrash and Aggadah

V. Women in the Talmud (see: (1) Shulamit Valler, *Nashim be-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-teḳufat ha-mishnah veḥa-Talmud* / Shulamit Valler *נשים בחברה היהודית בתקופת המשנה והתלמוד* Imprint Tel Aviv : ha-Ḳibuts ha-me'uḥad, [2000] ; (2) Sperber, David *ha-Nashim ha-mefalelot le-'atsman : tefilat nashim ve-'olaman ha-tarbuti bi-re'i ha-omanut ha-Yehudit* / David Shperber *הנשים המפללות לעצמן : תפילת נשים* Imprint [Ramat Gan] : Universitāt Bar-Ilan, ha-Maḥlaḳah le-Talmud veḥa-Merkaz le-ḥeḳer ha-To. shebe-'a. p. ule-hafatsatah 'a. sh. Naftal-Yafeh be-shituf 'im Merkaz Liber le-ta'arukhot 'a. sh. Gershon yi-Yehudit Liber, 2002 (3) Glatt, Aron Eli, *Women in the Talmud : an anthology of the Talmud's stories about women, as explained by the classic commentators, Zeraim-Moed = [Nashim ba-Talmud] / Aaron Eli Glatt* Imprint New York, N.Y. : Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America ; Brooklyn, N.Y. : Mesorah Publications, c2003] * original long version of power point included much on this subject but do to limits in time to present was cut]

VI. Women in the Responsa texts (see Isidore Epstein, in Leo Jung's *Women in Judaism*,) * see original uncut power point.

VII. Contemporary women

While first wave feminism of the late 19th century focused on civil rights for women with an emphasis on the right to vote, second wave feminism emerged in the 1960s demanding equality in social relations between men and women particularly in the economic sphere. Mary Wollstonecraft's **A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects** (1792) was an 18th century work advocating for equal rights of women particularly in the domain of access to education. Wollstonecraft responds to those educational and political theorists of the 18th century who did not believe women should have an education. She argues that women ought to have an education commensurate with their position in society, claiming that women are essential to the nation because they educate its children and because they could be "companions" to their husbands, rather than mere wives. Instead of viewing women as ornaments to society or property to be traded in marriage, Wollstonecraft maintains that they are human beings deserving of the same fundamental rights as men. Wollstonecraft's work is particularly within the context of responding to the French National assembly which posited that women's education should be merely in training women for domestic duties and tasks i.e. women should only receive a domestic education. Wollstonecraft used her commentary on this specific event to launch a broad attack against sexual double standards and to indict men for encouraging women to indulge in excessive emotion and advocated for equal access to educational opportunities in contradistinction to the French Revolutionary tractate *Rapport sur l'instruction publique* by Talleyrand Perigord. At the end of 1791 Olympe de Georges had published *Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen* so that women's rights became a central debate in France and England. With Catharine Macaulay and Hester Camppone, Wollstonecraft maintained that women were capable of rational excellence and the stereotype that women are more emotional and operate in the realm of feeling is more due to social conditioning than biological destiny. Wollstonecraft calls on men, rather than women, to initiate the social and political changes she outlines in the *Rights of Woman*. Wollstonecraft never wrote the second part to the *Rights of Woman* although William Godwin published her "Hints", which were "chiefly designed to have been incorporated in the second part of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*", in the posthumous collection of her works.

In literature first wave feminist tracts included literary texts such as Virginia Wolfe's *A Room of One's own* which speculated about Shakespeare's sister who unlike her rhetorically and psychologically gifted brother who was able to write histories, tragedies, and comedies, and poetry was denied equal opportunity to practice her creative dramatic writing because she did not have a room of her own. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* also literarily tackled the patriarchal aspects of her husband who proscribed for her post-partum depression seclusion in a room with yellow wallpaper and denial of her to use creative writing as a therapeutic outlet. Like Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwomen in the Attic* (a work of literary criticism from the second wave of feminism) Gilman was able to critique the oppressive nature of the main woman character who was relegated to seclusion rather than therapeutically being able to socialize and interact with fellow human beings as a result of the Victorian antidote for post-partum depression in what was then called "rest therapy." Rochester in Bronte's *Jane Eyre* secludes his wife, Bertha Mason, also to an attic. Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Emily and Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, and Emily Dickinson in first wave literary feminism all strove to give voice to the female voice, and offer insights from perspectives of women's insights on gender relationships. Austen exposes the disadvantage women face in the

courtship process, questioning whether one should marry out of Romance for economic security. Austen documented the class structures of bourgeois, aristocracy and poor exposing the way men exert power over women in all three classes by controlling the purse strings of power by denying women the right to their own financial and economic destiny. On the one hand Smetina's *The Bartered Bride* whereby the bride is reduced to bourgeois commodity fetishism as an I-it relationship, on the other hand the spirit of the Romantic movement spawned in England by poets like Perce Byshe Shelley, Wordsworth, Keats, Byron, etc. spoke of a independence and individualism [as did American Transcendentalism of Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman] that envisioned the new woman as a bold independent individual who shirked what society thought of her and followed her passions of the heart to pursue romance and greater freedom. Henry James' *Miss Daisy* speaks to the dangers of this quest for independence when the main character, who the male author James tries to think, feel, and experience the plot through the mind of a woman, contracts a fatal disease while playing hide and seek with her dark lover in the Roman Coliseum while on vacation. The greater access to travel allowed women these adventures that perhaps in the past had been curtailed due to the great domestication of the women's' role as the Baalabasta of the household or even a savvy entrepreneurial Jewish businesswoman in the form of the *Memoirs of the Gluckel of Hameln*.

Second wave feminism also elaborated on the causes of the oppression of women and proposed solutions to it. The 1960s were a time of upheaval and revolution. The Vietnam war protests, the Civil Rights movement lead by Martin Luther King and militant Black Panthers, Woodstock, Hate Ashbury in Sanfransisco, Kent State, spoke to a time where authority was in question and nothing was sacred and sacrosanct. Alan Bloom in *closing of the American Mind* refers to this period of the 1960s as the demise of higher education whereby academic scholarship was no longer based on what one knows or how great a scholar one is but rather the politicization of academia with feminists, Marxists, and radical Deconstructionists running rampant spoke to an upheaval of traditional scholastic traditions that were being replaced by nihilistic Rock music of the unthinking sort, a kind of Coming of the Dawn that was predicted by Friedrich Nietzsche whereby the foundations of Western Civilization were rocking and one's choice was either to jump into the nihilistic abyss or champion a political ideology in academia as an axe to grind, calling students out of the classroom to revolution for social and economic change. The sit ins, the Freedom rides, the Vietnam war Protest, the drug culture promoted by literary figures like Allen Ginsberg, Barry Synder, and Jack Kerouc all spoke to a time of open rebellion from authority.

Within this context of rebellion against authority the Jewish feminist movement of the 1960s was spawned. This radical feminism of the 1960s matured in the 1970s and 1980s where it became clear that the what is at stake is the amelioration of the status of women in all walks of life and particularly the social and cultural expectations of gender roles of men and women. The distinction between sex (biological difference) and gender (social constructed expectations) was articulated in many works by feminists across all religious lines. Power, Control and prestige were deconstructed as social power-knowledge regimes in the Foucaultian sense. The inequality of gender based social practices allowed feminism to employ the analytical tools of deconstruction of social constructs, methods championed by Derrida, Foucault, and Julia Kristeva. Academic programs changed their title from "womens' studies " to gender studies, and equity feminism was born that differentiated itself from gender feminism. Both

however sought to remove “the disabilities” and forms of unfair treatment of women. Feminist voices of the 1960s do not speak in one voice as feminists disagree about the causes of women’s oppression and the ways in which women can be liberated from oppression. The types of feminism can be classified in camps such as liberal feminism, liberation theorists, Marxist Feminism, socialist feminism, existential feminism (i.e. Simone de Beauvoir), post-modern feminism, radical militant feminism, third world feminism, and ecofeminism. These streams of feminism differ with regards to issues including: sexuality, reproduction, family, labor, education, pornography, prostitution, and lesbianism. Gender analysis pays attention to class, ethnicity, race, or religion of women, factors that undermine any universalistic claims about women or about social relations between the sexes thereby championing multi-culturalism.

Judaism did not stand ideally by the feminist movement. While for most Jewish feminists their commitment to Judaism played little to no role in their championing of women’s rights such as the leaders Betty Friedan and Bella Abzug, many rank and file members were Jews by birth, and their commitment to feminism had little to do with their assimilationist upbringing alienated from Orthodox Judaism as a religious tradition. These Jewish secularists were not in general committed to Orthodox praxis. However Jewish women who were committed to Judaism soon found out that the women’s movement could not address their religious interests because it was profoundly a secular movement and it harbored in some cases latent anti-Semitic tendencies. Thus a poet like Sylvia Plath could write a poem about her own Jewish father openly calling him a Pharisaical hypocrite with little knowledge of what these terms mean historically and in religious context. “You do you jew you do you jew” was so much nonsense filled with own self Jewish loathing and self-hatred that Plath committed suicide. However Jewish feminism emerged as a distinctive branch of feminism in the early 1970s with the founding of the Jewish Feminist Organization (JFO). Some Jewish feminists launched a systematic critique of Judaism as a stereotypical “patriarchal religion” and sought to transform Judaism in the Reform and Conservative Movements by taking direction from their non-Jewish feminist sisters calling for revolution, especially Christian theologians and scholars of religious studies. Liberal Jewish feminists demanded access to formal Jewish education and to become prestigious rabbis, cantors, and teachers, becoming active participants in synagogue life, and leadership positions. Although the Jewish Feminist Organization ceased to exist in 1976 Jewish feminism had a significant impact on Jewish life in the industrialized West and in the hippie culture of Israel.

The impact of feminism on each branch of modern Judaism varies in accordance with its degree of commitment to halakhah. Reform Judaism embraced feminism immediately and its demand for equality rose to leadership positions in the CCAR and UAHC incorporating new prayers devised with inclusive language and new rituals to express women’s spirituality were invented based on the non-Jewish secular feminist movement. Conservative Judaism witnessed a much more protracted debate about women and gender precisely because it views halakhah as normative while acknowledging historical change. Yet the conservative movement today is not what it was in the time of Saul Lieberman who opted for an additional clause in the Ketubah to protect a woman from becoming a potential Agunah. The struggle for the inclusion of women revolves around the ordination of women, introduction of inclusive language in prayer, and women’s participation in public rituals. Even with the decision to ordain women in 1985 the movement continues to wrestle with gender issues centering now on admission of gay and lesbians

into the rabbinate although the Reconstructionist movement founded by Mordecai Kaplan had accepted this admission much earlier.

Although Orthodox feminists affirm the divine origin of halakhah and accept the constraints of halakhah the foundation of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Association (JOFA) in 1997 and the nonprofit organization Kolekh (Your voice) in Israel indicate that vitality of feminism within the Orthodox world where today Orthodox women engage in Torah study (including Talmud), serve as legal advocates (to'anut) for women seeking divorces, and take on a much larger role in public life although certain painful issues such as the status of the Agunah remain a source of evolving progress. It can be argued that in the Orthodox world the degree of openness toward feminism goes hand in hand with the degree of openness toward secular modernity as opposed to "medieval haredi Judaism" and modern neo-Orthodoxy founded by Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsh.

Feminism impacted Judaism in all three major branches of Orthodoxy, Conservative, and Reform. Feminism also transformed the academic discipline of Jewish studies which became a separate department in the 1960s when African American Studies, Womens' studies, and Asian Studies were also founded as legitimate areas of study although Arthur Hertzberg clearly shows in his books *The Jews in America* that 18th century Puritanism in America had always made a place for the study of the Biblical Hebrew language and "The Old Testament" as represented in the founding of chairs of Hebrew philology at Yale and Harvard and in fact at Yale the commencement address was given in the Hebrew language as the schools emblem is the Uri veThumim. The Academic study of Judaism began in Germany in the 1820s but Jewish studies programs were established in North American Universities later. While Harvard early on established a chair of Jewish philosophy occupied by Harry Austen Wolfson and later by Rabbi Isadora Twerski, the son in law of Rav Soloveitchik, and Columbia admitted to the court jew society of literary studies Lionel Trilling as one of the first Jewish literary critics, it can be noted that Jews have come a long way from Trilling so that now the likes of a Harold Bloom in America or Frank Kermode in England have made significant impacts on opening up literary studies to Jews. In the 1960s with the postmodern critique of the universalizing tendencies of the Enlightenment Jewish studies became a beneficiary of these strains in academia. Like women and African Americans Jews on the College Campus asserted their particularity and demanded that they be more included in the interpretation of Western Culture and the Humanities. With the spread of feminism into the academy all sub disciplines of Judaism were affected by asking the question, "What about women?". With new attention to women and the analytic tool of gender studies methodologies new research agendas emerged transforming the study of history, literature, and the Bible, rabbinics, political science, sociology, and ethnography along with Holocaust studies, Israel Studies, and Film Studies. It cannot be denied that the greater consciousness of the Holocaust and the miraculous victory of Israel in 1967 added strength to attracting Jews to fill the programs of Jewish studies, and were thereby lead back further to the core texts of Rabbinic Judaism and traditional values emblematic of the baal teshuvah phenomena.

In 1999 **Nashim: a Journal of Jewish Womens' studies and Gender Issues** was added to the roster of academic publications in Jewish studies bringing new research to the fore and a new generation of Jewish feminists an outlet to share their work. In 2000 the volume *Jews and Gender: The challenge to Hierarchy* was published in which all disciplines of Jewish studies are represented except Jewish

philosophy as philosophy is less interested in axes to grind and ideologies to inculcate vs. abstract contemplation of the truth whether one conceives this as the attributes of G-d, creation, revelation, Jewish virtue ethics, the problem of evil for Judaism, and other seminal philosophic topics. Nonetheless in 1986 Heidi Ravven engaged philosophy with the challenges of feminism in her essay, "Creating a Jewish Feminist Philosophy" calling on Jewish philosophers to contribute to a philosophic definition and analysis of the central beliefs and praxis of Jewish women and argued that women's ethical, social, and spiritual expressions ought to influence the choice of a philosophic approach to integrate them into Jewish philosophy.

Hava Tirosh-Samuelson in an essay published in 1994 sought to explain the resistance to Jewish philosophers to take feminism seriously by arguing and demonstrating that feminism need not be an agenda or axe to grind but rather a movement as is Platonism, Aristotelianism, Hegelianism, Kantianism, existentialism, phenomenology, and post-modernism. The lived experience of women, ½ of the world's population cannot be essentialized into these previous philosophical schools of thought. Doing philosophy in a feminist mode could still strive for truth about the human condition and not advancing political particularistic claims that end up using others for political ends that justify the Machiavellian means.

In the 1970s academic Jewish feminist discourse was dominated by Jewish feminists such as Judith Plaskow (*Standing Again at Sinai*), Ellen Umansky, Diane Ashton, Lynn Gottlieb, Susannah Heschel (*On Being a Jewish Feminist*), Blue Greenberg (*On Jewish Women*), and Norma Joseph, who were trained as scholars of religious studies of history rather than Jewish philosophy. In the 1990s women trained in philosophy began to employ the category of gender in their interpretation of past Jewish philosophers. In 1997 Susan E. Schapiro wrote an essay on Moses Maimonides that introduced the notion of "reading for gender in Jewish philosophy which allowed her to argue that there is a negative perception of women in Jewish philosophy, and showing the gendered language in the articulation of philosophical positions, and in some case she congruence of philosophical positions with feminist sensibilities. Schapiro sought to demonstrate that since Rambam is an Aristotelian Maimonides inherited from Greek Thought the misogynistic tendencies to relegate the female principle with matter¹¹⁶ (*hupikeimonon*) and the male principle with form (*eidos* and truth). This is echoed in a midrash that the man contributes the white of the bones, brain, and eyes while the woman contributes in a child the red blood with Hashem as a third partner. Sara Klein-Braslavy and Idit Dobbs-Weinstein had also argued that Rambam was prone to this Aristotelian bias against women although their analysis was not carried out with the feminist intent in mind making no extra attempts to deconstruct Rambam's metaphysics. Ruth Birnbaum has also noted that Rambam's feminization of the faculty of imagination in Maimonides' philosophy is stereotypical that women are allied with the imagination, the source of evil, and men with reason, as

¹¹⁶ Matter is championed by eco-feminists who celebrate "mother earth" and advocate and ethics of care for environmental issues. Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein were Jewish ecofeminists who argue that the polluting and control of the earth that leads to its exploitation is the same similar behavior that is manifest in the oppression of women. Karen J. Warren has articulated this feminist stream of eco-feminism further. It can be argued that Warren's postmodern ethic of care is preceded avant la letter by the ethics of care that we find in Jewish existentialists such as Buber, Rosenzweig, and Levinas. Yet Rosenzweig was cautious about the new paganism with which this type of environmentalism of ecology and ecological discourse can become when not guided by morality.

Moses' prophecy was unique in that Moshe made his imagination ministerial to Reason in that his revelation was legal or halakhic what in Greek is called *nomos*. Ruth Birnbaum shows that Maimonides rejects the "feminine faculty of the imagination for he rejects its fanciful constructions" citing the verse that the imagination is the mirror that does not shine clearly while Reason is the *Aspaklariya Meiri*. Elliot Wolfson, a scholar of Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism, also notes this tendency in the Rambam and all of the Rabbinic tradition, to demote the feminized imagination to be subservient to reason in *The Cambridge history of Jewish philosophy: v. 2 : The modern era*, [eds. Martin Kavka, Zachary Braiterman, and David Novak. Cambridge, 2012]. Wolfson shows that it is at the limits of reason, that Jewish mystics invented their own counter subversive logic of illogic to go beyond and express the ineffability of the infinite, *ayn sof*. In this way Maimonides is a rationalist as Strauss and many others have demonstrated in a systematic way. i.e. Rambam forbid one to read *Shiur Komah* as this Kabbalistic text Rambam felt relied too heavily on the imagination and crude materialistic anthropomorphisms. Julia Schwartzmann like Klein-Braslavy analyzed Rambam's interpretation of creation narratives. Schwartzmann concluded that Maimonides did not regard women as being *BiTzelem Elokim* because the female member of the human species is inherently associated with Matter. Judith Hauptman in fact has shown that Christianity characterized Judaism as Carnal Israel and Christianity as the true spiritual Israel in her book *_Carnal Israel_*. Schwartzman showed the impact of Maimonides gendered philosophy on later biblical commentaries such as *pirushim* on *Mishlei* trying to show that the desire of (male) Jewish philosophers to prove women's social and intellectual inferiority led them to "reconstruct" a verse to empty the words of their literal meaning to create pseudo-etymologies and to totally ignore the fact that in *Mishlei*, Wisdom is imaged in feminine language. The Malbim also sees the *Eshet Hayil* as a *mushal* for the King as the active realized intellect and the *Eshet Hayil* as the queen of undeveloped potential intellectual soul etc. In this writer's opinion The Malbim's interpretation is in keeping with traditional allegorical commentary and is not misogynistic counter to Schwartzman's accusations.

Menachem Kellner has argued that Gersonides being an even stronger Aristotelian than Maimonides gives voice to some misogynistic tendencies such as equating the female principle with matter and the formal principle with the male etc. More defensive of Maimonides is Abraham Melamed who like Sraussians emphasizes the indebtedness of Maimonides to Plato's political theory which was more egalitarian than that of Aristotle. In that Miriam died by a kiss it can be argued that women can in principle reach the highest form of knowledge available to humans. Similarly T.M. Rudavsky understands that women are on a higher spiritual level than men which Maimonides understood. Gad Freudenthal also analyzed gendered metaphors in Jewish philosophy about the maimonidean controversy. In the Renaissance philosopher Leone Ebreo in his *Dialoghi di amore*, the female protagonist Sophia engages in philosophical dialogue with her male protagonist. Abarbanel's positive portrayal of the female seeker of wisdom reflects both the conventions of Renaissance courtier literature as well as the social opportunities in Renaissance Italy where patrician women had greater access to liberal arts education.

In modern Jewish philosophy Rosenzweig¹¹⁷ and Levinas made the category of the "feminine" central to their philosophical work. Like Buber they rejected the notion of female domesticity and embraced the

¹¹⁷ Rosenzweig in *das Neue Denken* integrated philosophy, Kabbalah, poetry, art, and communal liturgy in his new thought as demonstrated by Barbara Gali.

importance of women to the cultural idea of Bildung. Rosenzweig and Levinas offer a critique of Western philosophy as masculine and Christian i.e. a product of Edom. The feminine like the Jew represents the Other which cannot be assimilated, remaining distinctly other in its otherness. While Sartre understood Otherness negatively as characterized by Marxist alienation, marginalization, and hostility Buber-Rosenzweig-Levinas made the Other into a source of care-love-and responsibility. However the earliest critique of Levinas' understanding of the other came from Sartre's mistress Simone de Beauvoir who in her book *Le Deuxieme Sexe* which became a foundational feminist tract, like Sartre understood Otherness negatively observing that men named man the Self and Women "the other." Later feminists like Jean Bethke Elshtain and Genevieve Lloyd found limits to de Beauvoir's analysis. Feminist literary critic Luce Irigaray also found limits to Levinas' analysis of the feminine claiming that the portrayal of the feminine by Levinas only perpetuates the dominant master narrative in the history of Western philosophy and objected to Levinas saying the feminine lacks a face, or is an aspect of the divine which she argues relegates flesh and blood women with faces to the mysterious Other, not quite human and incapable of rational thought and action.

Rosenzweig is interpreted by Yudit Kornberg Greenberg in the light of feminist theories of the relational self to argue that Rosenzweig anticipates feminist thought in her book, *Better than Wine: Love Poetry, and Prayer in the Thought of Franz Rosenzweig*. Rosenzweig in the *Star of Redemption* (*Die Stern Der Erlösung*) develops the midrash on Shir HaShirim not as merely love poetry, but allowing for a theory of revelation as an analogy between eros and divine love both being spontaneous, unpredictable, and nonreducible. Both share the dynamics of male and female love, the interplay of active and passive energy. Eros becomes an instantiation of divine embodiment. Greenberg argues that love for Rosenzweig constitutes the locus of mediacy and immediacy so that the reader becomes a co-creator of the work of the song of Songs, as an allegory of Hashem's love for the Jewish people. Thus Rosenzweig's engendered theory of revelation and love in Shir hashirim invite feminist analysis. Thus Michael Oppenheim has viewed Rosenzweig as a feminist (male) Jew. Leora Batnitzky and Randi Rashkover have done so without attention to feminism. Braiterman however argues that Rosenzweig's erotic gendered tension is typical to fin-de siècle eroticism. Braiterman argues that the beloved (*Geliebte*) may be feminine but not necessarily a woman. Like Shakespeare's "dark lady" the *Geliebte* is a persona that masks the authors' own presence.

Levinas holds that the alterity of the absolute Other is the feminine. Ultimately the self cannot know the Other, there is a dimension of separateness, interiority, secrecy, or alterity in the feminine Other. While the face can be framed, limited, or totalized, the feminine Other has no face, but is transcendent and irreducible to comprehension. The woman for Levinas is the Absolute Other. And the alterity of the feminine is the essence of the feminine. In both *Existence and Existents* and *Time and the Other*, the feminine is identified with radical alterity and is presented as an exemplar or ideal figure of alterity, and in *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas champions maternity as a metaphor for the ethic of care and caring. The feminine prevents the totalization of sameness, systemization, under the rubric of a collective categorization. C. Katz in *Levinas, Judaism, and the Feminine: The Silent Footsteps of Rebecca* tried to defend Levinas against the attacks of radical feminists who saw Levinas as putting women on a Victorian pedestal in his notion of the Other by using the feminine as the transcendental structure. Katz argues

that Levinas means by the Other she who creates a dwelling the welcoming and habitation so that the ethical can manifest itself. Levinas chose the trope of maternity as the epitome of the ethical relationships which goes beyond the eros of enjoyment towards the ethics of responsibility. Levinas' ethics as first philosophy embodied in the metaphor of maternity was a substitute for the Heideggerian conception of life as a being towards death, exemplified in Dasein existence's angst vor das Nichts. Katz notes that Levinas sees women as essential in the ethical relationship envisioned by Levinas that evokes responsibility, care, devotion, obligation, and love of the other. Leora Batnizky along with Katz also considers the place of the feminine in Levinas and Rosenzweig. Rosenzweig and Levinas conceive of Judaism as a feminized rootless Other that commands ethical being. Jewish existentialist philosophers envision an ethics of care embodied in the metaphor of maternity as a response to human vulnerability.

The western tradition is biased in that it equates reason with the masculine and emotions and feelings with the feminine. Schiller's *The Naïve and Sentimental Education* sought a corrective to this bias. Feminists following Derrida also sought a corrective to this assumption treating the female body as a text with multiple meanings many of which are subversive to the dominant culture. Likewise feminists sought in Foucault's deconstruction of power-knowledge regimes of the patriarchal regime a demonstration how the female body is politically inscribed entity shaped by the history and practices of containment and control as such. Post-modern French feminists including Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray have blended philosophy, literary theory, and psychoanalysis striving to dissolve binary thinking such as rational/form/male vs. emotion/matter/female. Sarah Pessin, a scholar of medieval philosophy, has attempted to deconstruct the mind/body dualisms by deploying Jewish philosophers as diverse as Ibn Gabirol, Gersonides, and Spinoza. Pessin argued that Gabirol's philosophy enables Jewish philosophy to assume a feminist critique since Gabirol's philosophy has a positive valuation towards matter. Gabirol's discourse understands matters as receptive longing for completion. Positioning matter as superior to form, Gabirol offers a view that feminists might develop further. Likewise while Kellner finds in Gersonides a misogynistic impulse Idit Dobbs-Weinstein finds in Gersonides theory of knowledge a critique of the notion of the disembodied self that is a tendency in Platonism. According to Weinstein Gersonides' offers a nondualistic theory of knowledge according to which all acts of knowledge are embodied for there is no knowledge without sensation. Weinstein argues that both Gersonides and Spinoza who read Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *De Anima* both came up with a nondualistic understanding of the self, matter all the way up and form all the way down. In what Strauss calls Spinoza's critique of Religion and Spinoza's founding the way for secularism, Weinstein finds in Spinoza the context in which a feminist vision can expand. Heidi Ravven also finds in Spinoza a champion for Jewish feminism in that Spinoza rejected and attacked all forms of oppression. Spinoza rejected the Maimonidean privileging of reason embedded in Moses's prophecy being embedded in rationalistic law, and placed centrality on the imagination linked to the feminine which allows language, culture, and society to construct a world that offers insights to the self. If the goal of philosophical life is to bring imaginative thinking under the control of reason and through it reach intuitive knowledge then in Spinoza we find a central place for the feminine imagination as opposed to imagination being ministerial to reason. Spinoza rejected *avant la lettre* Locke's notion of the mind as a *tabula rasa*, and explained the mind being filled with imaginative world of culturally specific language and tradition. Similarly the imagination in Spinoza is allied to emotions and expectations of pleasure and pain and to the social

arena views in accord with much of feminist thought. Although Spinoza was no feminist Ravven argues that Spinoza's egalitarian view of the ideal of intellectual love (*amor intellectus*), his ethical project of liberation from all tyrannies and oppression, and a political proponent of democracy and equality make his philosophy of critical import to women and Jews. In Spinoza's vision of the Hebrew commonwealth and his critique that speculated on equal human rights long before the modern Enlightenment, Spinoza's equalitarian thought lends itself to equal opportunities in education and development of the mind for both men and women. Spinoza's political thought in the TTP lends itself to feminist political philosophy that reflects attention to issues of female personhood, agency, equality, and freedom from all sorts of oppressions.

Nancy Levene takes her cues from Spinoza and Biblical critic Bernad M. Levinson, to argue that Jewish law is amenable to the concerns of women and feminists to be inclusive of women than is often assumed to be the case. For Levene there are no Jewish political questions that are also not Jewish feminist questions. Levene uses Spinoza's understanding of religion and the political to show how his analysis of the ancient Hebrew past can help contemporary Jews challenge the rights of women in the present day religious settings. Politicizing our relation to religion, Levene uses Spinoza as a spring board to air feminist concerns. The most well know women political philosopher of the 20th century was Hannah Arendt who never denied her Jewishness and retained her solidarity with Jews working in the offices of the Zionist Youth Aliyah to save Jewish children from the claws of Nazism. While Arendt grew up in an assimilated Jewish family and had little knowledge of Orthodox Judaism she began her philosophical career with the question, "How to do philosophy if one is a Jewish woman." Her biography of Rahel Levin Varnhagen (177-1809) involved focus on a Jewish women who converted to Christianity and who held an intellectual salon in Berlin was perhaps Arendt's deliberate attempt to philosophize in a new way and her concern with Nazi Evil, radical and banal, also may mirror her own banal alienation from her own traditional Judaism, that is an evil unto itself of marginalization from the roots of Judaism.

Hava Tirosh Samuelson's edited book *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy* originated in a conference held in 2001 bringing 13 Jewish women to engage the entire Jewish philosophical tradition in light of Jewish feminism. Themes in the volume include: (1) human embodiment and the pursuit of knowledge, (2) human relationality, (3) individual and community theory and praxis, (4) the link among power-justice-law indicating how feminist philosophy and the category of gender can enrich Jewish philosophy. Judith Plaskow's book *Standing Again at Sinai* insisted contrary to other Jewish feminists like Cynthia Ozick, that the problem of women in Judaism is primarily theological rather than sociological. Plaskow, a liberal Jew trained in feminist studies at Yale in the 1970s envisioned a feminist Judaism, an egalitarian, nonhierarchical religion in which women and men worship G-d not as a "dominating Other" but as a "friend, lover, companion, and co-creator." Plaskow adopted the negative categorization of otherness found in Simone De Beauvoir's work, *Le Deuxieme Sexe*. Plaskow argues that Judaism is a male centered religion. She calls for change that women be excluded from official interpretation of the foundational texts of Judaism. She sought to found an egalitarian nonhierarchical pluralistic Judaism that expresses fluidity, multiplicity, and movement in G-d as the source of all being versus the Aristotelian Maimonidean model of G-d as the Unmoved mover. Endorsing the work of Marcia Falk, Lynn Gottlieb, and Margaret Wenig, Plaskow advocates a nature-based symbolic language

of the appropriate liturgy for all Jews which traditional Orthodox Jews view as heretical in attempt. Plaskow's philosophy follows in the wake of process philosophy later championed by William James, Alfred North Whitehead, and Sandra Lubarsky, & Carol Christ. The main Jewish proponent of process philosophy is Hans Jonas. Plaskow is rejected by Orthodox Jews because she views halakhah as human made rather than of divine origin. She does not exclude halakhah in the future but posits that women will shape halakhah as decision makers in its evolution of oral torah. Speaking as a lesbian Plaskow presents the erotic as "one fundamental life energy" and seeks to make us all aware of the erotic nature of human relations, a Freudian assumption of the pleasure principle i.e. sex driving all human interaction. Plaskow was branded as heretical also for her argument to change prayer to be more egalitarian and less hierarchical.

Third generation feminist Laura Levitt problematized liberalism by questioning the core metaphor of Jewish conventual theology i.e. the marriage of Israel and G-d in Levitt's *Jews and Feminism: The Ambivalent Search for Home* which reject Eugene Borowitz' trust in liberalism. Levitt rejects that liberal Judaism employ the model of heterosexual marriage which she argues perpetuates asymmetrical power relations because it does not allow for difference. Like Plaskow Levitt in the Orthodox view heretically calls for the inclusion of gays and lesbians in the rabbinate. Soon after Levitt's book, Rachel Adler articulated a halakhically centered revision of liberal Judaism. Whereas Plaskow was ambivalent about halakhah and Levitt rejects halakhah, Adler argues that liberal jews need to live a halakhic life, but she denies that Orthodoxy hold the monopoly on the interpretation of halakhah. Borrowing from legal theorist Cover Adler offers a proactive legal theory to replace either legal formalism or legal realism. For Adler to engender Judaism means to honor gender differences as equals in value and to engage men and women cooperatively in light of the values of equal respects, inclusivity, diversity, and pluralism.

Besides the Orthodox Feminist Tova Harman (see *Feminism, Encounters Traditional Judaism: Resistance and Accommodation*) an Orthodox Jewish feminist on the scene today is Tamar Ross. An endorsement of Adler's approach was found in Orthodox Feminist philosopher Tamar Ross. Ross is trained in Anglo-American analytic philosophy and the history of Jewish philosophy and mysticism. She began to engage feminist after reading "Dare to Know: feminism and the Discipline of Jewish Philosophy" in which she was cited along with other female scholars of Jewish philosophy. That essay led Ross to study feminist theory and to ponder its implications for Judaism. This culminated in her work *Expanding the Palace of torah: Orthodoxy and Feminism*. Ross argues that women living out an egalitarian reality are precisely the ones most capable of building upon Adler's project. She argues for a halakhic process that is proactive and inclusive of women. She adopts Adler's shifting of community in the center of the interpretative process away from rabbinic authority. She goes beyond Adler to offer a philosophical support for a non foundationalist approach to halakhah that is based on Ludwig Wittgenstein, Hillary Putnam, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Stanley Fish. All of these thinkers contributed to placing primacy on the role of the readers' preliminary biases in determine meaning of texts while positing that there is no absolute or objective yardstick to evaluate such biases. Ross argues that revelation is a cumulative process that allows women to take on greater roles. This dynamic unfolding of the original Torah transmitted at Sinai reveals in time its ultimate fulfillment. G-d's revelation is experienced in evolution of historical processes, especially the mounting increasing political and social

power of women in history and religious life. Revelation is always for Ross and Adler interpreted through a cultural filter. Committed to equality between men and women within Orthodoxy, while recognizing halakhic constraints, Ross seeks “to reclaim motifs that already exist in the tradition but have been neglected, forgotten, or abandoned for various reasons which are mostly ones of political power. Her “theological resporativism Is directed to the nature of Torah as a divine text. Most interestingly Ross tries to adopt the Kabalistic ally inspired theology of Rav Kook into her camp arguing that Rav Kook’s vision is ultimately coterminous with the feminist Orthodox position. She argues that Rav Kook also accepted that religious systems evolve, and she argues he accepted that environmental factors shape the evolution of faith and its content.¹¹⁸ Ross argues that Rav Kook shares the feminist rejection of divine transcendence and the emphasis instead on divine immanence and the human limited and ever-changing apprehension of the divine. Rav Kook in Ross’ interpretation believed that history is a medium of revelation. Rav Kook saw G-d’s presence in history, not in terms of providence and external manipulation but as gradual exposure of G-d’s dynamic being. Sinaitic revelation is not exhausted as an event but evolves across history. Thus Ross attempts to recruit Rav Kook to the feminist camp by arguing that power evolves in history amongst groups because history is fluid and open ended.

Yet Ross understands that

Ross perhaps is more of a wishful thinker than a factual examiner of history for Rav Kook was rather conservative on womens’ political suffrage. On the status of women in general Rav Kook remained conservative. While later followers of Rav Kook like Daniel Shalit interpreted Rav Kooks work in a manner that shows how feminism is not “an alien plant that threatens to contaminate pure Judaism” but a movement that manifests a higher evolutionary development within Judaism. Ross therefore seems to be arguing for a progressive revelation as articulated by earlier feminists like Plaskow, Levitt, and Adler. Some may feel that Ross’ work is the best example of what constructive feminist Jewish philosophy should be, although this judgment too is open to debate.¹¹⁹

Ross’ book was received with various controversy as most groundbreaking works will do sometimes. Elizabeth Shanks Alexander¹²⁰ and Daniel Reifman¹²¹ welcomed Ross’ book while Aryeh A. Frimer was more critical and cautious about its contradictions.¹²² Shanks Alexander summarizes what she sees as the essence of Ross’ argument by writing, “Ross’ book... attempts to address what Ross sees as the key challenge that feminism poses to traditional Orthodox belief and praxis. As Ross understands the matter, feminism’s critique of traditional religion lies in its emphasis on the human, rather than the transcendent, element of all cultural phenomena, including religion. One of feminisms’ key insights is that gender relations generally and patriarchal societal organization, specifically, are human constructs.

¹¹⁸ Ross, *Expanding the Palace of Torah: Orthodoxy and Feminism*, 2005 p. 727

¹¹⁹ See Reifman, Daniel, *Review Essay of Tamar Ross, Expanding the Palace of Torah*, in *Modern Judaism*, 2005, p. 102-104; Frimer, Aryeh A, *Guarding the Treasure, Review Essay of Tamar Ross Expanding the Palace of Torah*, in *B.D.D.*, 18, April 2007.

¹²⁰ Alexander, Elizabeth Shanks, *Expanding the Palace of Torah: Feminism and Orthodoxy*, *Nashim*, 2005, p. 243-249

¹²¹ Reifman, Daniel, *Modern Judaism*, 2005, p. 101-105

¹²² Frimer, Aryeh A., *Guarding the Treasure*, *B.D.D.* 18, April 2007, p. 67-106

To the extent that traditional religious texts (Jewish or otherwise) project patriarchal social organization as normative or use male language to depict God, they attest to the indelible traces of their human (male) scribes. Feminism then, highlights the extensive role for the human filter in the records of divine revelations that have reached us. While it might allow for the theoretical possibility of genuine divine revelation, feminism observes that the records of divine revelation available to us have an undeniable human component. Ross's solution to this problem is a theoretical model based on the notion of cumulative revelations. Drawing heavily on a theology articulated by Rabbi A.I. Kook, Ross proposes that we view the Sinaitic Torah as merely the earthly reflection of a metaphysical Torah, which must be supplemented by history (p. 223).- that is the unfolding revelation of God in history. In this view, humans have no direct unmediated access to the metaphysical Torah except through the cumulative unfolding of the divine will through history. Since humans cannot transcend the limitations of language or their experiences, God must be made evident in the course of human history. In each generation God is revealed in the dynamic interaction between sacred text, official interpreters, and communal consensus. Insofar as the sacred canon is interpreted in a manner that achieves communal consensus and is consistent with the patterns of meaning allowed by the sacred texts themselves and their traditional interpretation, the divine will is shown to lie behind the unfolding interpretation of each successive generation. As the word cumulative suggests, earlier accounts of revelation at no point discredited as incomplete that earlier patriarchal expressions of sacred texts and communal norms are authentically divine. Equally important however is the idea that once feminist ideals achieve broad consensus within Orthodox circles, they too will be revealed to be a manifestation of the divine will."¹²³

The problem with Shanks Alexander's summary are multifold as she wants to have her cake and eat it too it seems. That is to say if Ross is "conjoining what feminists call the patriarchal past with a feminist future in the single unfolding process of divine revelation"¹²⁴ then how are we to understand the original Sinaitic revelation outside of history? Rashi comments on Pirke Avot that Moshe Kibel torah miSinai, and since the text does not say "ha-torah" which would imply only the written torah, then Moshe received coterminously both the written and oral torah together. However Ross as understood by Alexander argues that the oral torah evolves over time and as various groups come to power, i.e. feminists, then they can change the meaning of the original oral torah, rather than its coterminous revelation. Ross as understood by Alexander accepts both the original Sinaitic revelation but via theological cumulative revelation of "the earlier patriarchal expressions of divine sacred texts and communal norms as authentically divine, once feminist ideals achieve broad consensus which she predicts hopefully withing Orthodox Foucaultian power-knowledge regimes, they too will be revealed to be a manifestation of the divine will. This is an old question found in Plato's dialogue where Socrates raises the question, "What is truth?" For Socrates truth is giving to each person what is their due based on merit. However one recalcitrant bully proposes that Truth is the will of the stronger i.e. the Roman model of might makes right and the conquerors of history rewrite history to conform with their agenda of the truth. Thus the Ramban in the Vakuah tried to set the record straight about what happened in the Barcelona debate of 1263 but the reigning Catholic power at the time James and Isabela set Ramban running because the Church was offended by Rambam's setting the record straight in the Vakuah. Thus the power of the

¹²³ Shanks, Alexander, p. 243-244.

¹²⁴ Shanks Alexander, p. 244

reigning authoritative interpretations are merely who has power. Yes, as Ruth R. Wisse in her book on Power shows there is spiritual power as well as physical power. However it appears that Ross and Alexander Shanks appear to want to categorize the written torah as patriarchal and the Rabbinic oral torah as so much superior as it will eventually allow Feminist voices over the course of generations come to power and articulation as the evolution of cumulative torah occurs. This of course ignores the "shtira" or contradictions on alloweing the feminist critique today to coexist compatibly with what feminists call "the dominant patriarchal religious interpretations that have come down to us."¹²⁵ The problem with this formulation is that if G-d is eternal and his word is forever eternal then the Maimonidean Aristotelian notion that there is no change withing God is ruptured by Ross and Shanks Alexander. In the evolution of cumulative torah God's eternal word that will stand forever does change and takes on new hermeneutical meanings. Thus Alexander likes Ross' formulation because it allows one to be an Orthodox feminist, although radical feminists who understand the contradictions of having your cake and eating it too, might object to this as "bad faith" not in the Sartrian sense, but as the inability to rationally prove revelations claims before the tribunal of reason. Alexander notes, "For the Orthodox Jewish feminist to deny the divine character of the torah, the oral torah, or halakhah is to cross a red line that places her beyond the bounds of Orthodox Judaism."¹²⁶ However it seems that Ross and Alexander are strattlign the fence, as Isaiah warns in a haftorah against. Alexander sees Ross' book as revolutionary in that it allows an Orthodox woman to maintain her feminist alliances because of the notion of cumulative revelation. That is to say, "ross provides Orthodox women with a way of difussing the internal tension resulting from their dual commitments to feminism and Orthodoxy."¹²⁷ Yet can one maintain a traditional loyalty to the sacred canon and its concomitant halakhic lifestyle in their received and authoritative form? Some like Aryeh FRimer would say no they can't. To regard Feminism as "the emergence of a new revelation of the divine will (p. 210) for Frimer is to assert a human construct on a divine revealed construct and to force by merely poltical power-knowledge regime politics the will of a human group. For Frimer cumulative revelation is not adequate enough to enable its adherents to maintain a delicate balance between traditional reverence for the sacred canon and its traditional interpretations, one the one side and sober feminist agendas on the other. For Frimer it is more than a stira, or contradiction to assert as Ross does that the possibility for the Torah to be both human and divine. This is just contrary to reason and logic for Frimer. If divine truth is soley a matter of broad consensus within the traditional community that Orthodox feminists hope will be more open to feminist agendas, then truth is merely also a poltical human construct. That certainly is not the understanding of Truth as held by Maimonides and many other Jewish philosophers. It is not so much that the interpretative community plays a decisive role in authenticating divine traditions as divine, there either is an epistemological given ontological truth or there is not. Ross and Alexander seem to therefore be in

¹²⁵ Shanks Alexander, p. 244; in another article titled "The Impact of Feminism on Rabbinic Studies: The Impossible Paradox of Reading Women into Rabbinical Literature" Alexander confesses the paradoxical role of Jewish feminists when she writes, "The role imagined for women in rabbinic literature is riddled with serious legal limitations and debilitating negative stereotypes. Jewish feminist readers of rabbinic literature face an irreconcilable paradox: they like other Jews turn toward this corupus as a wellspring for identity and yet find it incapable of reflecting back a vision fo whoy they would like to be" (p.101).

¹²⁶ Alexander, p. 245

¹²⁷ Alexander, p. 245

agreement with Richard Rubenstein that when the Nazis murdered 1/3 of the world's Jews they murdered 1/3 of God himself, however as medieval philosophers know God is not a quantitative body that can be measured and is indeed transcendent and beyond human measurement. God is not a body, not finite, and not ignorant. Yet Ross and Alexander seem to have reduced themselves into the warp and wuff of a Marxist process that all religion is political and a matter of agendas. This is the position of Frederick Jameson in *The Political Unconscious* and what Alan Bloom warns against post the 1960s when Academia just became a matter of catering to the consumers/students and big givers at Universities and all subjects were politicized with different groups such as Deconstructionists, Structuralists, Marxists, Psychoanalytical, Feminist, etc. groups with axes to grind in pursuit of nothing more than power understood in the Foucaultian sense. If only interpretations that achieve broad communal consensus are understood to be authentically divine, then power is a human construct. However as a person of faith knows, God is all powerful or omnipotent, or as Maimonidians would say God is not powerless. This contradiction between halakhic Judaism based on performance of mitzvot and the feminism of Ross may take more generations to theologically work out. However for Areyeh Frimer to scapegoat the written law as patriarchal from a feminist perspective is to reject the divinity of the biblical text which is coterminous with rabbinic authority and its authoritative interpreters.¹²⁸

Alexander refers to "the disability imposed upon women who might wish to enter the stream of transmission. At the very root of this generative project lies a definitive exclusion of women. Consequently not only are women denied a favorable representation in the rabbinic corpus itself but they are excluded from the transformative role of interpreter. (p.102)". Alexander argues that the goal of the feminist project is "to restore women's place in the narration of the past, effectively taking women's experiences 'out of the margins' of history as has been done in so many other domains of historical study. The academic historical enterprise first confirms that women (their status, their experiences, their circumstances) are a legitimate domain of inquiry and then attempts to refashion the categories by which history is narrated in order to reflect the particularities of women's experience." (p. 102). Alexander maps out various methods (p.103) and goals of deconstructing the patriarchal rabbinic tradition as "they (academic scholars) may try to identify protofeminist voices within the texts (Judith Hauptman¹²⁹), account for the patriarchal control of women's lives (Wegner¹³⁰), or explore the constructed character of gender relations so that in the words of Miriam Peskovitz, "[we] need to repeat their habits for our futures."¹³¹

¹²⁸ Frimer, Areyeh, *Guarding the Treasure*, p. 69.; Frimer conceives of Feminism as a doctrine about rights (zekhuyot) advocating equality of opportunity for both genders in all spheres of life. Frimer on the other hand views halakhic Judaism on the other hand as a religion of mitzvot and obligations (hovot) which by definition seriously limit one's personal autonomy and one's options for gender equality equations. (p.70) Frimer sees an absolute incompatibility between Ross' feminism and halakhic Judaism.

¹²⁹ Hauptman states that her work, "demonstrates that patriarchy was the dominant form of social organization among the rabbis, but is "is feminist in that I show that some of the rabbi legislators... put forth countervailing voices, calling into question the patriarchal basis of Jewish Law (*Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice (Radical Traditions)* Westview Press, 1998 , 11)

¹³⁰ See Wegner, *Chattel or Person: The Status of Women in the Mishnah*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1988, , p. 186-198

¹³¹ Peskovitz, *Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender, and History (Contraversions: Critical Studies in Jewish Literature, Culture, and Society)* University of Calif. Press, 1997; Peskovitz emphasizes the extent to which rabbinic

VIII. No Longer written out of history- Historical Research of women in digitized archives like the Cairo Geniza and other repositories (see powerpoint and work of Marc Cohen on Cairo Geniza)

IX. The Malbim¹³² understands the Eshet Hayil not to be a physical woman but a mushal for the life of the active and passive intellect, the dynamic of the souls (ruah, neshamah, haya, nefesh) in every human being to attain intellectual virtue, being created equal in the image of Hashem which the Rambam understands meaning in the image not anthropological resemblance but rather the potential of the active intellect to attain to divine wisdom¹³³, to come closer to Being with Hashem. The Malbim's commentary is preceded on a myriad of panegyrics where the Rabbis praise the life of wisdom as the life in pursuit of study of torah. In baraita de Qinyan Torah appearing in the 6th chapter of Pirke Avot we find the following praise of the life of learning Torah:

R. Meir says Everyone occupied in Torah for its own sake merits many things. Furthermore, the entire world is worthy of him. He is called re'a; he is beloved, he loves G-d, he loves humanity, He gladdens G-d he gladdens his fellow human beings. It torah studied lishmah clothes him in humility and reverence and it enables him to be righteous pious upright and trustworthy; it keeps him away from sin and brings him close to virtue. People benefit by his advice counsel insight and strength as it says in Proverbs 8:14 mine are counsel and resourcefulness I am understanding courage is mine... Torah's secrets are revealed to him and he becomes like a bubbling spring, an endless flowing river; he is modest, long suffering and he forgives insults; it enhances and elevates him above all works." In a baraita R. Menachem son of Yose expounded the verse Proverbs 6:23, Misvah is ner, and Torah Ohr. Scripture likens a misvah to a lamp and the Torah to the sun in order to tell you that just as a lamp's light is temporary so is the protection afforded by a mitzvah. However torah likened to the sun is to tell you that just as the sun's light is forever so is protection of the Torah. And it also says Proverbs 6:22 wherever you turn she will guide you when you lie down she will watch over you and when you wake she will converse with you.¹³⁴

The Malbim notes that most commentaries point out that the section on Mishlei about the Eishet Hayil is a mushal or allegory for the human intellect "depicted as a king that is to rule within a person and his primary undeveloped soul is conceived as a woman wed to the King, because she listens to him. Of a materialistic nature the primary undeveloped soul is essentially inimical to spirituality which is feminine. It can be prepared however to yield instructive ideas of moral wisdom and goodness either by nature or by effort. Such a pliant soul is denoted as "a woman of valor" which the intellect finds for this is indeed a

sensibilities concerning gender roles are not natural but constructed. In order to make her point, she turns to the area of daily labors, the repetitive work that people do without noticing its larger implications. She observes that women regardless of social station, were associated with textile work. i.e. spinning, and that this work became a signifier of feminine identity

¹³² See Malbim on Mishley: The Commentary of Rabbi Meir Leibush Malbim on the book of Proverbs, abridged and adapted in English by Rabbi Charles Wengrov based on an original draft by Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, Feldheim: Jerusalem, 1982

¹³³ Proverbs 8's elegy to wisdom is interpreted by the rabbis to be torah as Ben Sira before them (Ecclesiasticus 24:1-23); see *Mirror of His Beauty*, p. 29-33, 79-80

¹³⁴ Sot. 21a

find an instance of good fortune without effort. By learning to love to learn one can find her. Generally however her price is beyond rubies. A primary undeveloped soul can be evolved into a good harmonious element of the psyche only through the inner battle of the intellect to gather wisdom, understanding and knowledge. Metaphorically one must cross distant oceans and plumb the waters depths to find its pearls- the good hidden faculties and powers that are latent in the psyche and bring them to the surface of conscious behavior. “

The Malbim notes, “The heart is the governing force in the psyche to regulate the primary undeveloped soul under the guidance of the intellect or royal husband. If the primary soul is recalcitrant it will yield only sporadically to discipline and then regress to amorality making the individual lose what his intellect has gained from the Torah’s moral laws. With a “woman of valor” an obedient primary soul a person can feel secure that there will be no such loss of moral progress in unresolved inner conflicts.”¹³⁵

In commenting on “she does him good and not evil all the days of his life” the Malbim comments that “Though it has elements of good, yet having experienced sin, a primary soul will sometimes fall prey to its evil elements, especially in the years of irresponsible youth. A good heedful primary soul however can make for a consistent life of decent moral behavior.”¹³⁶

The malbim again allegorizes the pusukim in Mishlei 30 when commenting “Good character traits and virtues are depicted as clothing for the soul, to be realized and acquired through proper action and behavior. Virtuous actions and good deeds are consequently described as wool and flaxen cloths. A good, compliant primary soul seeks and welcomes good deeds to acquire its garments of praiseworthy character traits; it does not have to be coerced and compelled inured to virtuous actions.”¹³⁷

The Malbim’s comments on “bringing food from afar” refers to the pliant’s soul supplying the active intellect with the sensual data of experience. Factual worldly education can be acquired by trading in human experience, gaining knowledge by knowledge as it were, to profit in one’ s development. One must embark on the high seas of this profound wide ranging knowledge to bring “such food from afar” for the soul; for the faculties of wisdom intellectual and spiritual awareness are innately distant from the physical world. Though normally the primary soul purified of such tendencies will “sail forth” unimpeded flag unfurled into the “sea” of valid knowledge.”¹³⁸

The malbim understands the pusek that the internal needs of the home require the Eishet Chayil to rise early before dawn and prepare food for the family and the rations for the servants to mean that “in the world the light of the intellect and spirituality is greatly darkened by the physical human condition. A good soul, however will arise from its torpor in the dark of night of earthly existence and give the food of torah study to her household, the faculties of the intellect and understanding, and rations of

¹³⁵ See Malbim on Mishley: The Commentary of Rabbi Meir Leibush Malbim on the book of Proverbs, abridged and adapted in English by Rabbi Charles Wengrov based on an original draft by Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, Feldheim: Jerusalem, 1982

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid

¹³⁸ Ibid.

observance of religious commandments and moral precepts for the training of the maids, the physical self and its natural tendencies.”¹³⁹

Commenting on the pusek that she planned a field and acquired it with the fruit of her hands she planted a vineyard the Malbim comments, “by nature the primary soul is able and willing to plant divine seeds of good action in the psyche if the human being does his farming properly by moral study and conduct; and then there is a harvest of reward in olam ha bah for all his good deeds. The field of study and mental growth is symbolized as a vineyard, in which proper conceptions are planted to develop into an essential part of the psyche which remains through eternity.”

Commenting on “she set her hands to the distaff and her palms held the spindle the Malbim comments, Intellectual pursuits in religious development are akin to walking to proceed steadily from concept to concept. The good soul “girds her loins” so that the individual can make steady gains in his understanding. As regards action, the performance of the Torah’s commandments and good deeds, “she makes her arms strong” and enables the individual to act forthrightly, unhampered by laziness or reluctance. “

Commenting on “her lamp would not go out at night” the Malbim notes “as it progresses well toward its own perfection a good soul wishes to improve others too. Both in their moral understanding and in their actions to gain profit by selling the merchandise” that is found so good. Thus a great, abiding merit is earned as the individual shares in the reward that others gain by their moral progress and so “her lamp will not go out in the night” of terminated life: after his death, such an individual’s good and religious deeds and the torah he taught, will continue to cast their influence like a shining light.”¹⁴⁰

Commenting on “she opens her hands to the poor man and stretched out her hands to the needy, the Malbim comments, “ “the distaff connotes a wooden beam to which prisoners were pinioned or tied, suggesting the coarse physicality of this world that ties and hampers the human psyche. Reducing it to hopeless poverty. ?Here the good soul sets her hands to the performance of mitzvoth and good deeds, to refine the physical self and release it from its bonds. It furthermore helps a hopelessly needy man, overcome by physical desires and drives by setting an example for him to emulate thus to gain mastery of his gross physical nature. Again for growth in religious awareness “her palms hold the spindle” to weave the insights for progressive understanding and the good soul can “open her palms to a “spiritually poor man.” To teach him the divine word and holy knowledge of the Torah, that will stand him in good stead in olam ha-bah.”¹⁴¹

Commenting on the pusek “she is not afraid for her household during snow” the Malbim comments, “a good primary soul that has developed well will feel no fear of death, the time of snow that freezes off the natural warmth of life for it has no anxiety about its household of spiritual forces and faculties in the

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

psyche, that they will remain without clothes (verse 13) for all her household are clothed in manifold garments of Torah and good deeds. The word scarlet is understood as various or manifold. ¹⁴²

Commenting on “she is clothed in purple” the Malbim notes “the soul has moreover made for itself precious ornaments of the perceptions and ideas gained in a lifetime of religious study and it has splendid garments out of such study and observance, a spiritual status to adore it in the Hereafter.”¹⁴³

Commenting on her husband is known in the gates the Malbim comments, “The husband of the good primary soul the guiding intellect of the psyche will be known and have a telling effect when they shall speak with the enemies in the gate (Tehillim 127:5) i.e. in confronting and battling the inner forces of evil impulse to impose discipline with moral law. Again, it will make its mark in “sitting with the elders of the land” i.e. in studying moral perceptions and religious ideas to gain an elder’s mastery of understanding.”

Commenting on “she made linen clothing and would sell it” the Malbim comments, “the gaining of understanding that integrates a person’s acquired perceptions and insights is symbolized as the weaving of linen clothing. This the good soul sells by applying it in the individual’s inner life and by sharing it with others which in turn increases and enriches one’s own religious maturation. The belt denotes the strength of wisdom to overcome temptation and impulse and choose only the good in behavior. This too “she gives to a trader” to pass on to others as an example to learn from.”¹⁴⁴

Commenting on “strength and dignity are her clothing” the Malbim continues to comment, “Out of a life of divine education and good deeds the good soul will be clothed in garments of spiritual splendor when the final day of earthly existence is to be faced. There will be happiness and joy as well for this good soul that has brought merit and virtue to others by precept and example thus earning a radiant reward in the Hereafter.”¹⁴⁵

Commenting on “she opened her mouth with wisdom and kindness was on her tongue” the Malbim notes “the good soul will then point to a lifetime choice of good over evil by the laws of moral wisdom. The tongue within the mouth denotes inner understanding- which the good soul gained, while on earth, of the esoteric meaning of much in the torah designated as a torah of kindness since it goes amply beyond the plain meaning as kindness goes beyond the call of law and duty.”¹⁴⁶

Commenting on “she would not eat the bread of idleness” the Malbim comments, “If a good soul has kept watch only over its own household to achieve self-perfection by alertness and zeal, there will be no public general praise. Only ‘her children’ the good deeds performed and the good faculties developed in

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

the psyche will bring reward; and for all the effort and energy invested in holy study to attain divine truth, “her husband” the intellect will be grateful for having been able to take this clear blessed path in life.”¹⁴⁷

Commenting on “many daughters have done valiantly but you excelled them all” the Malbim comments, “many good souls have pursued their own perfection gaining spiritual charm and beauty by intellectual attainments and good deeds. Such gains however are false and vapid as it were in comparison with the achievements of good souls whose life has been marked by a devout awareness and reverence of the Almighty which has inspired them to exert a profound influence on others. Such a soul’s reward is extremely great, and its name remains a source of blessing wherever the Torah’s wisdom and righteousness is valued.”

Thus we see that the engendered language of the Eishet Chayil in Mishlei chapter 30 as understood by the Malbim is a *mushal* for the attainment of the active intellect (male) in relationship to the potential intellect i.e. an allegory for the purpose of life of the mind, to seek *hokmah*, *binah* *vedaas*, in the quest for intellectual-moral-and spiritual virtue. That this pursuit of intellectual virtue-moral virtue and spiritual virtue is common to all human beings in potential that have a soul(s) therefore the *mushal* of the *eishet Chayil* speaks to the opportunities in spiritual and intellectual cognitive education that both men and women share by being endowed with a soul.

The Malbim’s *mushal* is a praise for torah learning as the Mishnah in *peah* notes “Talmud torah *kineged kulam*.” R. Berakhia and R. Hiyya of Kefar Tahmin one said even the whole world in its entirety is not worth a single word of torah. The other said even all the *mitzvot* of the torah are not worth a single word of torah (Y. *Peah* 1:1 (15c)). In Rabbinic eschatology the rewards of torah were not only a question of “enlightenment” and life enhancement. Reward had come to be thought of as recompense to be enjoyed by the individual’s disembodied soul after death. The soul’s bliss in the next world was contingent on the moral-intellectual-and spiritual virtue gained in *olam hazeh*. Hence if Torah study and its reward were the prerogative of men, what would a woman’s ledger look like on the day of reckoning? By what means do women gain merit is embodied in the phrase “*nahsim bemaiz zakhayan*”? By letting their sons learn scripture and their husbands learn Mishnah and by waiting patiently for their husbands to return from the study house.¹⁴⁸ Thus the rabbis replace the biblical role of men as warriors when a man’s swagger was his sword (Dt. 22:5a) with the *sith-fringes* so that the *bucherim* in *Yeshivah* fight the real wars of the *L-rd* with the swords of *pilpul* that acquire eternal merit. This is not the physical battlefield of Esau but the spiritual battlefield of *makloket* in the *shas*. Rambam tells us that the reward for the righteous will be proportional to the wisdom-understanding-and knowledge gained in this world where the righteous will bask with crowns on their heads in the *ziv shekhinah* (a feminine manifestation of Hashem). However the Rabbinic tradition also reenvisioned women as the source of wisdom. The Targumic witness prove the resilience of torah-for all by attesting to the marvels such as Abigail, the

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ber. 9:5; see Sotah 21a “Though not under orders to study the reward of taking their sons to their scripture and mishnah lessons and waiting patiently for their husbands until they return from the *bet midrash* do they not *plg* that reward?” This is a kind of vicarious expiation noted in the phrase *hareni kapparath alav*.

erudite Talmudist who parries her male counterpart in pukka halakhic debate.¹⁴⁹ We also learn of the Shunnamite who studies torah with a foremost teacher and parallel to his male disciples is expected to pay him her respects on specified Holy days.¹⁵⁰ In Ruth Rabbah 2:23 and elsewhere Naomi is depicted as instructing Ruth in the intricacies of halakhah.¹⁵¹ The wise woman of Abel appraises Joab of his Torah duties.¹⁵² In the 9th century text known as Seder Tannaim va-Amoraim, Deborah and Huldah figure as links in the living chain of Torah transmission (a masorah) that is they are entrusted by their teachers with the entire corpus of oral torah.¹⁵³ If we dig deeper we yet again recover Samson's yoshevet vedoreshet mother.¹⁵⁴ Still deeper yet in rabbinic texts we discover that potentially boundless band of womankind whose torah learning the rabbis sought to protect against amnesia.¹⁵⁵ With regards to wisdom personified as a woman we find the pusek "long life is in her right hand and in her left riches and honour (Proverbs3:16). As ben bag bag implores, "turn it turn it, everything is in it."

X. Conclusions

Jewish feminism faces many new questions in the 21st century particularly as a result of new advances in technology and science. The halakhic process is what is required to deal with new questions such as transhumanism as the post-modern world is confronted by new questions such as those made possible by genetic engineering and technology that can save human species from its biological limitations as well as risk to threaten with destruction the very existence of human life itself. Transhumanists consider the human species to be a work in progress. The species will continue to evolve as a result of the confluence of advancements in the life sciences, neuroscience, genomics, robotics, informatics, and nanotechnology. For Transhumanists the human species is in an early stage of human evolution. Whereas today humans are still enslaved to their genetic programming IVF, PGD, and other biological techniques make it possible to eradicate genetic diseases and afflictions and genetic engineering and programming may in the future through bioengineering and genetic enhancement allow humans to live longer, possess new cognitive and physical abilities, and eventually be liberated from pain and suffering due to aging and disease. We may speculate that humans may even conquer the ultimate enemy death itself by attaining cognitive immortality that is the downloading of human software (the mind) into artificially intelligent machines that will continue to exist long after the individual human has perished. In the trans humanist future sperm and egg banks will allow humans to design themselves out of the biological limitations of the human condition, and for all of these scenarios in the future the relationship between men and women may change and continue to evolve as feminists gain more control over their human destiny in procreation and the social cultural political realms. Yet ethics would dictate that the trans humanist science fiction that seeks to make an assault on the finitude of the human being is one more example of human hubris. This technological hubris dare not risk becoming a eugenicist nightmarish dream. Perhaps instead of trying to be like immortal gods beyond death what is need is to

¹⁴⁹ Meg.14b

¹⁵⁰ RH 16b

¹⁵¹ Yevamoth 47b

¹⁵² Tg to 2 Sam 20:18

¹⁵³ Mahzor Vitry, Nuremberg 1923, p. 481; S. D. Luzzatto's critical edition, Prague 1839, p.3

¹⁵⁴ Midrash Eshet Hayil in Wertheimer's Bate Midrashot vol. 2 Jersusalem 1955, p.149

¹⁵⁵ Hor. 13b

enable humans to live with dignity and strive for ethical-moral-spiritual virtue. The question is one of what is true happiness. Will more sophisticated technologies make us more happy. Of course not. Traditional Judaism has conceived of happiness in terms of intellectual attainment and raising Jewish families to whom one transmits to future offspring the teachings of Judaism and moral virtues. Living a life of the mind, in search of hokmah, binah, vedaas, was the traditional Jewish response to ultimate happiness to contemplate the attributes of G-d, to dwell in His heavenly Temple forever. While man has progressed technologically this is not necessarily so morally and ethically and it is this goal that we must strive for. We need to focus on cultivation of the virtues at the center of human happiness because Judaism considers this redemptive. To give rise to a new generation that is more wise, more compassionate, more caring to live better and interact with respect for each other, cultivating moral personality should be the goal of Judaism and Jewish feminism. The liberating power of Judaism is not necessarily only in its answers but its questioning as the piety of thought. Commitment to the truth enables Judaism its integrity and Jewish feminism need not be dogmatic in character. It should however enable men and women to live more justly and more truthfully with one another in harmony rather than promoting relationships of oppression and exploitation. A goal of Jewish feminism should be to eradicate abuse in all its forms, allowing women to assume their rightful place of dignity and respect and adulation within Judaism. The importance of gender does not lead one to endorse radical feminism that denounces the very institutions of family and marriage that trans humanisms may envision. Jewish feminists ultimately want to be equal but different at the same time. They want to have access to all aspects of life (politics, law, economy, education, medicine, the arts, etc.) and not be excluded simply because they are women. At the same time women are not men and do not want to be assimilated into the male paradigm. The issue is not as Freud posited "biology is destiny" but rather what ethical, social, and political significance can we ascribe to biological differences. If women are to imitate male behavior in the work place of social sphere then women fall trap to becoming woman warrior amazons. Men have wreaked enough war and fighting across history and at this point in human history the next major militaristic confrontation does indeed annihilating life on the planet mother earth. Thus it is important women not merely try to imitate male behavior and roles. In short Jewish feminism can remain true to its mission if it continues to strive to make us better human beings, and realize the messianic vision of an earth eradicated from war. War has been waged by men now too long. The Quaker option of passivism is not an option in the face of radical evil such as another Hitler. But as the messiah tarries, perhaps Jewish feminism can urge us to strive for our better selves to help realize the day that is promised by Isaiah, a world that will not know war anymore, a day where the swords will be turned into plowshares, a day where the one preoccupation of the world will be to know hashed, and the knowledge of Hashem will fill the world as the waters fill the seas. In that day a midrash has it that death will be abolished and women will not experience pain in child labor anymore nor men have to earn their living by the sweat of their brows. This task is worth striving towards and Jewish feminism has an important role to realize this potential that is promised in our prophetic writings of a more fair, just, equitable world where the messianic King will judge not by the assumptions of the eyes and ears but by truth, justice, righteousness, and fairness. Such is the true vitality of Jewish feminism. One based on love and not hate. One based on ahavas hinam rather than sinat hinam. Jewish feminism should pave the way not only for gender equality while still recognizing the biological differences in the sexes but also

seek to make the world a better place so that men and women may dwell together not in persistent opposition of exploitation and oppression, but in love, harmony, brotherhood and sisterhood.

Sociologically however we are warned with the substance of statistics and data by Chaim I. Waxman that American Orthodoxy and throughout the world is moving to the right towards the Haredi varieties which have a larger birth rate than Modern Orthodoxy groups. According to Waxman there are a number of basic sociological factors which render it inevitable that Orthodoxy in modern society will adopt a stance of greater isolation and especially ritualistic stringency and more resistance to women's roles of authority in the area of halakhic decision making. Waxman writes, "it should be emphasized that the Haredi opposition to modernity is to the cultural components of modernity, not to the technological. In contrast to the Amish and others, Haredim do not reject technological innovations but adopt and adapt them to their ends of social and cultural isolation"¹⁵⁶, which was the point of my opening section on the asifa. How Feminism will fully effect Haredi Judaism waits to be seen, but currently the Haredi camp is more resistant to modern feminism than the other liberal movements of Judaism. Haredi Judaism is based on strict separation between the sexes except in marriage. Besides accepting humras or stringencies the real aspect that defines Haredi Judaism is their rejection of modernity which the last section of this paper has tried to show is the ideological underpinnings of the modern feminist movements. Individualism, the quick fix, the sound byte mentality, and fast food generation is characteristic of modernity with its idolatrous belief in the march of progress and technological progress that Haredi understanding rejects. The traditional Jewish view is the yoredit of Jewish generations from the revelation on Har Sinai. Boundary maintenance makes for Haredi limits. Haredi communities separate from the larger liberal Jewish societies and especially from what it views as the treif non-Jewish elements in the larger non-Jewish cultures. Many Haredi Jews view modern feminism as a threat and or heresy. Haredi Judaism involves submission to Religious Rabbinic authority. Authority and tradition are a prerequisite for religious orthodoxy. Waxman writes, "Within an orthodoxy the individual is expected to so internalize tradition as to perceive himself as not having any choice but to conform to all of its dictates. The notion that the individual has any right to choose is heretical, as Peter Berger elucidates. As he points out the English word heresy comes from the Greek verb which means to "choose". From the perspective of religious orthodoxy one has no choice, and from the perspective of traditional Orthodoxy the actions of choice included the inevitable submission to the ultimate authority of the rabbinic scholarly elite."¹⁵⁷ The Halakhic authority of the Rabbinic Haredi elite currently mostly rejects the developments from the French Revolution on of feminism, Jewish feminism included in this evolution. Halakhah changes more slowly than political ideologies such as feminism. Black and white categories such as male/female, light/dark, form/matter often govern the search for rigidity of clarity that is found among the masses of Haredi Judaisms. The grey areas of intellectual consideration often are less attractive to mass followers than the emotional passionate warmth of Jewish outreach. The somewhat distant intellectual coolness of philosophical modern Orthodoxy that are more open to Jewish feminism, are often suspect to the Haredim. Haredi Jews often approach the ill

¹⁵⁶ Waxman, Chaim I., "The Haredization of American Orthodox Jewry", Jerusalem Letters, No. 376 19 Shevat 5758/ 15 Febr. 1998 see: <http://www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/bitstreams/18274.pdf>

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., <http://www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/bitstreams/18274.pdf>

effects of modernity with quarantining itself by circling the wagons from new ideas that may undermine its own authority structures. Thus only time will tell how fast Haredi Judaism absorbs and filters modern Jewish feminism from having a greater effect on its ways of life. In the mean time according to Waxman and other Sociologists, the Haredi are the winning race horse that may eclipse all other varieties of Judaism with its rejection of intermarriage and relatively large population growth. Thus the fate of Jewish feminism waits to be seen in the future for those Jews that are able to carry on and transmit their Judaism to growing future generations. However change is afoot as noted in the no longer as wide traditional exclusion of women from Torah study of rabbinic texts with the explosion of Orthodox Seminaries throughout the world in Israel and the U.S. The growth of Womens' Rabbinic education since the Chofetz Chaim is noted in this paper, and it is likely to continue if the Jewish community continues along lines of prosperity and population growth. Ultimately with Maimonides we look to a future where the one preoccupation fo the world will be to know Hashem, and knowledge of Hashem will be as wide spread as the waters of the sea (Isaiah). Then there will be no more war, no more famine, and blessings will be abundant, and eventually a messiah who judges not by the assumptions of the eyes nor the assumptions of the ears, will orchestrate the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash. May we witness the geulah speedily in our day and forever, as the word of the eternal Hashem is an eternal word not contingent on political agendas nor human constructs.